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The Evolving Paradigm of Victorian Cemeteries
Their emergence and contribution to London's urban growth since 1833

Resubmission for PhD

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24 November 2014

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DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

I, Gian Luca Amadei, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature:

Date:

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'The ceremonious burial of the dead in graves marked by a cairn, a tree, or a tall rock, formed perhaps the first permanent meeting place for the living: the home of the ancestral spirits, the shrine of a god, the embryo of a city.'

(Mumford, *The City in History*, 1991, Graphic Section One. Plate 1)

Abstract

This project is concerned with the study of London's early nineteenth-century private suburban cemeteries and interrogates how their inception advocated a process of rationalisation of burial spaces, and by extension, contributed to the formation of the city's suburbs.

My hypothesis is that the private Victorian cemeteries were the direct result of the socio-cultural, economical and political context and were part of a unique transformation process that emerged in early nineteenth-century London. I will argue that the re-ordering of the city's burial spaces along the principles of health and hygiene, was directly associated with liberal capital investments and that its political support had consequences in the spatial arrangement of London.

Beginning with a formal analysis of the context that underlay the implementation of the early Victorian cemeteries in London, this research will then investigate their spatial arrangement, aesthetics and functions. These developments will be illustrated through the study of three private Victorian cemeteries: Kensal Green Cemetery, Highgate Cemetery and Brookwood Cemetery; which have been selected for their diverse history, scale, location, topography and socio-cultural make up.

For the purpose of this research, a geographical boundary of observation of one-mile radius from each selected cemetery has been set, so to study each chosen site and its immediate context. The objective is to establish what influence the presence of Victorian cemeteries had in attracting (or indeed deterring) specific developments in the area.

The Evolving Paradigm of Victorian Cemeteries will use maps, plans, surveys, prints, drawings, inventories and accounts of several archives and libraries to examine the context of nineteenth-century London and the selected case studies. This research will propose that a new understanding of London's early Victorian cemeteries is emerging when they are studied in their local context. In particular, it will highlight how the process or rationalisation of burial spaces – as implemented with the early Victorian suburban cemeteries – contributed to the emergence of new spatial strategies that influenced the formation of modern London. Ultimately this established a new order and governance that controlled the visibility of death in the urban space.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, scholarly research studied and documented many aspects of early London's Victorian cemeteries, from their origins to their unique funerary architecture, and from their landscapes to their value as cultural heritage at large. However, within the wide range of published work, the contribution Victorian cemeteries made to the formation of their immediate surroundings and by extension to the urban growth of London, is still poorly researched and understood.

The objective of this thesis is to address this problem by studying a selection of early London Victorian cemeteries and elaborate on the urbanisation process that occurred in their proximity. The aim is to clarify how the presence of cemeteries affected this arrangement and furthermore, to establish the type of relationship that existed between each cemetery and its immediate surroundings; with a specific interest in understanding which other institutions such as hospitals asylums, workhouses and prisons came to exist in the proximity of Victorian cemeteries. The results of this research will provide a fresh new perspective on cemeteries, and will shed light on how these influenced the formation of their immediate surroundings. Beyond contributing to the existing scholarship on early Victorian cemeteries, these findings will expand the knowledge on the urban history of London and the complex relationship between the city and its cemeteries in the modern era.

Parish churchyards and other private graveyards constituted most of the provision for burials in early nineteenth-century London. However, as its population grew considerably following the events of the Industrial Revolution, London's churchyards started to prove inadequate to the needs of a fast growing city, both in terms of space and quality. Beyond churchyards, crypts in chapels and churches also became congested with coffins. The overcrowding and poor maintenance of London's parish churchyards were challenged by the medical profession, which found them to be harmful to the population as they contributed to the propagation of contagious diseases. The implementation of the new cemeteries was also part of a process of rationalisation of burials, which contributed along other larger scale projects to the modernisation of London. These included the construction of new sewers, transport infrastructure, hospitals and other institutions and services including cemeteries. Although substantially similar in their function to any other graveyard or churchyard, the new suburban cemeteries contributed to a cultural shift in the perception of death that

although firstly addressed the burial needs of London's middle-classes, eventually brought dramatic changes to the burial culture in Britain at large. As in many other cities, and also London, the sites of most Victorian cemeteries were carefully chosen for both their topography and connectivity to the city, as well as for the poor quality of the land and value. When first opened, most of London's Victorian cemeteries were isolated from the main urban fabric of the city, and it was only gradually that they started to be embraced by factories, houses, parks, hospitals or even railway networks.

A number of scholars have approached the subject of London's early Victorian cemeteries. James Stevens Curl (1937-) and Christopher Brooks (1949-2002) both address in their studies the cultural value of these spaces and have voiced concerns over the deteriorating state of architectural heritage in these cemeteries. Historian Richard Etlin (1947-) clarifies the use of vegetation and landscape in Victorian cemeteries, while Julie Rugg provides a comprehensive study on the reasons behind the establishment of early Victorian cemetery companies. Ruth Richardson and Elizabeth Hurren both approach the Victorian cemeteries along a specific trajectory through medical and social history. Anthony Giddens (1938-) more broadly questions the invisibility of death in modernity as part of the process of the individualisation of contemporary society, which is symptomatic of how it structured and commodified many aspects of human life, including death. The influence of these works is strong in this field of study, and this thesis intends to widen the interpretation of existing scholarship on London's early Victorian cemeteries by building upon them. In reviewing the existing literature, however, it emerges that most scholars researched Victorian cemeteries in isolation, as individual architectural objects or institutions, rather than study them in relation to their local context.

As mentioned in the opening, to make the research more manageable, this thesis will focus primarily on a selection of case studies, which wants to represent the variety of cemeteries and locations. For each one of the case studies chosen (Kensal Green Cemetery, Highgate Cemetery and Brookwood Cemetery), each site will be studied in connection with its immediate surroundings and particularly in relation to institutions, parks, residential developments and other relevant site-specific conditions and buildings. I have preferred to approach each chosen site in its context, as it became part of a larger socio-cultural and spatial urban network. I will study in particular what connections existed between each cemetery and local institutions, such as workhouses, hospitals, prisons and mental asylums, which were also present in the Victorian suburbs.

This thesis acknowledges that the cultural shift in the attitude towards death, initiated in Victorian times, has deeper roots in social studies. Some of the principles of Victorian society were based on capitalism, promoting aggressive individualism, class division and segregation. All of these were strongly concentrated in London at the time, and influenced the re-ordering of the city's spatial arrangement, including that of its cemeteries in line with health and hygiene concerns. This thesis however, is not primarily concerned in tracing the evolution of the Victorian funerary culture (this has been explored by other scholars: Curl, Brooks), the history of landscape or indeed the history of urban planning. Instead it is interested in identifying a trajectory across the complex power-relations established between those forces that ultimately influenced the construction of the new city and that include: politics, economics, socio-cultural context, transport infrastructure, architecture, planning and history of medicine. I trust that by adopting this methodology of research, this thesis will bring to light new evidence and new knowledge to expand the existing research on the subject, and clarify the contribution that Victorian cemeteries made in the shaping of modern London.

Previous and simultaneous to researching Victorian cemeteries, I have also been studying the history of the urban development of London, history, of transport infrastructure, socio-cultural context, medical history, economy, philosophy and politics. Therefore my interest lies in understanding the power-relations established between these areas of study. These aspects have influenced my interpretations of the history of Victorian cemeteries, however the relations between the history of cemeteries, medical history and urban expansion have predominated.

The sources of evidence which have been consulted in the course of my research are numerous; they include literature in the form of books, manuscripts, pamphlets, and online resources as well as maps, plans, surveys, prints, drawings, inventories and accounts from several archives and libraries. I have also drawn from contemporary journals, newspapers magazines, auction particulars and a range of manuscripts and published maps, surveys, and topographical views of London and its environs. Occasionally, where documentation is lacking for metropolitan examples of certain aspects of the Victorian cemeteries, I have explored these aspects with reference to other cemeteries outside central London or indeed Britain. I have likewise included a variety of illustrations, which although not precisely contemporary with the cemeteries which are discussed, can none the less be seen as useful and relevant because of the unchanging circumstances.

A critical review of relevant existing published literature opens the thesis, which is formed by a total of five chapters. Each one of them approaches the topic of Victorian cemeteries from a different thematic angle in an attempt to show how their paradigm evolved over time.

Chapter One provides an overview of the historical context of early nineteenth-century London and explains how and why the conditions of its burials gained the attention of the medical profession, central government and private entrepreneurs in the early nineteenth century.

Chapter Two studies in particular how cemetery companies organised and structured new cemeteries for their commercial purposes, establishing new administrative procedures for burials and funerals. Companies also utilised architecture and landscape design as an aesthetic vocabulary that conferred them a distinctive individual style.

Chapter Three focuses on the impact each one of the case studies had in its immediate surroundings, questioning how the presence of a cemetery contributed to the character of a suburb. This chapter also questions how Victorian cemeteries may have stimulated new urban improvements such as the reformation of hospitals, asylums and prisons.

Chapter Four elaborates on how in late nineteenth-century London the quality of the city's urban growth started to be questioned by thinkers, philanthropists and doctors. Within this context cemetery companies were challenged for the poor maintenance of their cemeteries, and new research started to study alternative methods of disposal.

Chapter Five examines how death culture evolved in the course of the twentieth century, particularly as a consequence to the two world conflicts. These affected the perception of death and stimulated a process of change that included the shift from earth burial to cremation. This section also addresses the issue of the invisibility of death in modern society, questioning whether death has been ostracised in our contemporary culture and reporting on how these changes are now affecting London's Victorian cemeteries.

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review aims to collect, define and map scholarly research on the history and interpretation of London's Victorian cemeteries. It articulates main themes emerging from existing material sources, and it identifies the knowledge gaps. While many of the sources listed in this thesis' bibliography cover a broader period, which spans from the early nineteenth century to today, this literature review focuses on publications issued in over the last twenty years.

The objective of this research is to clarify what kind of relationship existed between Victorian cemeteries and other institutions also present in the area - such as hospitals, workhouses, asylums - as well as residential developments, parks and transport infrastructures. As we will see in this review, this particular aspect of Victorian cemeteries has been marginally acknowledged by existing literature, and holds the potential for further research to be initiated.

In an effort to broaden the analytical scope of this review, a large number of sources were examined, including academic literature as well as online articles and press publications. The structure of this review comprises a first section that provides a summary and overview on the main themes identified. This is followed by individual sub-sections that analyse more in depth selected key themes and literature which are particularly relevant to this thesis. Furthermore, these sections also identify commonalities between existing researches and current issues on the theme of Victorian cemeteries, from which important lessons can be learned.

Synthesis of the main themes:

The current status of London's Victorian cemeteries is one of the themes that contemporary scholars have been addressing in recent years, particularly the poor conditions of the historical monuments and graves and the emotional and physical disconnection between society and cemeteries. Historians such as James Stevens Curl and Christopher Brooks, who researched extensively on Victorian architecture and death culture, identify the roots of this problem in the physical and psychological 'distance'

between society and death. It is this emotional detachment that, in their opinion, produces a lack of understanding of the intrinsic socio-cultural values of the cemetery by contemporary society. For Brooks this has been one of the reasons for the 'destruction' of the cemetery in contemporary culture by neglect. This emotional detachment has direct consequences on the conditions of historical cemeteries, as they are not fully perceived by contemporary society as part of a shared cultural heritage, as in the case of other historical sites or buildings. Paradoxically, most of London's Victorian cemeteries are now fully integrated in the urban fabric of the city, and part of densely populated areas, yet local communities are only partially aware of the conditions and destiny of these historical cemeteries.

Another reason for this emotional detachment from cemeteries is to do with physical distance of communities from these resting places. Architecture writer Ken Worpole (1944 -) and Julie Rugg first addressed this issue in their report 'The Cemetery in the City' (1989). The research assesses the burial needs for London in the near future and identifies that the capital's inner districts do not have a suitable stake of land-holdings dedicated to burial spaces, therefore people are often buried far away from where they lived. The origins of the problem rests primarily with the restrictions set in place by burial laws, which, in Britain, forbid the reuse of old graves for new burials. Worpole and Rugg advocate that a change in the laws, that regulate the reuse of graves in existing cemeteries, could alleviate this problem. Research connected with this issue has also identified that most Victorian cemeteries are now gridlocked into the urban fabric of London. This condition restricts their possibility for expansion; therefore new burial space has to be identified farther away from these existing cemeteries and urban areas. However, this will cause more emotional displacement and distance between society and cemeteries.

Worpole, in one of his most recent publications titled *Last Landscapes* (2003) also identifies that there is the lack of engagement of contemporary architects and planners in applying their skills to the identification of new designs for cemeteries. The author criticises the fact that architects in the modern world have created new kind of buildings and innovative structures, however they have not created yet anything original when it comes to cemeteries. At present cemeteries are not considered as part of planning strategies for the urban development of new areas, like other infrastructure and services.

Social studies interpret the emotional and spatial detachment between society and death as part of a process, which seeks to make death gradually invisible. In particular Giddens argues in his 1991 book *Modernity and Self-Identify* that death is segregated in hospitals, where it is treated as a disease and effectively being medicalised and therefore in his view 'sequestered' from society as an experience which should be part of the life-cycle.

All the above-mentioned themes share a common denominator in that they all address in some form the consequences following the implementation of Victorian cemeteries and legislations that regulate burials in London since the mid-nineteenth-century: whether it is to do with the lack of burial space, reuse of graves or the grown emotional distance between society and death. However, thought-provoking themes are also emerging from cross-disciplinary studies that connect socio-politics with economics and history of medicine. The research that has emerged examined how Victorian cemeteries contributed to form a progressive image for city's authorities and promote a civic sense in local communities. This also projected a sense of trust in private companies and local authorities as they were able to prevent any health hazards, related to the disposal and burial, to possibly harm the population.

A theme shared by a small number of publications, also included in this review, directly acknowledge the contribution of Victorian cemeteries to the formation of complex urban planning strategies as they started to emerge in nineteenth-century. These recent studies argue that the process of rationalisation of burial spaces, in terms of arrangement and strategies, had an influence on the development of urban planning, as we know it now. The limited availability of literature dealing with this particular aspect of Victorian cemeteries, however, highlights the need for further studies to be undertaken on the subject.

As anticipated, the following sections expand on key themes, which are emerging from existing published literature. These will give us a broader overview on areas of interest, arguments and concerns on the current landscape of Victorian cemeteries studies that are particularly relevant to this thesis:

a. The emergence of Victorian cemeteries and its connections to London's socio-economical and cultural context

Scholars studying the history of nineteenth-century London, as in the case of geographer and anthropologist David Harvey (1935-), have acknowledged that the implementation of new Victorian cemeteries was a necessity that originated with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. In his 1992 book *The Urban Experience*, the author explains that the historical event brought socio-economical changes including fast growth in the population that relocated from rural areas to cities, a transition that marked the shift of British economy from agricultural to industrial. This transformation sparked new entrepreneurial and speculative private initiatives for the development of new areas of the city; these included the construction of new houses and services for the growing population, comprising, of course, new burial spaces.¹ Brooks however, argues that the provision of London's burials was already inadequate since the eighteenth century, and that there was a resistance to acknowledge the issue by governmental authorities to find an immediate solution. It was however, the growing importance of the merchant and commercial classes in the second part of the eighteenth century that eventually prompted the dramatic changes in death culture in the early part of the nineteenth century, as the emerging middle classes drew attention towards individualism and self-value. Brooks also states that the burgeoning middle classes needed suitable and appropriate cemeteries that, unlike the existing London churchyards, would be safer and private, to complement the self-reflective qualities that they aspired to project in society. Unsurprisingly, the first Victorian cemeteries implemented in London were private businesses initiated by middle-class investors, such as bankers and lawyers. The joint stock companies financing the new cemeteries were complex businesses enterprises, which, by their very nature, tended to combine diverse funding partners that also wanted to influence all aspects of the business: from the commercial to the actual design of the cemeteries.²

For some scholars the introduction of new cemeteries in Victorian London marked an unprecedented evolution from the medieval graveyard to a modern system of burials, as outlined by Etlin in his book *The Architecture of Death* (1984). The new designs of Victorian cemeteries, explains the author, were a preferred alternative to the small graveyards in use since the Middle Ages and notoriously associated with the macabre

¹ Harvey, p. 19

² Brooks, pp. 3, 4, 24

aspects of death. Etlin also comments on how original Victorian cemeteries are for combining in a picturesque manner landscaped vegetation and architecture. Ultimately, in the writer's view, the new picturesque landscape designs adopted in Victorian cemeteries, originates from the garden arrangements seen in England in early eighteenth-century country estates.³ The notion of picturesque in the urban context is studied more in depth by Malcolm Andrews (1942-) in his 1994 essay 'The Metropolitan Picturesque'. Here the author argues that the picturesque was effectively an architectural principle in the development of Victorian London.⁴ In this respect Victorian cemeteries were the manifestation of a local jurisdiction beyond the urban setting of the city, and therefore connected, in an unprecedented way, the urban and the rural aspects of a city.

b. Victorian cemeteries and local networks

Ground-breaking research on the consequences of the Anatomy Act 1832 and the Poor Law 1834 was carried out by Richardson who identifies connections with the anatomy trade in nineteenth-century Britain as outlined in this book *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (1988). Richardson's findings have been recently supplemented by Hurren's revealing study that asserted how the anatomy trade in nineteenth-century operated on the commerce of body parts and not whole corpses. As the historian states in her book *Dying for Victorian Medicine* (2012), the trade of the body parts expanded considerably with the introduction of fast railway transport connections. Both Richardson and Hurren ultimately assert that the network of connections established by this type of trade, linked hospitals and anatomy schools to institutions such as workhouses, asylums and prisons.

These studies however do not investigate what role cemeteries had in this network system, considering that by law a dissected body was still supposed to receive a decent and dignified burial. To contrast this statement, however, Hurren argues that considering that most of the trade was in body parts rather than the whole corpse, it is likely that dissected remains did not receive any decent burial at all, as when these reached the grave they were beyond recognition. Like cemeteries also other institutions such as hospitals, prisons and workhouses underwent a process of modernisation and rationalisation. This too was understood as being part of civic society and modern living, founded on rules of physical and mental hygiene and decency.

³ Etlin, p. 163

⁴ Andrews, p. 284

For example, the rural settings of the suburbs were also ideal for hospitals or asylums, as the green surrounding were understood to have beneficial effects on patients towards their recovery. Just as in the case of cemeteries, the presence of these institutions in a suburban context represented extensions of a local authority or government. This spatial organisation helped to shape a new way of living, and structuring urban space, which was starkly different from the existing centre of the city. This new process of urbanisation however, did not envisage the urban development of the city as a metropolitan whole, as it was not yet structured in a coherent way.

c. The planning of Victorian cemeteries anticipated a new model for the living

Recent research by geographer Peter Johnson has explored the spatial rationalities of mid-nineteenth-century cemeteries in connection with John Claudius Loudon's (1783-1843) proposals for the layout of new cemeteries. In his 2008 article 'The Modern Cemetery: a Design for Life' Johnson argues that Loudon's design proposals not only advocated a rationalisation of burials in spatial terms, but also integrated in them various inter-related social-political doctrines. These included essential hygienic conventions, aesthetics, which are morally dignified, as well as educational and civic functions. The combination of all these elements outlined a new paradigm for modern living.

This argument takes as a starting point Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) interpretation of liberalism's political rationality as a set of practices, with at its core the fundamental principle of maximum economy, which is obtained by enhancing political and economic benefits and reducing costs. These principles are complemented by a surrounding of objectives, which are constantly assessed and reshaped so to adapt the core principles of liberalism to changes. For this reason, in Foucault's view, liberalism is engaged in a perpetual process of self-criticism and fearful of getting involved too much in governing. Yet one of the key reasons for liberalism to intervene, is in case of dangers such as disease and sanitation, and related issues including burials.

d. Concerns over the current status of Victorian cemeteries: contemporary culture and psychological detachment from death and burial spaces

As we saw in the opening section of this literature review, 'The Cemetery in the City' report commissioned in 1989 to Worpole and Rugg denounced the need to retain

existing cemeteries in the heart of local communities, and proposed as possible solutions to this the reuse of old graves. As the process to identify new areas to be designated for burial purposes is lengthy and complex, to alleviate the current pressure on the limited availability of burial space, some local authorities have started in recent years to actively implement the reuse old graves.

By contrast, Giddens approaches the same issue from a sociological point of view and studies the relation that contemporary society has with death. He argues that there are key elements which are shaping our relation with death as the lifespan is more and more freed from kinship ties (family traditions). In pre-modern cultures these ties were stronger. Mobility has also an impact on the relation with cemeteries; we could also say that this is closely connected to economic freedom (which give people the possibility to choose where to live). The transmission of property played an important part on this matter. The life cycle doesn't make sense anymore and the connections between the individual life and the interchange of generations are broken. Lifespan separated from place as social mobility, together with the breaking up of traditions, are the reasons why people do not look after graves. Place does not form anymore the parameter of experience and familiarity does not depend upon local context.

e. Rationalisation of burials and its repercussions on the quality of funerary design

As we saw briefly in the opening section Brooks and Worpole relate the reasons for the neglect of modern and contemporary cemeteries at large, to the lack of good architecture and landscape design, especially when compared to the funerary architecture that flourished in the Victorian period. This process of rationalisation of funerary design in the course of the twentieth century is seen as a problem, and it is associated to the changes brought to society by the two World Wars, particularly with the dramatic shift from earth burial to cremation.⁵

f. The virtual elimination of death

The scholarly research, which is interpreting the history and evolution of death culture, is by nature more speculative even if its sources are partly historical. One of the leading arguments, brought forward by French philosopher Philippe Ariès (1914-1984) in his book *The Hour of Our Death* (1981), is set around the theme that discusses the

⁵ Brooks, p. 58-78

elimination of death as part of an evolutionary process or rationalisation of modern society. Some of this research identifies a relationship between the technological advances, the rise of prosperity, and the virtual elimination of death from daily life. Scholars have argued that that the synergy of this relationship is geared toward a process that is gradually making death less visible in the everyday life. The condition is also affecting the contemporary physical space and its socio-cultural context, as death is experienced more as a private experience rather than a public ceremony.

This statement is supported by historical research which explains how in medieval and early modern times death and mourning rituals were more public and shared by local communities than private and individual. This shift was also accelerated by the introduction of cremation, and the more private nature of this practice, which also rejects the physical reality of the human remains and the physical resting place of the body. It appears that the degree of privacy in death is also associated to social status, as mourning rituals are more prevalent in working-class households than middle-class ones.

Another aspect that is contributing to the invisibility of death is the hospitalisation of death. As previously seen this has been interpreted by Giddens as a 'sequestration' of death as an experience by the medical profession which segregates death in the space of the hospitals to contain it, study it and ultimately reduce its visibility. It has been observed that this condition has been widely accepted and hardly contested by society, even if more recently the attitude towards the benevolence power of medicine and hospitalisation is changing.

We will see later on in Chapter One how the medical profession is closely connected to the history of Victorian cemeteries. Surgeons, in the early nineteenth century, were the ones that denounced the poor state of graveyards in the first place, and actively contributed to the reformation of burials and their legislation.

Conclusion

The diversity of the literature included in this review, shows the rich complexity of this field of studies, which unfolds from the practical issues, connected to the availability of burial space, to the more theoretical interpretations of cemeteries and death in general.

This mapping exercise has highlighted that contemporary available literature on the subject of cemeteries at large is engaged in issues related to the effects caused by the implementation of Victorian cemeteries. These could be summarised as follow:

- Transformation from the medieval model of the macabre and unhealthy graveyard to the picturesque and hygienic landscaped cemetery.
- Transition of death culture from the public to the private sphere.
- Emotional detachment between society and death due to geographical distance from burials.
- Shortage of provisions for new burial spaces.
- Victorian cemeteries not understood as a shared cultural heritage.

These specific conditions, which characterise modern society, have also affected the relationship with death:

- Rationalisation of funerary design has lowered the quality of funerary architecture.
- Medicalisation of death: the experience of death is taken away from society and 'sequestered' by the medical profession.
- Cemeteries are not integrated in the planning strategies for the development of new urban areas.

To conclude this review has also revealed gaps in the existing knowledge and the need for further studies to research into the Victorian cemeteries and give new interpretations of their history. Particularly, it reveals the need to review what relationship that contemporary society has now with Victorian cemeteries and how their historical and cultural heritage is understood and shared. This can be achieved by studying what contribution Victorian cemeteries had to the formation of their immediate surroundings and the character of the local context. How they related to the social makeup of an area, and engaged with other institutions, transport infrastructures and industries. Moreover, how Victorian cemeteries contributed to the establishment of a new system of governance and order over burial spaces and how, since their inception, they influenced the evolution of death culture and its visibility in the urban context of London.

1. *Re-ordering the dead: London's graveyards in early nineteenth-century*

Summary

As outlined in the abstract, this thesis supposes that the private Victorian cemeteries emerged as a direct result of the socio-cultural, economical and political context, which was unique to nineteenth-century London. Drawing from existing literature and scholarly research, this first chapter provides a form of analysis of that context to understand how and why the conditions of the London's burials gained the attention of the medical profession, central government and private entrepreneurs in the early nineteenth century.

More specifically this chapter will reveal how the conditions of the graveyards were a shared ground of interconnected interests between professionals, private enterprises and social reformers. Furthermore it will explain how the combinations of concerns from such diverse parties activated an unprecedented transformation of London's burial spaces, which eventually manifested itself in the form of the early Victorian cemeteries.

Ultimately in the chapter's conclusion it will be argued that the re-forming of the city's burial spaces was directly associated with the principles of health, hygiene and liberal capital investments. Their political support had a broader outreach and consequences, which, well beyond burial spaces, eventually affected the spatial arrangement of nineteenth-century London at large.

1.1. A rational mindset: the context of early nineteenth-century London

In the first half of the nineteenth century, London underwent an unprecedented expansion. With the combination of positive market forces, population growth, innovation in transport technology and profitable building speculation, alongside direct access to raw materials from the imperial colonies, London became a voracious capital.⁶ High concentration of craft skills had established the capital as the supreme manufacturer, notably of quality wares. With colonial expansion, the port brought boundless business, creating riverside handling and processing industries – timber, sugar, tobacco, rum, molasses. The City profited immensely from the monopolies held by the East India Company and other chartered bodies. Imperial conquests in India, the Caribbean and the Pacific reinforced the capital's commercial dominance. London's high-wage economy sucked in thousands, creating further spirals of demands. Its role as a residence and playground for the rich generated buoyant employment in retailing, portage and transport, and many other services.⁷

The exodus from the countryside to the city transformed the British economy from agricultural to industrial. As a result, between 1800 and 1900 the population of London grew from just under one million to 4.5 million. The expansion of the capital was favoured by its unique geographical location. The river was the main avenue for the transportation of goods – raw materials arrived and were processed at its docks – therefore most industries settled around the port and the eastern part of the city. Before the advent of the railway, workers were obliged to live near their work. Under these conditions, slums developed, mostly in the vicinities of factories. This underlines the problems associated with London's rapid growth in the early industrial period, as a consequence of the lack of any coherent planning legislation and programme.⁸

Unlike other British industrial cities and regions, whose economies depended on specific trades or raw materials, London's diverse economy facilitated an endless source of varied job opportunities, from casual work to banking. Although London's service economy largely exploited casual, cheap and part-time labour, the commercial success generated by trade with the imperial colonies created middle-class jobs in shipping, banking, investment and insurance. The affluence of the burgeoning middle classes in

⁶ Porter, 2000, p. 237

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 186

⁸ Burke, p. 72

turn required workers in construction and transportation, as well as in the crafts and artisanal trades, such as tailoring and dressmaking, in addition to retail.⁹ Unlike the trade patterns in other cities, London counted among these many small businesses that offered a variety of services. For this reason, these trades were vulnerable to seasonal and cyclical change. Owing to London's fragmented service economy and the high turnover of labourers, the influence of the trade unions was particularly weak in the capital. The lack of cohesion apparent in the labour market was also mirrored in the geography of the city, as London didn't have a clear centre.¹⁰ Instead, the city was formed by autonomous districts, which were regulated by local administrations and legislations. The tangled bureaucracy of these local authorities, combined with the absence of a central government to oversee and co-ordinate the overall expansion of the city, allowed London to grow into a gigantic sprawl.¹¹ Although London's scale and the complexity of its local administration made it a difficult place to navigate, its social geography was very clear as the volume of casual labour created high levels of class mobility and fractured the sense of community.¹²

The priorities of the market forces at the time prevailed over those of the otherwise fragmented social fabric of London, overruling even ethical issues such as the disturbance of burial grounds in the name of progress. In his book *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*, historian Anthony Wohl (1937-) offers another explanation for this issue as in his view 'the early and mid-Victorians were, quite simply, pioneers faced with a set of problems that were novel not only in their form but in their magnitude.' The author also states that 'the often hesitant or erratic progress was as much due to inexperience and uncertainty bred of ignorance as to any conscious political or economic philosophy.'¹³

The socio-cultural context of nineteenth-century London, driven mostly by the rational laws of trade and commerce, set the ground for scientific and medical research and technological innovation. This approach to change and progress was also endorsed by philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), who formulated the 'greatest happiness principle'. Bentham's theory advocated the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers, and viewed medical and scientific research as the application of

⁹ Porter, 2000, p. 187

¹⁰ Dyos, 1982, pp. 40-1, 43

¹¹ Porter, 2000, p. 186

¹² Dyos, 1982, p. 40-3

¹³ Wohl, p. 3

his philosophical theory into a reality that, in his opinion, would benefit society. It was for this reason that he decided to donate his body to science. Although Bentham is recognised as the leader of the so-called Philosophical Radicals and, in particular, Utilitarianism, his research interests also incorporated the theory of law, ethics and politics. For Bentham, each individual human being naturally attempts to pursue (what they perceive to be) happiness in life, and is not able to grasp the implications of their individual choices on a large scale. Bentham believed that the legislator had the duty to intervene and harmonise this process, and reach a balance between the private and the public interests.¹⁴

This principle had a strong impact in shaping the politics and legislative reformation in early nineteenth-century Britain. Some of the reforms, initiated by Bentham's followers, influenced the establishment of the medical profession – in particular, the legalisation of anatomical studies, which, at the time, was seen as the only way to progress in medicine, and defeat diseases to ultimately improve the quality of human life. Such ideas were entrenched in Bentham's philosophical thinking. However, behind the theoretical framework provided by Bentham's principle of the greatest good for the greatest number, there were practical interests and ethical issues connected to anatomical studies that the medical profession was eager to resolve. Before 1832, anatomy in Britain was not fully legally regulated therefore the supply of corpses available for anatomical study was unreliable.¹⁵ Most corpses were available to medical schools or private anatomy theatres for dissection by being exhumed and traded. This practice exacerbated the already precarious conditions of London's overcrowded graveyards, as they were often dug up to exhume freshly buried corpses. Eventually the legalisation of anatomy was only partly supported by anatomists, as they feared restrictions on their activities by government-implemented laws.¹⁶

One anatomist who campaigned for legislation to regulate the provision of bodies to medical schools was Thomas Southwood Smith (1788-1861), Bentham's private doctor and a follower of the philosopher's school of thought. Coincidentally, it was Southwood Smith who, on 9th June 1832, publicly carried out the dissection of Bentham's corpse, just weeks before the Anatomy Act came in to force on 19th July 1832.¹⁷ Southwood Smith was also an active member of the health reform movement and set up the Health of

¹⁴ Russell, pp. 698-9, 700

¹⁵ Southwood Smith, p. 34

¹⁶ Bates, p. 90

¹⁷ Ashworth Underwood, 1948, p. 891

Towns Association in 1839, and the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwelling of the Industrial Classes in 1842. He was the medical member of the General Board of Health when it was constituted in 1848 and remained in office until its dissolution in 1858. As I will go on to explain further, Southwood Smith worked closely with social reformer Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890) and influenced the legislation that regulated London's burials. Drawing upon Bentham's philosophical principles, Southwood Smith publicly advocated the scope of dissection, by maintaining that it was the only way to pursue medical research. All these aspects were touched upon in his influential 1824 article published in *The Westminster Review* the same year.¹⁸ In the *Use of the Dead to the Living*,¹⁹ Southwood Smith reiterated the importance of anatomical studies for the progress of medicine, stating 'the basis of all medical and surgical knowledge is anatomy'.²⁰ Later in his text, and assuming a tone that may have helped him to win over his readers, Southwood Smith affirmed that:

To the surgeon, anatomy is eminently what [Francis] Bacon has so beautifully said that knowledge in general is: it is power – it is power to lessen pain, to save life, and to eradicate diseases, which, without its aid, would be incurable and fatal.²¹

It could be said that aim of Southwood Smith was also to instil in his readers a renewed trust in the medical profession and its commitment to improving human life.

An enlightened physician and a skillful surgeon are in the daily habit of administering to their fellow men more real and unquestionable good, than is communicated, or communicable by any other class of human being to another.²²

Southwood Smith also reports that in Britain at the time there was no prejudice against anatomy itself, there were, however, concerns about the practice of exhumation and he lamented that there was no alternative way to access corpses for anatomical studies, unless a new legislation was implemented legalising and regulating their availability.

¹⁸ This article was later reprinted as a pamphlet (1827 and 1828), and became a milestone in the implementation of the controversial 1832 Anatomy Act.

¹⁹ The original text was published as an article in *The Westminster Review* in 1824, and later reprinted as a pamphlet for general distribution. In particular, the copy consulted for the purpose of this research was printed and published in the United States in February 1827.

²⁰ Southwood Smith, p. 4

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7

²² *Ibid.*, p. 3

Unless some other means for affording a supply be adopted; whatever be the law or the popular feeling neither magistrates, nor judges, nor juries, will or can, put an entire stop to the practice.²³

Southwood Smith lamented that, because of the lack of supply of bodies available for dissection, the young doctors coming into London to learn anatomy at the College of Surgeons may end up spending money to stay in the city and not learn the practice. Most of the medical students were from middle-class families, who could afford their children's education and aspired to improve their social status with the prestige of having a doctor in their family.

In response to his concerns, Southwood Smith put forward a proposal for a legislation that could resolve the issue of exhumation and guarantee a secure supply of corpses by Scottish surgeon William Mackenzie (1791-1868). In its opening lines, however, the proposal also states that the dissection of a dead body should be removed from the country's criminal code, where it was considered and judged as murder. Mackenzie suggested that each of the hospitals, infirmaries, workhouses, poorhouses, foundling-houses, houses of correction, and prisons in any town and city of Great Britain and Ireland, should provide a mortuary for the reception of any unclaimed dead person in the aforementioned institutions. For every corpse, each medical school would have to pay 20 shillings to the treasurer of the institution. Once the dissection was completed, an appointed officer would remove the remains of the dissected corpse from the medical school, which would be put into a coffin and buried at the expense of the school itself. Although Southwood Smith objects to Mackenzie's plan in his article, stating that it is making the bodies of the poor public property,²⁴ he later reverses his opinion:

Those who are supported by the public die in its debt, and that their remains at least, might, without injustice, be converted to the public use.²⁵

Mackenzie's proposition became the template on which the 1832 Anatomy Act was eventually formulated. The law gave control over the bodies of the poor to the medical community and established thereon an enduring relationship between medical schools and institutions such as hospitals, workhouses and the asylums. It could be said that the

²³ Southwood Smith, p. 33

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37

Act instigated the formation of new routes along which the corpses of the poor moved. Akin to a virtual conveyor belt linking together a network of geographical locations, where the city's institutions (workhouses, hospitals and asylums), connected with the anatomy theatres and the graveyards, where the dissected remains would, in theory, find their resting place. It could also be said that the Act succeeded in altering the natural journey of a dead body from its deathbed to its final resting place in the graveyard, deviating instead through the anatomy theatre. This system of relations established by the Act was embedded within the city itself, and used its network of roads to move the corpses from one location to another. In a metaphorical way, the city became a large-scale production line at the service of anatomists, and regulated by the government. The visibility and publicity of these transactions in London's streets became problematic soon after the Act was ratified. As Inspector of Anatomy, Dr. James Somerville supervised the allocation of bodies to medical schools, yet he feared any public exposure and was interested in removing any sign of the exchanges between institutions and anatomists from public view. Somerville's desire for secrecy and discretion led him to instruct anatomists in codes of conduct that should be adopted preceding the receipt of a corpse in their schools. His precautions went even further when, in the early 1840s, Somerville introduced rules that excluded the public from anatomy theatres.²⁶ As Southwood Smith's article reports, Mackenzie had already taken this level of discretion into consideration in his plan:

That no dead body, shall be conveyed from a hospital, infirmary, work-house, poor-house, foundling house, house of correction, prison, or mort-house, to a school of anatomy except in a covered bier, and between the hours of four and six in the morning.²⁷

To the annoyance of most anatomy teachers, however, the Act gave the government unprecedented control over the anatomy schools. As a consequence, the government introduced Inspectors of Anatomy to evenly allocate bodies to each medical school. The implementation of the Act terrorised the poor and activated a supposedly legalised trade of dead bodies, which demonstrated a lack of respect for the poorer classes and the humans generally. The law was eventually challenged by a public debate that took place at the House of Commons on 11th June, 1844, which revealed that a portion of workhouse

²⁶ Richardson, 1989, p. 244

²⁷ Southwood Smith, pp. 36-7

masters earned money by disposing of corpses for dissection, while entering them in their dead-books records as if they were buried by their relatives or friends. Additionally, the debate exposed contradictions:

It was true that the Bill provided that all bodies left for dissection, should be decently interred with all due rites of religion – a humane provision, and one calculated to reconcile the public to the measure. But it was a delusion to suppose that that regulation was practically carried out. On the contrary, the bodies that had been subjected to dissection were notoriously the object of a most inhuman traffic and sale. They were separated, and the different parts sold to students. Any qualified person might, by paying for it, get the whole or parts of bodies at the different hospitals, avowedly for scientific purposes.²⁸

Despite the allegations reported in the transcription of the House of Commons debate, the Act was not altered or amended. Alongside cases of corruption, the Act also instigated cases of refusal to co-operate with the anatomists by masters of workhouses, such as the one mentioned by Richardson in her book *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, in which the Whitechapel and Shoreditch workhouses eventually stopped providing corpses to anatomists.²⁹ By contrast, in her book *Dying for Victorian Medicine* Hurren reports that central government records, especially burial records, confirmed that many Poor Law Unions institutions in London and provincial towns were prepared to collaborate, but kept their involvement very quiet to avoid public recognition and the potential to become liable to riot. Hurren explains that the Anatomy Act did not elaborate on the fact that medical education involved practising on body parts in order to satisfy the basic qualifications required by the Medical Act 1858, as it was often difficult to find a whole body. The process of dissection and dismembering was a way of destroying any traces of the existence of a human being. Once the body was dismembered and the body parts were dissected, there was little left for burial and no integrity of the body, yet, paradoxically, the Act required medical schools to give each body a Christian burial.³⁰

In the light of what we have encountered so far, it is possible to say that although the 1832 Anatomy Act legalised anatomy, it failed to discourage the illegal trade of corpses initiated with the practice of exhumation. The Act established a new set of power-

²⁸ Houses of Parliament Archives – Anatomy Act – 1844. (n.d.). *Hansard Anatomy Act – HC Debate 11 June 1844 vol. 75 cc. 523-34*.

²⁹ Richardson, 1989, p. 243

³⁰ Hurren, pp. 34-6

relations between the authority of the government, the medical profession, the institutions, and the poor classes. The Act also contributed towards the growth and establishment of the medical profession in the first part of the nineteenth century, as the supply of corpses available for dissection became more regular. As a consequence, medical schools started to attract larger numbers of students to be trained as doctors, and as medical research steadily progressed, it also fulfilled the Utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers. The price paid to actualise this utopian theory of happiness, however, fell on the shoulders of the poor classes, who were not given any choice in the matter.

The growing trade of corpses contributed to the further deterioration of London's graveyards; when body parts finally reached the graveyards at the end of their trade cycle, they were in an advanced state of decomposition,³¹ and were not given a decent and decorous burial, since they were no longer recognisable as humans. For this reason most of London's graveyards at the time looked just as dishevelled as a dissected body in the anatomy theatre. The inadequate maintenance of the graveyards was a reality so embedded in the everyday that no one had yet attempted to address and resolve the problem, but tried instead to ignore it. London's medical community saw the conditions of the graveyards as morally disrespectful to the dead as they were to the living.

We could argue that poor state of London's graveyards was partly the responsibility of the doctors themselves yet, paradoxically, the majority of literature available on the conditions of London's burial grounds in the first part of the nineteenth century, consists of reports of a medical nature. The next section will study one of the most comprehensive and significant of these writings by London surgeon George Alfred Walker (1807-1884) which was published in 1839 under the title *Gatherings from Grave Yards; Particularly Those of London*. Walker brought into the public realm the horrific portrait of London's burials. As we will see later, his publication, not only established a direct connection between the poor conditions of the city's burials and the public health of citizens, but also addressed the lack of sensitivity, decency, and solemnity on questions concerning the disposal of the dead in Victorian London.

³¹ Hurren, p. 92

1.2. Writings from the graveyards

In his book *Gatherings from Grave Yards; Particularly Those of London*, Walker assembles a thorough investigation and reports on the conditions of the capital's graveyards. Walker lived in Drury Lane (between Covent Garden and Holborn in London), a street where there was a graveyard too. It was thanks to his tenacious research that the grim evidence of London's churchyards was placed under public scrutiny. The tone of his writing, the graphic and realistic account of the state of existing graveyards in London and more widely across Britain and parts of Europe, was dramatically fear inducing. To compose such a vivid portrait of London's graveyards, Walker wove together his own personal findings, gleaned from site visits and interviews with caretakers, with published articles on the subject that had appeared in the press at the time. Considering the substantial contribution to the conditions of London's graveyards by the continuous exhumations providing corpses for the city's anatomy theatres and medical schools, it is puzzling that doctors ended up publicly denouncing what was in fact a consequence of demands set by their own practice.

Walker revealed that the practice of exhumation, which for a long time (before the introduction of the Anatomy Act 1832) had been associated with the illegal trade of corpses for anatomical studies, eventually diverted to a more established form of business. In one instance, Walker includes extracts from an article from the *Morning Post* (Monday 14th October, 1839) about the burial grounds behind Globe Fields Chapel near Globe Lane in Mile End, owned by an undertaker. The article reveals that bodies buried in the most prominent and popular part of the graveyard were exhumed and relocated to a more secluded site after an estimated four to six weeks. This practice was carried out regularly so as to free-up the more desirable burial plots for new funerals and possibly charge customers more for interments in that particular area of the graveyard. As the corpses in an advanced state of decomposition were exhumed, their coffins were dismantled and the wood and nails sold. According to Walker, human bones were also traded.³² Quoting from another article extracted from *Quarterly Review* (no. XLII p. 380), Walker reports that 'tons of human bones every year were sent from London to the North, where they were crushed in mills constructed for the purpose and used as manure.'³³ In another instance, Walker describes the shocking situation of a graveyard near where he lived, in Drury Lane (see Fig. 1).

³² Walker, 1839, pp. 199, 200

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 218

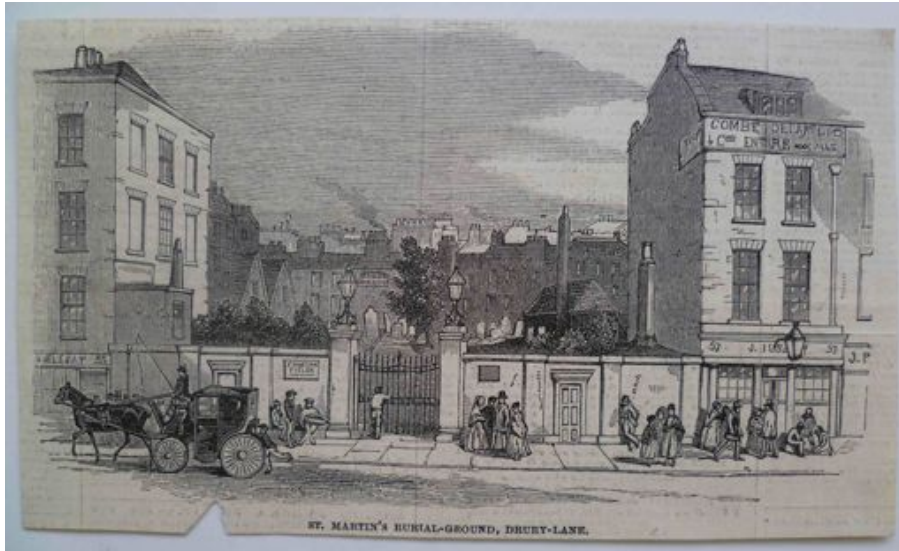


Fig. 1– Undated. St Martin's Burial Ground in Drury Lane. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Here, the topography was affected by the piling up of corpses and coffins:

The ground was subsequently raised to its present height level with the first floor, and in this superstratum vast numbers of bodies have, up to this period, been deposited.³⁴

Among the medical community at the time, there was the conviction that typhoid fever and cholera were airborne diseases. Walker reasoned that the bad air resulting from the noxious gases generated by the decomposition of corpses was the cause for diseases such as typhoid and cholera, and even for the spread of the pandemic (see Fig. 2). He was a fervid believer in this theory, and clearly his book, and his steadfast persona, had an influence in pushing the government into taking immediate action with regard to intramural burials.

The highly detailed accounts of the insalubrious sites that Walker visited are written with zealous pragmatism. This approach is not dissimilar to the one used by surgeons in anatomical studies, in which detailed written accounts were recorded during the dissections. Walker's *Gatherings* is text-based without drawings, etchings or other visual support. Walker strategically places the more gruesome accounts toward the end of the publication with a seemingly deliberate intention of leaving a lasting impression on his readers.

³⁴ Walker, 1839, p. 162



Fig. 2 - March 1, 1832. A London Board of Health Hunting After Cases like Cholera. Lithograph by Robert Seymour. Source: The History of Medicine Website.

This collection of chilling events and anecdotes on graveyards, although well researched, at times appears to be over-exaggerated and possibly too geared towards media sensation. In pointing out the hazards to public health that the churchyards represented, Walker was driven by two factors – firstly, by his professional commitments as a doctor, in wanting to improve people’s health and living conditions; secondly, he was moved by his philosophical convictions as a follower of Bentham’s Utilitarian thinking, which, as we previously saw, asserted the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals. The picture of London that emerges from Walker’s book is that of a city where graves are filling every urban interstice available – a city that is very close to the descriptions found in Charles Dickens’s (1812-1870) novel *Bleak House* (1853), where the author describes a churchyard as ‘pestiferous and obscene, whence malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our dear brothers and sisters who are not departed.’ To reinforce his point, Walker includes comparative studies on the condition of cemeteries in Paris, and in France generally, that illustrate how far behind London was in comparison to other European capitals.

The year that Walker’s *Gatherings* was published, however, Highgate Cemetery was opened for burial, and became London’s third new cemetery after All Souls Kensal Green Cemetery opened for burial in 1833, and West Norwood Cemetery, in south-east London, in 1837. In spite of these new private cemeteries gradually emerging on the scene, for Walker nothing had particularly changed in the inner part of the metropolis. Although

not explicitly stated in his text, Walker wasn't keen on the new cemeteries springing up in the suburbs of London. It is possible that this was because the private companies running the new cemeteries were advertising them as open to all classes. In reality, their burial plots were out of reach for London's working classes and the poor, and designed mostly to attract the wealthy and aspiring Victorian middle classes. With his sensational and provocative writing style, Walker attempts to rouse the consciousness of his readers with respect to the conditions of the churchyards by directly asking: 'Are these the "consecrated grounds" – the "sanctuaries" – the "resting places" of our ancestors?'.³⁵ Strengthened by his findings, Walker was ultimately seeking the closure of the existing churchyards in London, and asking for reforms to the burial regulations in London, including the planning of new cemeteries. Indeed, Walker's book managed to capture public opinion at the time (see Fig. 3), and prompted social reformers to launch a governmental report on the condition of London's churchyards.

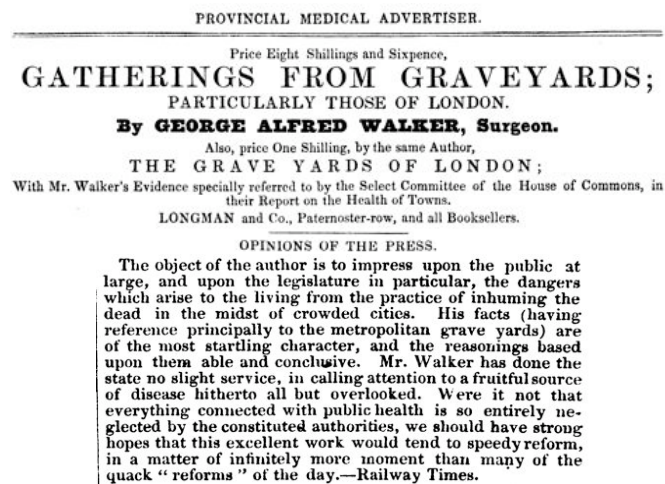


Fig. 3 – 3rd August 1842. A review appeared in the *Railway Times* of Walker's *Gathering from Grave Yards; Particularly Those of London*. This was part of a selection of reviews, published on two pages of the *Provincial Medical Advertiser*.

Besides its medical nature and Walker's agenda to raise awareness of public health issues, his work is testimony to the shift in the general perception of death and burial, which, at the time, attempted to move away from the medieval model of the graveyard towards new solutions that were eventually manifested in the physical space of the city. As stated earlier in the introduction, the implications of this shift, in socio-cultural terms as well as spatial terms, are relevant to this thesis. For this reason, Walker's *Gatherings* is crucial in helping to lay the foundations of the historical context, with its invaluable

³⁵ Walker, 1839, p. 4

report portraying the condition of burials in London in the first half of the nineteenth century. Walker's work could also be seen as drawing attention to the condition of the poor in London. This was not new – for example, the *Report on the Prevalence of Certain Physical Causes of Fever in the Metropolis* was published in 1838. Compiled by Neil Arnott (1788-1874) and James Kay (1804-1877), this report exposes the living conditions of London's poor, revealing the tragic condition of the everyday through quasi-journalistic, scientific and quasi-medical studies that pioneered what is now called Social Studies. Similarly, interest in mundane reality was also fashionable in literature, hence the work of Dickens and George Eliot (1819-1880) who, among others, drew inspiration from everyday life.

In positioning Walker's work within a broader cultural context of the time, we could note that his writings are not dissimilar in content and ambition from the work of Victorian journalist and reporter Henry Mayhew (1812-1887). Mayhew published four volumes of interviews between 1861 and 1862, entitled *London Labour and the London Poor*. Here, the author gathers together written portraits of street sellers and poor people, penned with a vivid lucidity and interest in a manner akin to that of an explorer discovering the mysteries of exotic lands. Incidentally, after the publication of his compilation, Mayhew travelled until his death in 1887.

It could be said that Walker's mythological approach to exploring, revealing and mapping the space of London's graveyards, was not dissimilar from that of anatomists, such as Southwood Smith, who cut open, revealed and mapped the hidden secrets of the human body. In addition, it is possible to say that Walker's intention was to identify the pathology of the graveyards so as to find a cure, just as anatomists did with the human body. To understand in more depth the application of the pathological method to the medical observation and analysis of the human body in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. In the following section, I will introduce the work of Foucault, in particular his book *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (first published in 1963). Here, the French philosopher argues that the birth of modern medical practice coincided with the application of the pathological method through what he terms the 'medical gaze'. Foucault explains how at the time: 'The eye became the depository and source of clarity.'³⁶ The study of the physician or surgeon was a way of understanding the human body and its diseases through observation and examination.

³⁶ Foucault, 2009, p. xiii

This became the only instrument trusted to reveal the anatomy of the human body, which brought into the realm of knowledge the otherwise unknown contents of the body:

The residence of truth in the dark centre of things is linked paradoxically, to this sovereign power of the empirical gaze that turns their darkness into light.³⁷

What the 'medical gaze' - to borrow Foucault's term - brought into the light of knowledge triggered the development of a new medical language, to communicate what was discovered. This was complemented by visual representations, including drawings of what was observed and found. These drawings showed the discoveries of medical science, developed in educational tools, such as the anatomy atlas that mapped the physical space of the human body. Foucault also explains that beyond mapping the human body, the medical observation revealed that the seat of diseases is not external to the body but is within it, and so is death:

An immemorial slope as old as men's fear turned the eyes of the doctors towards the elimination of disease, toward cure, toward life: it could only be a matter of restoring it.³⁸

So the medical practice, through the observational method of the gaze, was able to diagnose the causes of death. Quoting French physician Jean-Baptiste Bouillaud (1796-1881) Foucault writes:

The determination of the seat of a disease, or their localisation is one of the finest conquests of modern medicine.³⁹

The author also states that to cure life through death was the mission of medical science, with the intention of freeing society from the evil of physical disease, just as the Church professed to free man from spiritual evil. The medical class became a substitute for the Church, and doctors replaced the clergy. He also affirms that 'life, disease and death now form a technical and conceptual trinity.'⁴⁰

³⁷ Foucault, 2009, pp. xiii-xiv

³⁸ Ibid., p. 146

³⁹ Ibid., p. 140

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 144

Although Foucault's interpretations are illuminating, they also have their own limitations in terms of relevance to this thesis, as they are not referring in any way to the specific context of London. Yet, Foucault's findings, give a broader overview on how the development of the pathological anatomy in medical science in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries was supported by a positivist attitude at the time, as the rational observation drawn from the real (dissecting the human body) could lessen the probability of error.⁴¹ In this context the scientific method became something that could be trusted, something 'true' as based on observation, experimentation, and comparison, with the aim to cure diseases. However, to isolate the site of disease by observing the human body wasn't enough in itself to prevent death and improve life so, the 'reliable' scientific gaze had to also understand the space in which the human body dwelt, worked, socialised, died and was buried. It is possible to draw a parallel between *The Birth of the Clinic*, as theorised by Foucault, and the birth of the Victorian suburban cemeteries. Foucault explains how the process of locating the seat of illness within the human body brought a shift in the perception of death. The scientific method of pathological anatomy was a way of rationalising death; in Foucault's words: it brought 'finitude' to death, as in his view:

Medicine offers modern man the obstinate, yet reassuring face of his finitude; in it, death is endlessly repeated, but is also exorcised.⁴²

As explained by Foucault, the aim of this method was to eradicate disease from the living body in the quest to defeat death. By applying the same method to urban space, the source of disease could then be removed from the city.⁴³ Cemeteries and churchyards were probably the first urban spaces that the medical profession identified as the seats of disease. By starting from the churchyard and other graveyards, medical science delivered a double coup: targeting two existing institutions. Firstly, by scrutinising the Church for not decorously maintaining churchyards in cities, and secondly, by questioning the central government for having proven incapable of supervising the work of the Church, in relation to the maintenance of churchyards – and thence of protecting the population from the disease that could be caused by the inappropriate disposal of human remains. This brings us back to where this section started, with Walker's *Gatherings*.

⁴¹ Foucault, 2009, pp. 50-1

⁴² Ibid., p. 198

⁴³ Vidler, 2011, p. 17

In the next section, we will see how *Gatherings* influenced the reforms of burials, just as much as Southwood Smith's work led to the 1832 Anatomy Act. Walker's report eventually moved the then central government to take action in terms of reforming cemeteries, and considering their effects on the public health of the population. This was not just to do with the magnanimous attitude and care of the politicians governing the country at the time, but was strictly connected to the country's economy and production. In his book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (first published in 1969), Foucault explains that a radical change took place toward the end of the eighteenth century when the notion of public health started to be understood by industrial societies for its economic implications.⁴⁴ There was so much interest in the population's health because its condition was crucial to determining the industrial productivity of a country. Within this context, the doctor was invested with the trusted role of addressing anything unhealthy - such as overcrowded burial grounds - that could threaten the population's wellbeing.

⁴⁴ Foucault, 1995, p. 51

1.3. Edwin Chadwick and London's burials

Subsequently to the publication of Walker's *Gatherings*, the government formed a committee led by Chadwick. The barrister and liberal social reformer shared Bentham's views, and had a central and controversial role in the shaping of the public health reforms in England in the nineteenth century.

Since Walker's book had such an impact on policy-making at the time, it could therefore be said that the observational method, applied to the urban space, succeeded in influencing central government and its policies. In 1843, his *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain – A Supplementary Report on the Results of a Special Inquiry into the Practice of Interments in Towns*, was crucial to inducing a complete review of the burial regulations at the time. Along with other experts, Chadwick invited Southwood Smith to work on the report. The first part of the study was published in May 1842, and included research and findings on the conditions of the working classes in East London. Just a few weeks prior to the publication of Chadwick's report on 26th March 1842, Walker submitted a petition to the House of Commons asking to ban intramural sepulture.⁴⁵ In an extract from his petition, Walker states that:

There is, under the present system of inhumation, an entire absence of every precaution; for, in the most densely populated districts, burial places exist which are dangerously overcharged; and in many such localities bodies are placed one above another, and side by side, to the depth of twenty-five or thirty feet, the topmost coffins being but a few inches from the surface.⁴⁶

The second part of the report (*A Supplementary Report on the Results of a Special Inquiry into the Practice of Interments in Towns*) was commissioned with the intention of confirming that the overcrowded conditions of the churchyards in London, as pointed out by Walker's *Gatherings*, were hazardous to public health.⁴⁷ Indeed, Chadwick admitted that overcrowded graveyards affected Londoners' health by polluting water

⁴⁵ *Provincial Medical & Surgical Journal*. 1842 March 26; 3 (26): 520. Online source:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2489557/pdf/provmedsurgj00924-0020a.pdf>

⁴⁶ Walker knew what he was talking about as he had undertaken extensive previous research inspecting London's graveyards, and made this very clear to the House of Commons in his petition: 'Your petitioner has carefully inspected the majority of the places at present used for interment in the metropolis, and is prepared to prove that for some years past they have been very inadequate for the reception of the dead.'

⁴⁷ Walker, 1843, p. 2

sources. Chadwick also connected the problems of London's churchyards to the poor living conditions of the working classes in the East End, as it was the primary reason for the high death rate in that part of the capital. On 1st July 1837 General Registration was introduced in England and Wales, allowing Chadwick access to the statistics published in his report. In the extensive paper, Chadwick confirms that the ghastly and overcrowded conditions of the churchyards in London were hazardous to public health. However, unlike Walker, Chadwick didn't believe that the unpleasant effluvium emanated by the graveyards was the cause of the spread of diseases. Rather, as he states in his opening pages:

The innocuousness of particular graveyards [is] supported by reference to the general testimony of a number of medical witnesses of high professional position, by whom it is alleged that the emanations from decomposing human remains do not produce specific disease, and further, that they are not generally injurious.⁴⁸

Chadwick's reports aimed to prove the direct link between the overcrowded churchyards in London and the high level of mortality, particularly amongst the working class and the poor in the East End of the capital. He believed that by improving the living conditions people would live longer. Looking at the statistics used by Chadwick in his report, the average lifespan of a working-class East Ender in 1839 was 27 years. As most of the working-class population lived on very low salaries, their dwellings were unhealthy, unhygienic and unsuitable for living. One of Chadwick's most horrifying findings is that the lack of money to pay for a funeral forced families to keep their dead in their small homes for days or weeks at a time. Furthermore, in his report Chadwick also proposes reformations for poor people's dwellings, as he was keen to improve the sanitary conditions of working-class dwellings to lower death rates and hopefully extend their life expectancy.⁴⁹

This report eventually laid the foundations for the Burial Acts – the laws that regulated burial spaces in Victorian London and that banned intramural burial (Burial Act 1852) and the reuse of graves (Burial Act 1857). In 1847 the Cemeteries Clauses Act was introduced (10 & 11 Victoria c. 65, 1847), its intention was to impose legislation about

⁴⁸ Walker, 1843, p. 2

⁴⁹ One of the achievements of the association was the construction in 1880 of a complex of dwellings called Gibson Gardens near Abney Park cemetery, supervised by Octavia Hill, granddaughter of Southwood Smith and co-founder of the National Trust in 1885.

the layout of cemeteries, as this would be undertaken by a private company. The legislation forbade the company to sell any consecrated land:

Which shall have been consecrated or used for the burial of the dead, or make use of such land for any purpose except such as shall be authorized by this or the special Act, or any Act incorporated therewith.⁵⁰

Furthermore, the Act also fixed the minimum height of a cemetery boundary wall at 6 ft.:

Every part of the cemetery shall be enclosed by walls or other sufficient fences of the prescribed materials and dimensions, and if no materials or dimensions be prescribed, by substantial walls or iron railings of the height of eight feet at least.⁵¹

Ultimately, though, the Cemeteries Clause Acts anticipated the Burial Act of 1857, and established a restriction that had a critical impact on the nature of cemeteries as private commercial businesses, as:

No body buried in the consecrated part of the cemetery shall be removed from its place of burial without the like authority as is by law required for the removal of any body buried in the churchyard belonging to a parish church.⁵²

The Public Health Act was introduced⁵³ in 1848 with the support of a pressure group called the Health of Towns Association⁵⁴ that was led by Southwood Smith and Chadwick. In the same year, the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers was also established and a second epidemic of cholera broke out in London.⁵⁵ The Public Health Act established the General Board of Health of which Chadwick was appointed Commissioner, while he simultaneously led the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers in London. In this specific role, Chadwick had the power to flush the capital's sewers into the River Thames, whenever he felt it was needed. Paradoxically, this operation

⁵⁰ Section 9 of the Cemeteries and Clauses Act, 1847. Online source: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1847/cukpga_18470065_en_1

⁵¹ Ibid. Section 15.

⁵² Ibid. Section 26.

⁵³ The legislation was passed under the liberal government of Prime Minister John Russell, grandfather of the philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970).

⁵⁴ The Health of Towns Association was an organisation founded by Southwood Smith in 1839 that became particularly active between 1844 and 1849.

⁵⁵ The first outbreak of cholera in London was in 1832.

facilitated the spread of cholera in London, as the sewers were polluting the river – at the time one of the city’s main water supplies (see Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 – 1828. Monster Soup, caricature by William Heath showing a woman looking into a microscope and seeing the monsters swimming in a drop of London’s water. Source: Wellcome Library.

The introduction of the Public Health Acts in 1848 and 1849 stipulated ‘that upon receipt of notice of the filthy condition of any building the speedy removal of certain nuisances, and the prevention of contagious and epidemic diseases’ would be effected.⁵⁶ We can say that this legislation was a direct response to Chadwick’s findings in his 1843 report, as previously noted, in relation to corpses retained in the dwellings of poor people and workers who couldn’t afford a proper funeral.

As a new cholera outbreak in London reached its peak, the government passed the Nuisances Removal and Disease Prevention Act 1849 to give health commissioners the power to remove corpses from homes as soon as possible. The Act also placed the state of burial grounds under the supervision of the commissioners. Three subsequent Acts established a new framework for burials in London. The first, in 1850, was the Metropolitan Interment Act that came into force to regulate churchyards in cities and new out-of-town burial grounds on a national scale, excluding London. In the introduction, the legislator⁵⁷ explains how this Metropolitan Interments Act was prompted by Walker’s *Gatherings*, Chadwick’s 1843 report, and by the work of the Health of Towns Association (1844). The Metropolitan Interments Act regulated cities in England and made it unlawful to inter more than one corpse per grave. It also introduced

⁵⁶ The Nuisances Removal and Prevention Acts, 1848 and 1849. By William Cunningham Glen, Esq., London: Shaw & Sons, 1849.

⁵⁷ Barrister William Cunningham Glen, who also drew up the Burial Act 1852.

receiving houses, morgues that functioned as warehouses, where corpses could be stored prior to the funerals. The Act did not include London's graveyards, but called for a specific legislation to be prepared for the capital. However the legislator addressed the lack of decorum and decency of London's graveyards, beyond any social status and condition, as one of the reasons for the spread of epidemic diseases. In the 1850 Act, it states that:

No new Burial Ground or Cemetery (parochial or non-parochial) shall be provided and used in the Metropolis, or within Two Miles of any Part thereof.⁵⁸

Then in 1st July 1852 came the Burial Act to stop burials taking place in existing London churchyards. The second appendix of the Act officially acknowledges the existence of private companies that became known as the major necropolises in London, including the Magnificent Seven (in chronological order: Kensal Green Cemetery, West Norwood Cemetery, Highgate Cemetery, Abney Park Cemetery, Nunhead Cemetery, Brompton Cemetery and Tower Hamlets Cemetery). Finally in 1857, the Burial Act of 1852 was modified to incorporate a section that forbade the reuse of graves in burial grounds. The effect of the Burial Acts on London's burial grounds needs to be understood in the broader frame of the health reforms that were being gradually implemented in nineteenth-century Britain, in relation to burial grounds as well as sewage systems, water supplies and even transport in, and to and from the capital.

These legislations affected a gradual shift in the administrative powers, from local to central government, after the French and German model.⁵⁹ Consolidating its power centrally, the government was able to intervene freely in the name of public health, and to provide the necessary infrastructures for London. Besides having a cascading effect on the implementation of legislations, Chadwick gathered material to prove that people were not happy with churchyard burials:

The feeling of a large proportion of the population appears to be dissatisfaction with the intra-mural parochial interments, less on sanitary grounds than from an

⁵⁸ The Act also state that the restrictions imposed by the legislation only covered the Church of England and Dissenters churchyards, and didn't extend to Quakers or Jews' cemeteries in London. The Act also didn't override the powers of the monarchy, as they were still able to authorise interments in the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul's in London, or in the Church of Saint Peter's at Westminster.

⁵⁹ Hamlin, p. 2

aversion to the profanation arising from interment amidst the scenes of the crowd and bustle of the every-day life.⁶⁰

For Chadwick, graveyards in the city were too public and too noisy, and he felt that burials needed to be in more private, secluded spaces, away from the tumultuous everyday life. The new cemeteries were the answer, providing seclusion, solemnity, and respect.⁶¹ Chadwick's report opened up questions about what were the actual needs of burial spaces for London. Chadwick demonstrated this in a diagram, which showed that two-thirds more space was needed in London to bury the population at a rate of one per grave and at a density of 110 per acre (see Fig. 5).

272 *Representation of the Space for Burial in the Metropolis.*

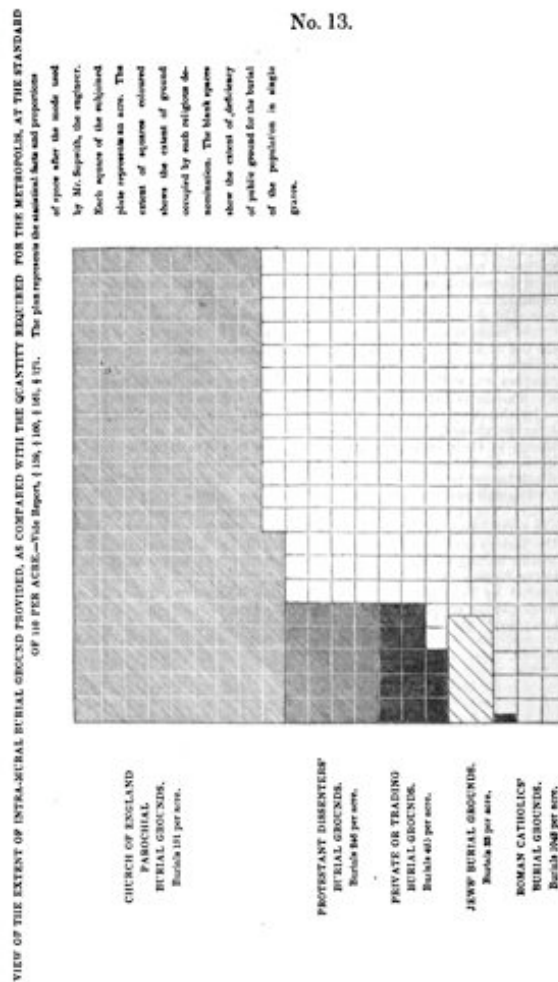


Fig. 5 – 1843, Edwin Chadwick's Representation of the Space for Burial in the Metropolis. This chart was part of his 'Supplementary Report on the Results of a Special Inquiry into the Practice of Interment in Towns'.

⁶⁰ Hamlin, p. 84

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153

Promoting the idea of cemeteries as places of seclusion and contemplation, Chadwick reports on the shifting attitude of local people toward the newly established suburban necropolises:

The establishment of a cemetery at Highgate was strongly opposed by the local inhabitant, but when its decorations with flowers and shrubs and trees, and its quiet and seclusion were seen, applications were made for the purchase of keys, which conferred the privilege of walking in the cemetery at whatever time the purchaser pleased.⁶²

As London's Victorian cemeteries doubled as public parks, their planning was a quick response to the need for green spaces, serving the fast-growing capital in more ways than one. An article that appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in January, 1835, sings the praises of the new London cemeteries for their ornamental qualities (the journalist in this case may be possibly referring to Kensal Green cemetery, the first London necropolis to be opened, in 1833):

We are glad to see a partial adoption in this country of the ornamental cemeteries of our neighbours, particularly as it is likely to put a stop to the baneful practice of burial in crowded towns, and as it is calculated to encourage the arts of architecture and sculpture.⁶³

Despite cemetery companies gained the support of the media at the time, Chadwick's view on the new private suburban cemeteries was not so positive. He felt that although overall the new cemeteries were an impressive improvement to London, the cemetery directors were lacking of management skills. Chadwick observed incompetence with regards to the choice of the sites, the drainage system in place, preparation of the soil and mode of burial. The lack of managerial skills also extended to trees and shrubs that adorned the new cemeteries. In some cases, Chadwick observed that they did not thrive well and needed replacing, yet the cemetery directors were reluctant to invest money in the plantations which were part of the cemeteries, to cut maintenance costs.⁶⁴

⁶² Hamlin, p. 154

⁶³ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1835, p. 74

⁶⁴ Chadwick, p. 139

Furthermore Chadwick in his report addressed how the lack of a centralised planning strategy had implication on the condition of burial spaces in London. He states that Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) already proposed to resolve the problem of burial in London, in the plan he drew for the reconstruction of London after the Great Fire in 1666. Chadwick explains that the implementation of Wren’s plan of straight and wide roads in London would have helped air to circulate in the city. Furthermore the new road network would have also facilitated the construction of an efficient drainage system to serve the city. The architect, explains Chadwick, wanted not just ‘all churchyards but all trades that use great fires, or yield noisome smells [to] be placed out of town.’ The Parliament and the King supported Wren’s plan, yet the corporation of London rejected it, as it feared that the implementation of Wren’s plan would have damaged the trade and reduced London’s population. This point is of particular interest especially as in Chadwick’s view, Wren’s new roads and sewages network (see Fig. 6), if implemented, would have helped to reduce mortality in London by one third.⁶⁵

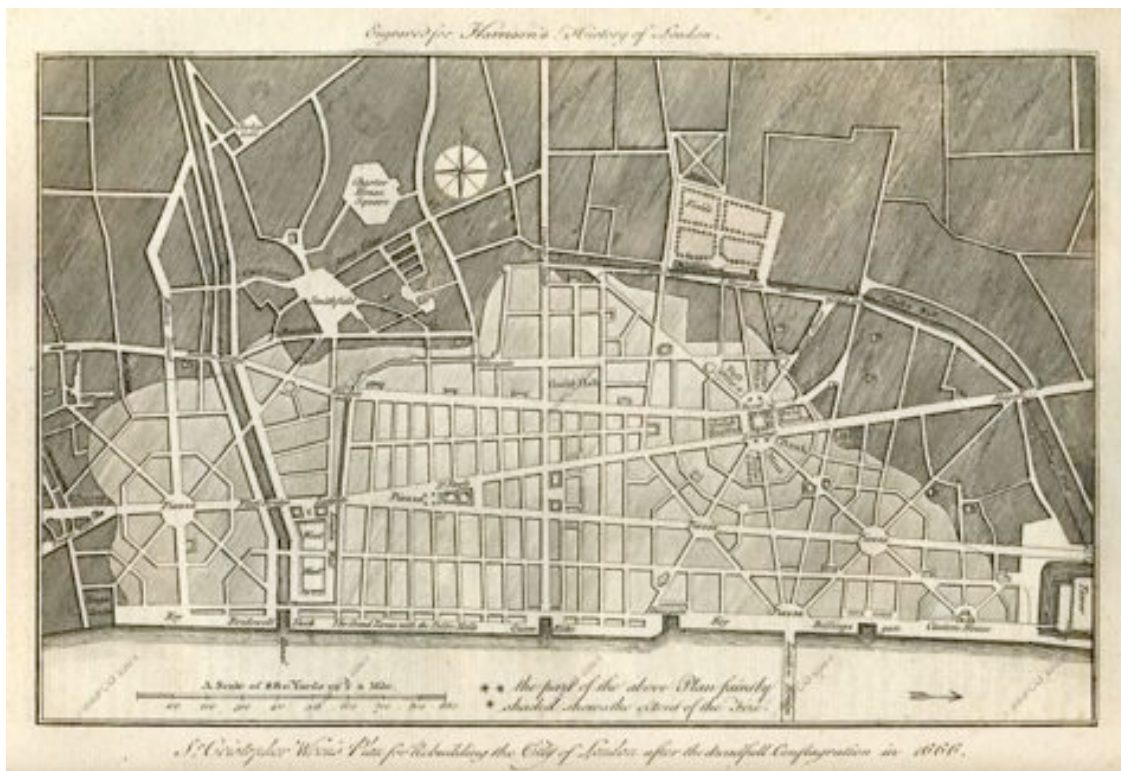


Fig. 6 – 1666, Plan for rebuilding of the City of London. Source: <http://mapco.net/london/1666wren.htm>

⁶⁵ Chadwick, p. 234-5

Taking the example of 1666 Wren's plan, Chadwick laments the lack of planning for London and the continuing resistance towards it. With regards to cemeteries in particular Chadwick highlighted the necessity to plan new cemeteries that needed to be more private and secluded, and away from the city centre, and from everyday life. This could be interpreted as a shift in the understanding of the moral sentiments towards human remains, or to put the same thing in a different way, as a sign of a change in the perception of death and burial in society, as it starts to be associated with the idea of morality and decency in public space. In the next section we will see how, at the time, the work of Victorian horticulturalist, farmer, landscape architect and journalist Loudon was particularly influential in the formation of a new paradigm of burial for London, that also promulgated the idea of decency and solemnity in cemeteries.

1.4. Space and order: Towards a new paradigm of burial

Loudon was a landscape architect, journalist and farmer of Scottish origins, who, like Southwood Smith and Chadwick, was also influenced by Bentham's philosophical views. He was interested in designing solutions for new cemeteries by drawing upon his broad horticultural and architectural knowledge. Loudon's interest in cemeteries was stimulated by a trip he made around Europe in 1813, which had a profound impact on him in both a personal and professional capacity. Of particular relevance was his visit to Poland, where – travelling across the countryside – he saw many dead bodies (victims of the recent war) being just partially buried in the battlefields. This talented and tenacious writer moved to London from Scotland in 1803 aged 25. During his developing career Loudon influenced different disciplines from landscaping to publishing and from architecture to the design of cemeteries. Although he didn't manage to put his stamp on any of London's new cemeteries he was commissioned to design one in Cambridge, Bath and Southampton. Of these, only the plans for Bath Abbey cemetery were fully carried out, while those drawn up for Cambridge and Southampton remained on paper.

Loudon's approach was not strictly concerned with the health issues addressed by Southwood Smith, Walker and Chadwick, instead, he was interested primarily in the decorous order of cemeteries. This approach emerged from his book titled *On the Laying Out of Cemeteries*, published in 1843. This practical manual on the ordering and maintenance of the cemetery is a comprehensive and unique text in which Loudon outlines his approach to cemetery design including such minutiae, as how to organise and run a cemetery: from suitable planting to its everyday maintenance. Loudon's research on cemeteries expanded well beyond Britain, in his book he included research gathered from travel literature that specifically described and illustrated cemeteries in Turkey, Persia and China. Loudon noticed that in Eastern burial cultures cemeteries were more integrated in the social life of cities. Particularly in Turkey, Loudon explains, burial grounds such as the one in Pera (now a district of Istanbul), were used by the locals as a promenade especially in the evening⁶⁶ Loudon also used his book to air his personal opinions on cemeteries, without reserve; the author expressed his dissatisfaction with the quality of London's cemeteries in terms of planning and layout. In the chapter entitled 'London Cemeteries and Gardens – The Present State of the London Cemeteries Considered Chiefly as Cemetery Gardens', Loudon writes:

⁶⁶ Loudon, 1981, p. 70

The planting of all the cemeteries is, in our opinion, highly objectionable.... It is too much in the style of a common pleasure-ground both in regard to the disposition of the trees and shrubs, and the kinds planted...the plantation in most of London's cemeteries appear to have been made without the guidance of any leading principle.⁶⁷

His concerns in relation to London's cemeteries went further:

It will not be denied, we think, that in all London cemeteries there is an appearance of confusion in the placing of the graves and monuments; there is no obvious principle of order or arrangement [....]. In our opinion all the cemeteries require reformation in this particular without delay.⁶⁸

Besides writing on existing cemeteries, gardening, and architecture, Loudon also explored possibilities and solutions to be adopted in future cemeteries and cities. In a short essay titled, 'Hints for Breathing Places for the Metropolis and for Country Towns and Villages, on fixed Principles' (1829), Loudon imagined a long-term plan for a future London (See Fig. 7). He foresaw a series of concentric circles that radiated outward from the centre of the city, alternating areas of green and built-up environment. In his plan cemeteries were to be part of the green belt areas, where he also envisaged having slaughterhouses, museums and markets. Loudon's plan for London however wasn't something to be achieved instantly. Instead he suggested that it would take two centuries to turn the plan into a reality.⁶⁹ Loudon's vision anticipated by almost 70 years the planning principles of the Garden City outlined by Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928), in his book *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, first published in 1898 (See Fig. 8).

A less well-known proposal for a new municipal cemetery to be built on Arthur's Seat in the outskirts of Edinburgh was also outlined by Loudon in 1832. The details of this scheme were published the same year in *The Gardener's Magazine* and the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicles*. Although in his plan Loudon envisaged laying out the space 'as a public cemetery and a park',⁷⁰ what he ultimately proposed was transforming Arthur's Seat into a suburban district of Edinburgh, which foresaw the integration of dwellings, cemeteries and leisure spaces. Loudon devised a specific system for the allocation of

⁶⁷ Loudon, 1981, p. 69

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 68

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 686-90

⁷⁰ 1832, p. 363

functions that would gradually make use of any space between the base and the top of Arthur's seat. Loudon suggested that any land not to be used for public burial could be sold off to different parishes for the purpose of building new churches or chapels with adjacent graveyards.⁷¹



Fig. 7 – 1829. John Claudius Loudon - Hints for Breathing Places for the Metropolis and for Country Towns and Villages, on fixed Principles.



Fig. 8 – 1898. Ebenezer Howard – This diagram, published in *Garden Cities of To-morrow*.

⁷¹ Loudon's plan anticipated what eventually happened with Brookwood Cemetery in Woking. There, within the cemetery, most London Parishes had their own allocated burial space.

Walker also proposed that the space not used by the parishes of Edinburgh could 'be let out to individuals for private burial-places, and for the erection of tombs or other monuments to the memory of their friends, or great men of the past or present age,' Following the laying of roads to afford carriages easy access, Loudon also suggests that 'it would be an admirable situation for villas and ornamental cottages. Perhaps one part of the hill might be devoted to this purpose, another to a zoological garden, and another to a general cemetery; but I confess I should prefer to see the whole a hill of churches, monuments, tombs, fancy gardens, and trees, with only few intervening dwellings.'⁷² The innovation proposed by Loudon, in which a cemetery eventually becomes a key feature in the context of a new suburban development, makes his work particularly relevant to this thesis. Loudon's scheme proved too audacious and expensive for the local authorities of Edinburgh at the time and was never implemented.

Despite Loudon's interest in improving the living quality of the metropolis in the future, he was also concerned – as Walker was – about the state of graveyards in London. In his opening chapter, he writes: 'No wonder that, under such circumstances, the burial-grounds, more especially of towns, are shunned and avoided, rather than sought after as places for meditation. Even under the most favourable circumstances, the associations which are generally attached to churchyards are gloomy and terrific.' Both Loudon and Walker were interested in what Loudon calls the 'improvement of the moral sentiments'⁷³ toward burials, which implied respect towards the human remains and the place where they were laid to rest. In Loudon's view:

The main object of a burial-ground is, the disposal of the remains of the dead in such a manner as that their decomposition, and return to the earth from which they sprung, shall not prove injurious to the living; either by affecting their health, or shocking their feelings, opinions, or prejudices [...]. A secondary object is, or ought to be, the improvement of the moral sentiments and general taste of all classes, and more especially of the great masses of society.⁷⁴

As we will see in the next chapter, Loudon's extensive work on the laying out of cemeteries their management and characteristic did just marginally influence the private

⁷² 1832, p. 363-4

⁷³ Loudon, 1981, p. 8

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 94

entrepreneurs that were already working to establish new cemeteries for London, as commercial returns prevailed over the moral sentiments that concerned Loudon.

Conclusion

In this chapter we saw how a new rational approach to death and burial emerged in early nineteenth-century England, which was prompted by poor conditions of graveyards in large cities such as London. These particular conditions gained the attention of the medical profession, which reported on them, as in the case of Walker, and brought the issues into the public realm and eventually force the central government to actively get involved burial reforms.

We also saw how the key actors involved in this process such as Southwood-Smith, Walker, Chadwick and Loudon were influenced and driven by strong philosophical underpinning that aspired towards progress and life improvement, in the name of the greatest happiness principle formulated by Bentham. This belief overruled even ethical issues, such as the disturbance of burial grounds in the name of progress, as in the case of the 1832 Anatomy Act that allowed for unclaimed bodies in workhouses, prisons and hospitals to be used for dissections, in an attempt to stop this trade and legalise the position of the medical profession. This was then further reinforced by the Poor Law of 1834, and the Medical Act 1858. These conditions enabled a network of close relations between institutions, such as prisons, workhouses, asylums, cemeteries and London's medical schools.

We have touched on how the conditions of the graveyards in London deteriorated due to overcrowding and exhumations. Surgeons such as Walker, promoted the idea that burial grounds should not be privately owned and run, but centrally managed by the government. However, the reality in London was that, private entrepreneurs interested in exploiting burials as commercial opportunities, were already building new cemeteries. In the next chapter I will be examining the elements that constructed this new paradigm of burial developed by the newly formed cemetery companies, and study their relation to the capitalist principles that ruled London's new industrial society at the time.

2. *The paradigm of the Victorian cemeteries: a sophisticated burial system*

Summary

In the previous chapter we saw how private companies initiated new cemeteries in the suburbs of London that advocated a reformed way of burying the dead. This new paradigm had an unprecedented level of rational organisation and sophistication that addressed the diverse and complex issues associated with burials. These included religious and hygienic concerns, viability of the new burial model through its management, administration as well as its aesthetic language through funerary architecture and landscape design.

This chapter aims to deconstruct the aspects of this new burial paradigm and study how it formed and functioned in response to specific locations, what were its meanings, and how other scholars have interpreted them. Starting from an outline of what were the motives that pushed private entrepreneurs to initiate such ventures, this chapter focuses on those cemetery companies directly connected to the selected case studies, looking at their administrative and management aspects as well as their architecture and landscape.

This chapter concludes that the new private cemeteries stimulated radical changes that rationalised burial to the extent of making it hygienically safe and morally decent, despite the growing scale of London. In this respect the companies effectively established a new set of standards for burials. Beyond this, the companies also contributed to the unprecedented socio-cultural shift in the attitude towards death in nineteenth-century London. Although the new private cemeteries were initially accessible only to a restricted portion of society, they made death and the status of burials more visible on the agenda of the social issues debated at the time.

2.1. The Victorian cemetery companies and the reform of London's burials

As outlined in the summary in reforming London's burials, the cemetery companies had to take into consideration the manifold aspects related to the disposal of human remains. Among others, the new paradigm of burial needed to address: health concerns, functionality, commercial viability, existing laws, decency, morality and most of all satisfy the board of directors and partners involved in the joint-stock company. Although essentially the burial method still consisted primarily in earth burial, its perception, organisation and meanings became more sophisticated. The fact that such a diverse range of factors was taken into consideration by the cemetery companies, shows how the burial of human remains became culturally complex and layered with meanings that ranged from practical issues connected to public health, to those related to the personal feelings of mourners.

As well as addressing the above-mentioned conditions the cemetery companies had to be granted permission to operate by an Act of Parliament and after the 1850s also had to comply with the new laws set by the Burial Acts. However, they did not conform to any restrictions in terms of centralised planning strategies, as London did not have one at the time. When it came to the architectural styles or landscape arrangements, each cemetery company was free to choose what best suited their image and the interests of their board of directors. It is for this reason that London's private Victorian cemeteries, and indeed the ones in the rest of the country, varied so widely in styles from one another and differed so much from their continental counterparts.

Before moving into exploring the aesthetics of Victorian cemeteries however, I would like to delve on what were the motives that pushed private companies and entrepreneurs to deal with such a complex issue such as burial. Certainly the business opportunity presented itself as an attractive prospect, though there must have been other reasons connected to other socio-cultural aspects that should be considered as equally motivational. But how and why did philanthropic and capitalist ideas combine in the unique model of the cemetery companies? Are there connections between the moral and financial concerns that should be evaluated?

Scholars researching this field of study have previously addressed these questions in their research, the most relevant to this thesis however, is the work of Julie Rugg who

conducted a comprehensive study on cemetery companies which culminated in her thesis 'The Rise of Cemetery Companies in Britain: 1820-53' (1992). Rugg maps 113 companies in the UK and studies the motives of the companies' directors. The author categorises the companies in three types starting from the early cemetery companies that emerged in the mid-1820 saw the burial problem mostly as a religious-political issue, and used the cemeteries to provide burial space which was independent from the Anglican Church. Moreover, Rugg demonstrates that within this typology there were different degrees of 'Dissenting militancy'; these companies had a degree of political significance as they were threatening to deprive the Church of England from its established income monopolies over burials.⁷⁵ The second type of company, in Rugg's view, emerged in the mid-1830s and saw burial primarily as a speculative business opportunity. These types of cemetery companies were a restricted phenomenon, contrarily to what is often understood by historians, both in time (most formed between 1835-37 or 1845), scale and geographical locations (London, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh). These companies were primarily concerned to provide luxury burial services or by contrast offer burial provision in the poorest areas of London.

Rugg reminds us that speculative companies interested in making profits, by selling the right of burial as a luxury commodity, were a very small minority and indeed an exception that yet received wide attention by historians, and led to the misleading conclusion that most companies were primarily speculating on burials, when it was not the case. The author identifies that only four companies formed with the objective of selling status burials. Three of these companies were located in London, and they were: the London Cemetery Company, owners of Highgate Cemetery and Nunhead Cemetery; the South Metropolitan Cemetery Company, founders of Norwood Cemetery and the London and Westminster Cemetery Company which initiated Brompton Cemetery. Rugg also notes that speculative cemetery companies were successful mostly in large cities, because of the concentration of wealth there, and did not reach out to the provinces. Other reasons for this geographic restriction are grouped by the researcher under three factors: the existence in London of a long tradition of private burial grounds, the success of Kensal Green, the first large suburban cemetery opened by the General Cemetery Company in 1833 and the increase in the demand for elaborate graves and memorials.⁷⁶ Rugg lastly states that the third type of companies emerged by the mid-1840s, was primarily concerned with burial as a sanitary measure, and therefore defined them as

⁷⁵ Rugg, pp. 7, 191

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 7, 93-4, 208, 225-6, 232

public health enterprises. Although these were less successful than the speculative cemetery companies, yet they helped to disseminate the idea that this type of cemetery contributed to civic pride of the town or city.⁷⁷

Overall Rugg's findings shed a completely new light on the nature of the cemetery companies, their motives and objectives. Her research demonstrates that it was not all to do with financial returns but a more complex issue that also included other aspects such as religion, local politics and civic pride. Although, this seminal work answers some of the questions on the formation and nature of the cemetery companies, it does not explore in greater details how the socio-cultural context of the time influenced these motivations. Historian David Thomson (1912-1970) addressed this question in his research and identifies a direct connection between the motives of the Victorian entrepreneur and morality. In his 1955 book, *England in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1914)* Thomson explains that, although, on one side, Victorians were driven by morality as predominantly derived by their religious principles on the other they took pride in material progress. In Thomson's view, the Victorian industrial and commercial classes had gained control over the economic life of the country in the mid-nineteenth century. This also allowed them to affect society and culture, resulting in a unique combination of contrasting elements that Thomson defines as "at once materialist and moral, aggressive and religious, self-satisfied and self-critical." This social complexity helped to shape a form of moral liberalism that transcended all barriers of religious sects, and that was more interested in how people in society put their belief into 'good' practice. It was a natural consequence of this freedom of religious worship and thinking to demand freedom of enterprise and trade.

For Thomson, the permanent motivating ideal of nineteenth-century England was 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.'⁷⁸ This was the leading philosophical principle of Bentham's radical Utilitarian thinking which promoted liberalism both in society and economy. Thomson again explains how convenient it was, in a moment of expansion such as the middle of the nineteenth century, that Britain's central government adopted a laissez-faire attitude. This condition suited the growth of private initiatives, of commerce, and the development of the city, including the creation of new cemeteries. Although this is not a full and accurate picture, Rugg and Thompson have identified some key aspects that could give us a better understanding of the

⁷⁷ Rugg, pp. 7, 225, 250

⁷⁸ Thompson D., pp. 107, 117, 225-6

philanthropic nature that moved and catalysed the Victorian entrepreneur (religion, morality and philosophy). In the next section I will focus more specifically on the commercial aspects of the cemetery company and the role of the entrepreneur.

If for Thomson the philanthropic nature that moved and catalysed the Victorian entrepreneur were religion, morality and philosophy, for German economist Werner Sombart (1863-1941), it was purely a matter of cold rationality. Sombart's explanation of capitalism is disconnected from any historical event, a kind of tabula rasa. In *Economic Life in the Modern Age*, one of Sombart's texts in English, the author, with a distinctive lucidity, explains that the spirit of the economic outlook of capitalism is dominated by three ideas: acquisition, competition, and rationality and that capitalism is formed by "three constituent elements – spirit, form, and technology." The "form" of the system, in a structural sense, is defined by Sombart as "aristocratic" as there is a disproportion between the small numbers of economic agents with power of control, in relation to the rest of the population taking part in the economic life.⁷⁹ The technology, as an aspect of the capitalist system, is one that allows for "improvement and perfection." The constant technological improvement is, for Sombart, the "weapon in the hands of the capitalist entrepreneur who seeks to eliminate his competitor and to extend his market by offering goods superior in quality or lower in price." Sombart explains this process of seeking perfection through the "scientific, mechanistic technology," as a way of making use of natural science to overcome the limitation of nature and the "organic environment." This process of technological advancement brings with it the idea of commodity and impersonality of the economic relationships. In Sombart's own words:

The depersonalisation of commercial as well as technical management transforms them into satisfactory instrumentalities for the practice of a technology based on the depersonalisation of human labor.⁸⁰

Sombart also defines the capitalist enterprise as an "economic organism," which is "independent from the individuals that constitute it." In short, it is an abstract entity in itself. The author also discusses the role and motivations of the capitalist entrepreneur in his view:

⁷⁹ Sombart, pp. 6,10

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 12

The motives of capitalist entrepreneurs are by no means restricted to acquisitive drives; among them, the craving for acclaim, the impulsion to serve the common good, the urge to action.⁸¹

If we apply Sombart's theory to the specific case of the entrepreneurs behind the cemetery companies we could suggest that they had a 'calling' to form new cemeteries so to "serve the common good" and possibly struck a cord with Bentham's "greatest good for the greatest number" principle. The economist also attempts to outline what he defines as the 'Ideal Entrepreneur', a character that, in his view, should combine:

The traits of inventor, discoverer, conqueror, organizer, and merchant. He is an inventor, not so much of technical innovations as of new forms of organization for production, transportation, and marketing. Moreover, the entrepreneur as inventor does not terminate his activity with the formulation of the invention; in utilizing it he improves and vitalizes it in countless ways.⁸²

Sombart's outline of the private entrepreneur is a good opportunity to draw together a few reflections on the cemetery companies and their directors. It is interesting, for example, to observe how, in some cases, they not only business managers but also engineers, architects, and surveyors. At times they were all of these in one person as in the case of Stephen Geary (1797-1854), the architect who designed Highgate Cemetery.⁸³ Another case of particular interest was that of the collaboration between surveyor Cyril Bazett Tubbs (1858-1927) and Arthur Albert Messer (1863-1934), architect and military man. Both were involved in the development of Brookwood Cemetery.

Whether the motivations of the Victorian entrepreneur involved in Victorian cemetery companies were to do with religion, health concerns or speculation, their attitude to change and innovation pioneered new ways of burying the dead. Consequently these generated in Britain an unprecedented socio-cultural shift in the attitude towards death, morality, decorum and civic sense at large. The issues connected with death and burial became more visible than in the past and were also openly discussed and scrutinised by society through the press and other communication channels.

⁸¹ Sombart, p. 13

⁸² Ibid., p. 13

⁸³ Stephen Geary was the founder of the London Cemetery Company and exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1814 and 1838, he was buried in Highgate in 1864. Geary's London Cemetery Company was supported by Thomas Wakley (1795-1862), the medical reformer and M.P. for Finsbury. Wakley also provided similar support for other cemetery companies set up in those years.

To keep in line with the investigation of the specific commercial aspects of the Victorian cemetery companies, which are at the core of this thesis, in the following section I will look further into the administrative aspects and the official bureaucracy that formed, structured, regulated and managed these companies. The existing literature has only partially reviewed this aspect of the speculative cemetery companies; as we was Rugg herself did not research the companies from an economic point of view, and Curl partly elaborated on these aspects. This condition provides an opportunity to analyse - with available relevant archival records at hand – key administrative aspects of those speculative cemetery companies behind the selected case studies. As we will see the rational and pragmatic attitude of the cemetery companies towards the burial issues to be addressed are complemented by a similarly structured administration that regulated all aspects of the companies.

2.2. The business of burying the dead

The range of bureaucracy connected to the speculative cemetery companies included a wide range of administrative paperwork, which is indicative of the complexity within which the companies were operating. For the purpose of this research, and to give a sense of the variety of the newly introduced paperwork especially designed by the companies, a selection of this historical documentation retrieved in national and local archives will be used to illustrate this section.

To start it is worth to say that due to intrinsic nature of the type of companies this thesis is studying, they all needed their burial grounds to be consecrated. This implied that each company had to be granted permission by an Act of Parliament, which validated the company and established the principles and constraints within which each company operated. Therefore this is the first document to be considered (see Fig. 9). The act covered the basic details of the company including its initial capital and stipulated in details the restrictions imposed on the company with regards to the alienation of consecrated burial grounds. This particular point was to avoid the companies to speculate on land sale.

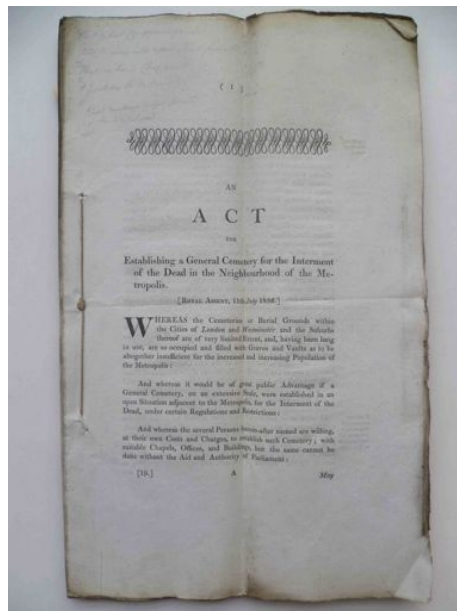


Fig. 9 – 1832. First page of the Act of Parliament, which established the General Cemetery Company, the private enterprise behind Kensal Green Cemetery.

Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

The administrative paperwork for the formation of the company was just the peak of the bureaucratic iceberg that a cemetery company had to deal with, for example in the case

of consecration of the company's burial ground the enterprise had also to exchange deeds with the Church of England. In this case, together with the official request for the consecration, a company also had to submit to the attention of the Bishop of London a plan showing the boundaries of the consecrated ground and the portion allocated to Dissenters. In the case of Highgate Cemetery and Kensal Green Cemetery these documents are to be found in the London Metropolitan Archives. The existing consecration plan drawing for Kensal Green Cemetery (see Fig. 10) dated from 1832, shows the original boundaries of the whole cemetery and marked in green is the area that needed to be consecrate by the Church which was the vast majority of the whole cemetery when compared to the Dissenters ground the company set aside.

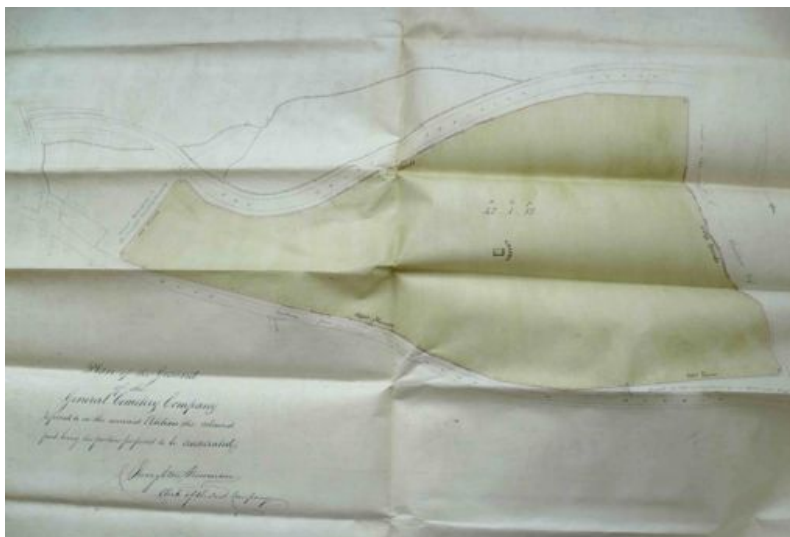


Fig. 10 – 1832ca. Plan showing the portion (in green) of Kensal Green cemetery burial ground to be consecrated. On the top left it is visible the small portion of the allocated Dissenters ground.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Bishops agreed to consecrate ground only when there was an evidence of permanency in the formation of a company, such as an act of parliament. Dissenters companies, because of the nature of their motives, had a less convoluted administration system that did not involve any transaction with the Church.⁸⁴ As we saw earlier, cemetery companies were also a threat to the Church's burial incomes and therefore the religious institution had to explore alternative ways to retain at least a stake in this business. Consecration was one of them as, at a local level at least, the opposition of the Church to a consecration of a new ground, had the power to determine the failure of a cemetery company. The threat however was contained in part by the bishop of London Charles James Blomfield (1786-1857), who managed to retain a secure position for the Church by enforcing clerical fees

⁸⁴ Rugg, pp. 74-6

on the consecrated grounds of the newly formed private cemeteries. This was essentially a form of compensation for the loss of earnings to the local parishes, as the deceased was to be buried elsewhere other than the parish churchyard where he or she came from. The payment was proportional to the burial expense the mourners sustained, therefore the more expensive the burial the higher the fee to pay to the Church.⁸⁵

As parish churchyards were running out of burial space, they were able to get allocated a dedicated new portion in one of the private cemeteries. This agreement was regulated by a new act especially drawn in these cases that added another layer of administrative paperwork to regulate the settlement between the cemetery company and the Church. Some of these documents still exist as in the case of the act drawn between the General Cemetery Company and the Church of England to stipulate a portion of the consecrated ground of Kensal Green, to be set aside for the use of the Parish of St. Luke in Chelsea (see Fig. 11). These transactions became more and more frequent following the introduction of the Burial Act 1st July 1852, that enforced a stop on burials taking place in existing intra-mural London's churchyards.

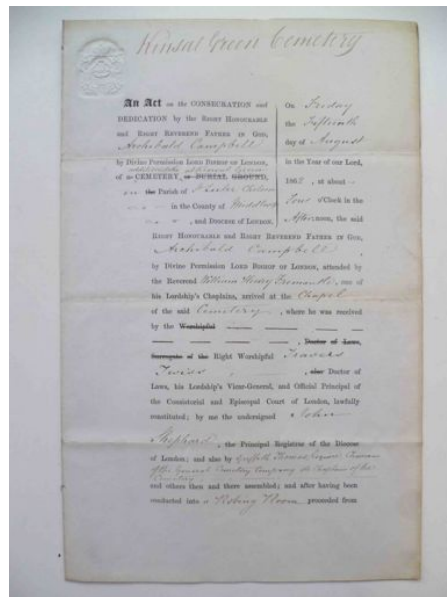


Fig. 11 – 15 August 1862. The first for an act of consecration for an addition to the General Cemetery Company's Kensal Green cemetery of the Parish of St Luke in Chelsea.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

The paperwork that regulated the contracts between a cemetery company and the Church was just one side of the administrative coin, More complexity is to be found in the administrative documentation that recorded the legal aspects of the formation of a joint-

⁸⁵ Rugg, pp. 185-88

stock cemetery company including their capital, structure of their shareholdings, and rights and obligations of the shareholders. The initial capital of a typical cemetery company was divided into shares, as in the case of the London Cemetery Company, which owned Highgate and Nunhead cemeteries and had a capital of £ 80,000 divided in 4,000 of £ 25 each (see Fig. 12). With the financial transaction in the purchase of a share, the buyer entered an agreement of rules and regulations set for the Government of the Company, which subscribers had to observe and comply with.

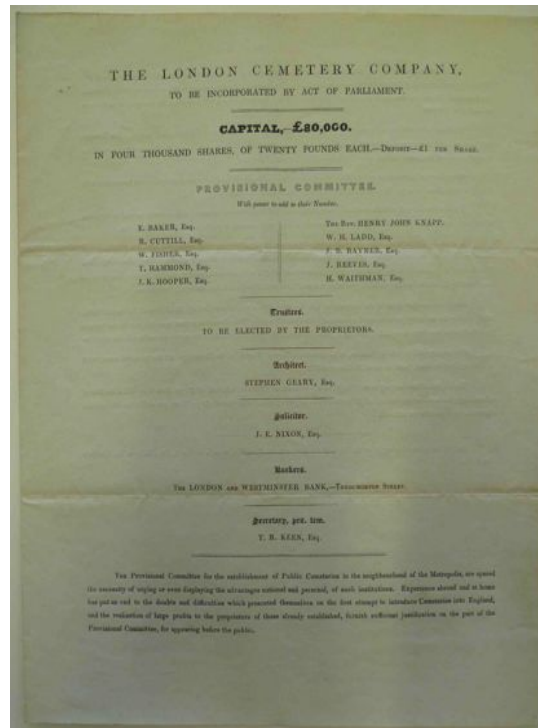


Fig. 12 – Document outlining the subdivision of the capital (£ 80,000 in 4,000 shares of £ 25 each) and the Provisional Committee of the London Cemetery Company (Highgate Cemetery and Nunhead Cemetery).
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

In a share issued by the General Cemetery Company, the rules were listed directly on the back of the actual document (see Figs. 13-4). These stated, among other points, that the responsibility of the proprietors was limited to the amount of the respective shares, and that new shareholders were not entitled to vote in the first six months. Also from here we understand that voting rights were related to the number of shares owned: five shares one vote; ten shares two votes. Shares were not transferable until three-fifth were paid up, so as to prevent new shareholder from investing for pure speculation purposes.



Fig. 13 – 1830. One Share (front) of £ 25 issued by the General Cemetery Company (Kensal Green Cemetery).
Source: Surrey History Centre.

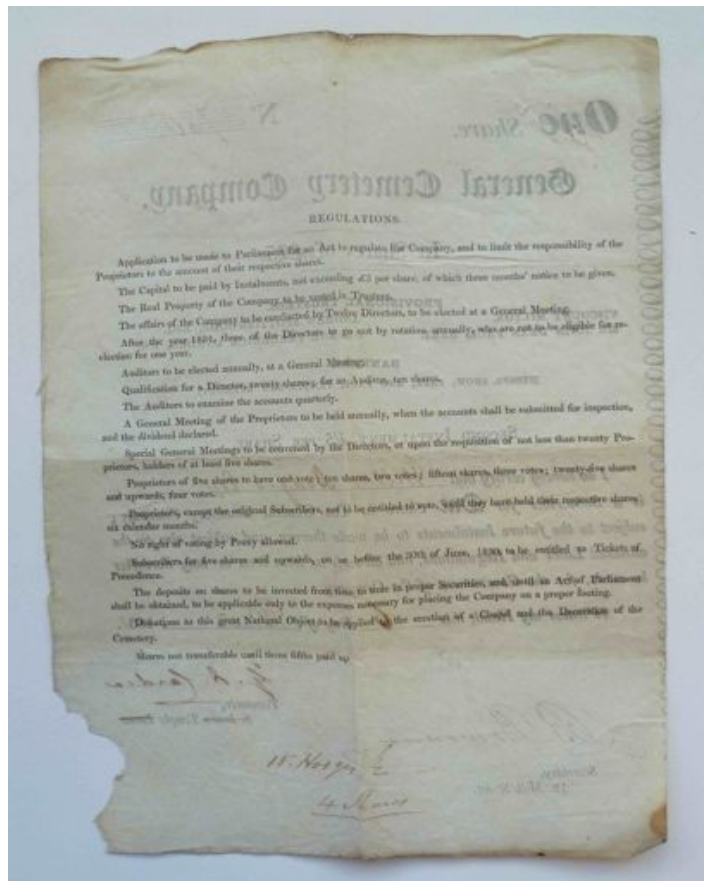


Fig. 14 – 1830. One Share (back) of £ 25 issued by the General Cemetery Company (Kensal Green Cemetery) listing the rules and regulation the proprietors of the shares had to observe.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

If the administration of shareholders had its degree of complexity it was in dealing with the day-to-day maintenance of the cemetery that the administrative qualities of the

companies are at their best. Among the archival records for the London Cemetery Company it is possible to find burial receipts issued by the company to settle a payment (see Fig. 15). Among the list of burial costs pre-printed on the side is also stated that ‘a monument or gravestone, which design must be approved by the company, will need to be built within 12 months from the burial date’. This stipulation must have added extra pressures on the mourners that were already facing expensive funeral costs.



Fig. 15 – 1874. Burial receipt issued by the London Cemetery Company (Highgate Cemetery)
 Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

The detailed administrative recording systems that cemetery companies developed are impressive. The London Cemetery Company introduced a logbook to list the type of preferred flowers or plants, and the maintenance they needed. It is not possible to

establish the exact date of when these records were first introduced, however one surviving example includes entries between 1934 and 1940 and is specifically related to squares 1 - 62 which was the way Highgate Cemetery is subdivided for the administration of the graves (see Figs. 16-7).

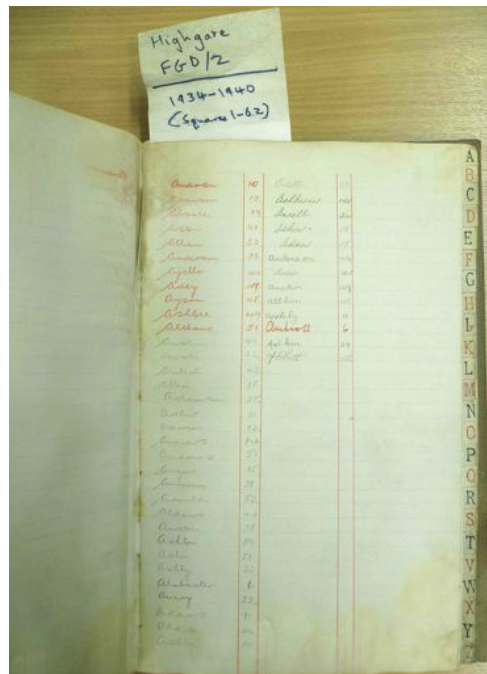


Fig. 16 – 1934-40 A double-spread from the flowers logbook use for Highgate Cemetery. Source: Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre.

Number	Square	Flowering or keeping	Ar
Square 44			
31300	44	No Wallflowers by request Flowg 4.9.39. 5	
21602	"	If Kng	1
23106	"	If Kng Cut Flowers Flowg	3

Fig. 17 – 1934-40 A close-up detail of the flowers logbook use for Highgate Cemetery. Source: Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre.

Things got more complex as cemeteries were gradually becoming filled. Detailed location records of each grave and its owners had to be kept and so it was for the deeds of each one of the sales. The extent of this administration was new to burials; and it was mainly

in place to guarantee a degree of governance within the companies, as well as the running of the actual cemeteries and control over the flow of money in and out.

If on one side this could be seen as an empire of paper records, on the other the structured recording system led to a better organised way of keeping records of who was deceased, where they would have been buried and when, what was the status of their grave and who was responsible for it. This rationalised and organised system also helped to control the business of people tracing their ancestors or next of kin, in the degree that was allowed, as in the case of a letter sent to the secretary of the General Cemetery Company asking for help in identifying a grave (see Fig. 18).

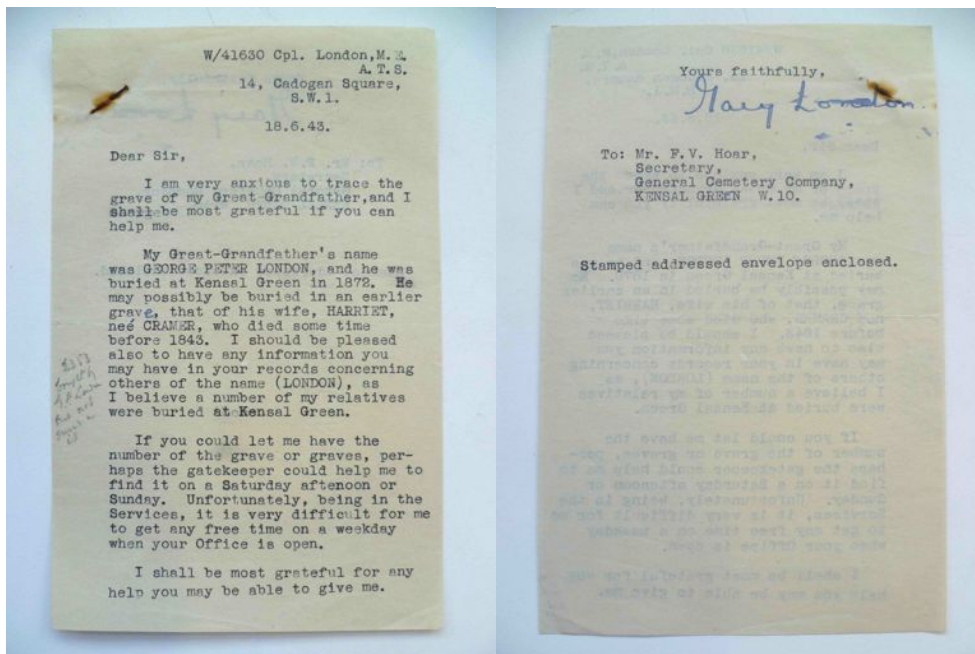


Fig. 18 – 1943. Letter addressed to the secretary of the General Cemetery Company by Mary London. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

To counterbalance the more internal administrative aspects of a cemetery company it is important also to understand what were the commercial strategies adopted by the cemetery companies to promote their business, in particular how they made use of the media to advertise and gauge the interest of potential investors as well as new clients. The language they adopted in the advertisements that appeared in the press at the time was particularly captivating and designed to address all the key aspects that their prospective clients were looking for when buying a burial plot. When the London Cemetery Company opened Highgate Cemetery for business in London in 1839 it employed commercial strategies to attract potential customers to buy burial plots, part of this was to run a series of advertising campaigns in newspapers and magazines. In one

particular extract that appeared in October 1839, in the weekly magazine *The Era* (see Fig. 19), Highgate Cemetery is described as “secure, elevated and admirable grounds.” It also describes its catacombs as “excellent” and states that “police attend all night.” The advert even includes the omnibus fares from selected locations in London.

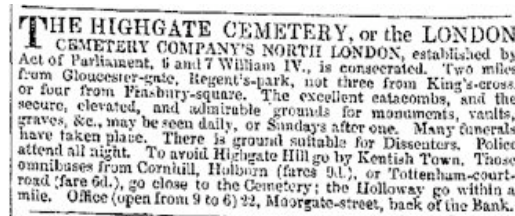


Fig. 19 – Sunday, 27th October 1839. Classified advert appeared on *The Era* – Issue 57.
Source: The British Newspaper Archives.

Although to our contemporary taste the idea of cemetery advertisements could be considered dubious, seen from the point of view of the private entrepreneur this was probably the best tool to reach out to potential customers. As we also saw in Chapter One, the press at the time played an important role in drawing the public’s attention to matters such as the condition of the overcrowded churchyards, or promoting London’s new private suburban cemeteries. In an article published in *The Illustrated London News*, on the 29th September, 1849 Victorian poet and novelist Thomas Miller (1807-1874) wrote a compact version of the history of burials that states his support for the healthy qualities of out-of-town burial compared to inner-city churchyards (see Fig. 20).

Although praised by the media at the time, the new cemeteries were also criticised by experts such as Loudon, who described them as “inadequate,” “unsafe,” “overcrowded” and not well built as he found the foundation of the tombs to be “insufficient.” Curl reports in his article ‘The Design of Early British Cemeteries,’ published in the *Journal of Garden History*, that Loudon’s campaign of criticism on cemetery design had been raging since 1830, when some of the private cemeteries were already open for business (Liverpool Necropolis for example opened in 1825). Perhaps this was also one of the reasons why the private companies did not follow Loudon’s published research on how to layout and maintain cemeteries. More criticism was raised later on in the nineteenth century by gardener and journalist William Robinson (1838-1935), an advocate of cremation and urn-burial.



Fig. 20 – 29th September 1849. An article titled Suburban Cemeteries and City Churchyards published in *The Illustrated London News*. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Robinson was known primarily for promoting the “wild garden” (a movement that rejected the regimented Victorian formal gardening) and for designing the landscape for London’s first crematorium in Golders Green (opened in 1902). In his book, *God’s Acre Beautiful or The Cemeteries of the Future* published in 1880, Robinson expresses his concerns over the redundant Victorian funeral industry:

What a gain it would be to get rid of much of this Monster Funeral, the most impudent of the ghouls that haunt the path of progress! Vulgar show may, of course, be indulged in as much one way as the other; but it is pleasant to think of the ugly things and trades that may be abolished in cities when urn-burial became practicable.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Robinson, p. 19

Robinson also warns that the commercial scope of the funeral industry may lead to overcrowding in suburban cemeteries:

So large and so important a question as the burial of the dead should never be in the hands of those who merely regard it from the point of view of moneymaking. It is well known that the profits from certain cemeteries in some of the pleasantest suburbs of London are very large; the temptation to continue burial in them, longer than decency or sanitary reasons would permit, will probably lead to danger in the future from pollution of air and water. The present state of some of our cemeteries close to London is already dangerous and offensive.⁸⁷

Yet, if the use of printed media to advertise the opening of a new cemetery in London was unprecedented, so too was the administrative complexity of the new suburban cemeteries as private enterprises. Sombart defined these as an “integrated system of relationships treated as an entity in the sciences of law and accounting.” Indeed, it was through these two disciplines (law and accounting) that the cemetery companies institutionalised and regulated burials, just like any other private company.

It is relevant in this respect to also note that the abstract nature of the rules and regulations of an enterprise, was, in Sombart’s view, considered as an independent economic organism that was created over and above the individual(s) who constituted it. This brings us to critically assess the Victorian cemetery as an abstract institution and a bureaucratic machine, which was formally set up to serve the common good, but practically brought financial reward to its investors. As a consequence, burial was possibly reduced to a commodified and depersonalised financial transaction. The physical appearance of the cemetery belies its commercial nature, with its distinctive architectural language and its apparently natural landscape, yet everything was an orchestration of the cemetery’s commercial nature. However, it is also true that the work of the cemetery companies had the effect of weakening the traditional Anglican control of burial provision in favour of other denominations, by virtue of a clause established by the Act of Parliament that granted the private companies the permission to operate a new cemetery.

⁸⁷ Robinson, p. 59

To conclude this section we can say that a process of rationalisation of burials took place specifically with the introduction of a new administrative system that recorded and regulated the transactions between the cemetery companies, central government, the Church and the private parties, whether investors or third part buyers. Despite this systematised approach to order and governance, the commercial nature of the early Victorian cemeteries was still a problematic one on many levels as it was criticised for their speculative nature as well as quality and standards. In particular there were complaints about their lack of appropriate drainage systems in most of the new cemeteries (which was also a public health issue) and the lack of maintenance of the plantations and landscapes (Loudon and Robinson). This criticism must have been true, at least in part, as there was no specifically appointed authority to supervise the work of the companies in terms of quality and standards, despite the fact that most companies were granted permission to open a new cemetery by an act of parliament.

It also should be noted, though, that the cemetery companies were pioneering new burial strategies for London, and therefore things needed to be tried and tested to allow for improvement to take place. In this respect the first generation of cemeteries differ from the later generation of cemetery companies such as the London Necropolis Company, which formed and managed Brookwood Cemetery (1854). The directors of this company had the possibility to learn from the successes and failures of their predecessors and therefore, not only improve the cemetery administration but also raise the standards of its engineering, architecture and design, as we will see in the following section.

2.3. Victorian architecture and death: a legacy for posterity

This section studies the architectural aesthetics adopted by cemetery companies, which communicated their ethos and identities and implicitly advocated freedom of expression. This was an attractive message for wealthy Londoners, interested in articulating their individual taste and social status to posterity, well beyond their graves. There is however an initial clarification to be made as there is a substantial difference between the architecture that the companies adopted and the funerary architecture that the cemeteries contained. This section will discuss the two issues separately. Ultimately this part, through an analysis of the historical archival materials available, will attempt to draw conclusions on how the architectural language chosen by the cemetery companies was intentionally lavish to disguise its evident speculative inclinations. It also will demonstrate how the architecture styles adopted gradually changed from elaborate to minimal and restrained in accordance with society's changes of taste in funerary culture. Despite differences in intentions, the cemetery companies had a common denominator in architecture, as it was an expressive element that allowed them to physically and aesthetically manifest their beliefs and motives. The range of new architectural styles developed by the cemetery companies was unprecedented, and adapted in eclectic ways architectural elements borrowed from Neo Classicism to Gothic Revival and from Greek and Egyptian revivals. We will see this more in details with the three selected case studies: Kensal Green Cemetery, Highgate Cemetery and Brookwood Cemetery, where each of the respective companies⁸⁸ adopted a distinct architectural style.

Being commercial ventures, the architectural aesthetics chosen by the cemetery companies were strongly driven by what was fashionable at the time with the Victorian middle classes, which represented their target customers. Following such a volatile point of reference, the architecture had therefore to adapt and change according to the pace of these trends. Despite these limitations, the architecture gave each company a public coherent visual image and translated their ethos and values into physical forms. However, the process of selecting a particular architectural style, or indeed creating a new one, wasn't simple and, at times, the final built project was the result of internal battles and compromises. In some cases –notoriously Kensal Green Cemetery and Highgate Cemetery – the built designs were completely different from the original proposals, as we will see next.

⁸⁸ Respectively: Kensal Green (General Cemetery Company), Highgate (London Cemetery Company) and Brookwood (London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company).

The original scheme for Kensal Green, designed by Edward Kendall (1776-1875), was in Gothic Revival style (see Fig. 21). In his proposal, Kendall also included a water gate on the canal that marked the south-west boundary of the cemetery. This design solution envisaged the integration of the existing waterway to facilitate the transportation of coffins and mourners to the cemetery, and for the display of funerals (see Fig. 22). Despite its grand scale and attractive beauty, this scheme was never implemented. In his book, *The Origins & Development of the General Cemetery of All Souls, Kensal Green, London 1824-2001* (2001), Curl explains in detail the internal battles (among shareholders) that eventually resulted in the selection of the “official” architectural style of the cemetery.



Fig. 21– Undated. Kendall’s design proposal for the Anglican Chapel at Kensal Green Cemetery.
Source: Victoria & Albert Museum.



Fig. 22 - Undated. Kendall's design proposal for the main entrance of Kensal Green Cemetery (top), and the Water Gate on the Grand Union Canal (above).
Source: Victoria & Albert Museum.

Although Kendall's proposal was the award-winning design, the final scheme, which was then built, was drafted by John Griffith, a protégé of Sir John Dean Paul, Chairman to the Board of the General Cemetery Company. The Greek Revival style adopted by Griffith was associated with antiquity and in favour at the time for its connection with pure

Classicism (see Figs. 23-4). By contrast, the Gothic Revival became associated with Christian worship and morality.⁸⁹



Fig. 23 – 2010. Anglican Chapel in Kensal Green Cemetery featuring a Greek Revival style.
Source: Author



Fig. 24 – 2010, Dissenters Chapel in Kensal Green Cemetery featuring a Greek Revival style.
Source: Author.

Irrespective of its direct association with Christianity, it was the Gothic Revival style that was adopted for both Anglicans and Dissenters for the West Cemetery in Highgate. The two equal chapels occupy the two halves of the entrance building, and are connected

⁸⁹ Curl, 2001, pp. 75, 152-3

through an archway that leads onto the main terrace. On the left side of the building is the Anglican chapel, and on the right the Dissenters chapel (see Fig. 25).



Fig. 25 – Undated. The entrance to Highgate West Cemetery.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

It is worth noting that this unique arrangement does not feature any architectural difference in style or scale that could lead the viewer to think of an hierarchical order between Anglicans and Dissenters, unlike in the case of Kensal Green Cemetery, as these religious denominations were both formally and equally represented. There was however a distinction in the quality of burials between the two halves of the cemetery as the left section of the West Cemetery was more expensive than the right one. By passing the main gate with its chapels and landing on the terrace, it is still possible to see still today how the left avenue winding up to the higher part of the cemetery was grander in terms of layout, plantings and quality of burials. By contrast, the right section of the cemetery was less impressive in scale and quality of the funerary architecture.

However, no trace of this arrangement, both in architectural terms and general layout, was to be seen in the original plan designed in the early 1830s by Geary, and featured by historian John Richardson in his book, *Highgate Past* (1989, 2004). Observing this drawing (see Fig. 26) we can see how the architect considered having two entrances to the cemetery, one on the south end of the cemetery (on Swain's Lane), and another at the north end (by St. Michael's Church). It also appears that Geary intended to annex the existing St Michael's church to the cemetery⁹⁰ and make it effectively the upper entrance

⁹⁰ This is London's highest church building, which was rebuilt in 1832 in a Gothic Revival style by design of Lewis Vulliamy (1791-1871). It was previously in the parish of St Pancras and then moved to Highgate Parish. St Michael's features in John Betjeman's (1906-1984) collection of poems, *Summoned by Bells* (1960)

to the cemetery. In the drawing, this part features a terrace that enhanced Highgate's distinctive vista over London and the southern counties. Furthermore the layout suggests that Geary was thinking of using the church for funerals, as he did not include an Anglican chapel in his scheme, but only the 'non-conformist' one, in Gothic Revival style, which in the drawing, is positioned in the south part of the cemetery. This could be interpreted as a desire by Geary to allocate to Anglicans and Dissenters two distinct sections of the cemetery, with their own separate entrances and chapels.

Lastly in Geary's drawing, there is little sign of a high perimeter wall that enclosed the cemetery and restricted its access through specific gated entrances. The only entrance to be seen here is the one on Swain's Lane, which consisted of a rather modest building containing the dwelling of the cemetery superintendent, and featuring an archway and very little ornamentation. Most strikingly though, and specifically for this building, it appears that Geary's drew his inspiration from the Greek Revival archway designed by Griffith for the entrance of Kensal Green Cemetery.

The West Cemetery at Highgate and St Michael's church was the site of Ashurst House, built for Sir William Ashurst (1647-1720) in 1694. Ashurst House was used by the Highgate Mansion House Academy for Young Gentlemen in 1816 and demolished in 1830.

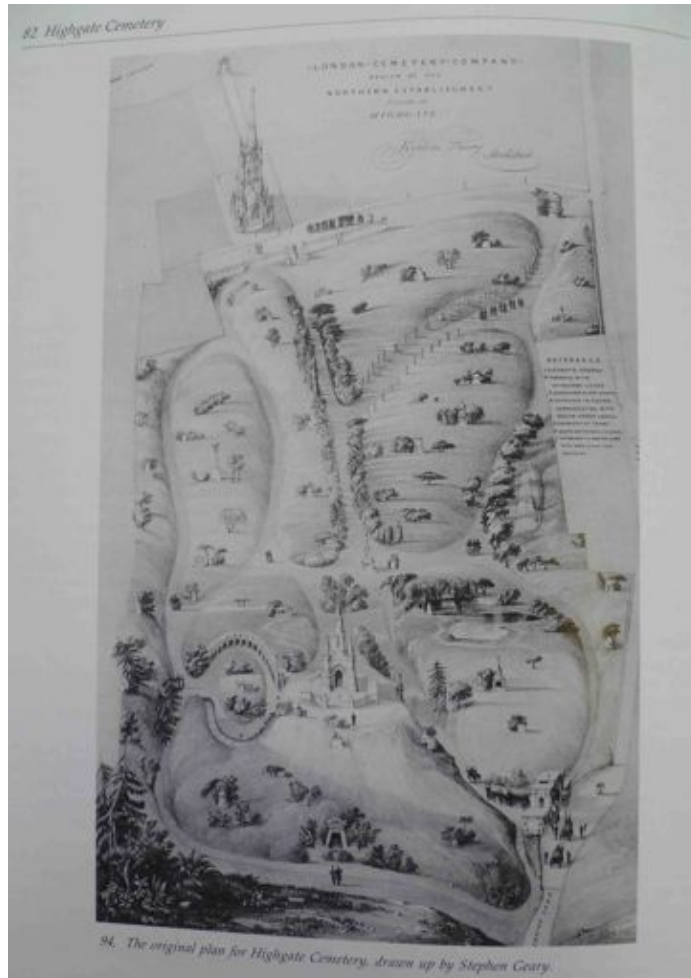


Fig. 26 – 1830 ca. Stephen Geary’s original proposal for Highgate Cemetery.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

It is not possible to establish what were the reasons that made Geary and the London Cemetery Company abandon this scheme, as there isn’t any specific historical document that could support it. However, records exist related to a dispute that almost stopped the consecration of the cemetery before its official opening. Archival material held at the London Metropolitan Archives shows evidence that the controversy was initiated by local residents of Highgate Village living by the north end boundaries of the cemetery. They complained that the public using that part of the cemetery could overlook their private properties and forced the company to abandon the proposal for a public terrace and a road access to the side of St. Michael’s church.⁹¹ In an undated engraving (see Fig. 27), most likely published before the dispute with the locals was settled, it is possible get a sense of how the design could have looked like if built. Here we can see how

⁹¹ Mr Harry Chester (1806-1865) led other local residents opposed to the opening of the terrace at Highgate Cemetery, as he wanted a right of way over the cemetery, a right that the company could not give to him, and (probably for this reason) Chester complained that from a part of the cemetery his garden could be seen. Chester was an influential resident in Highgate Village and was the founder of the local Literary and Scientific Institution (1839). Source (London Metropolitan Archives).

impressive, in scale and composition, the architectural arrangement of St. Michael's Church, the staircase entrances onto the cemetery and the catacombs in the Circle of Lebanon would have looked like, if they were carried out as in the company's original plan.

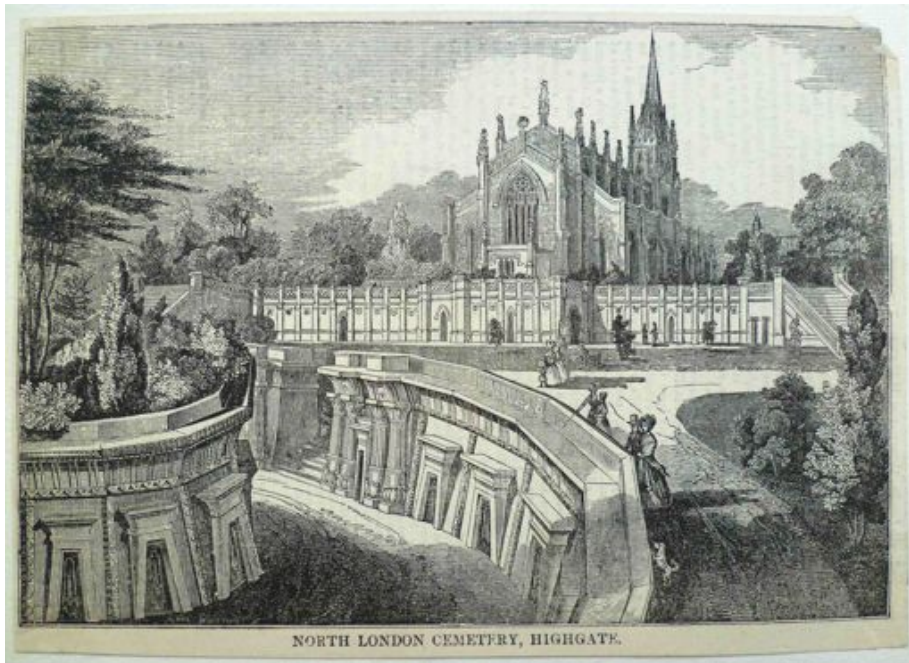


Fig. 27 – Undated. Engraving showing the upper-end of Highgate West Cemetery.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

We need, however, to remind ourselves that architectural proposals such as this one for Highgate, despite their alluring aesthetics, were ultimately designed to suit the speculative nature of the company and attract new buyers. Granted that was the case, we can also see, how the architect attempted to integrate existing architectural features (St. Michael's Church) with the existing topography of the site, to form a new visual and architectural continuum. This demonstrated sophistication and understanding in the modelling and planning of a cemetery, taking into consideration the immediate context in a rather extrovert way, and intending to blur the boundaries between the cemetery and its surroundings, rather than simply marking a physical separation between the two with a boundary wall. Furthermore we can see that although Geary and the London Cemetery Company did not succeed in implementing this scheme, they challenged the cemetery design by proposing an alternative to the example set by Griffith with Kensal Green Cemetery few years earlier. Geary's design was also challenging one of the key hygienic requirements for cemeteries, which was a boundary wall to physically mark the boundaries of the burial ground.

To summarise this section, we can say that in the case of Kensal Green Cemetery as in that of Highgate Cemetery the companies pursued new avenues in terms of cemetery design. Beyond the aspects discussed above, their design was also attempting to blend together urban and rural elements, as after all these were both entirely new cemeteries at the edge of the city, where city and countryside needed to be bound together.

However, this wasn't a trend that other companies necessarily followed, as in the case of the London Necropolis Company, founders and owners of Brookwood Cemetery (1854). This was a rare example in which the offices of the company and the actual cemetery were physically interconnected by a railway line. The London Necropolis Company took up this challenge by adopting two different architectural styles that responded respectively to the urban context of the city and the rural setting of the cemetery. The city end had to deal with the spatial limitation of the urban setting, as space was a premium there, whereas the other end had to respond to the grand scale of a cemetery that allegedly had enough space to accommodate burial for five hundred years.

The company offices and railway station near Waterloo Station marked a further shift in architecture terms as well as burial culture. In the space of 15 years (this is the time gap between the opening of Highgate Cemetery and Brookwood Cemetery), things changed dramatically, the railway network was expanding and with it the possibilities to open new cemeteries further away from the city, where the land was less expensive for purchase by cemetery companies. The architectural language used for the railway station was as utilitarian as most of the railway architecture seen at the time. The archway leading to the Necropolis Station effectively became a substitute for the main entrance to the cemetery, as this was the first point of contact for any mourner or client. As can be seen in a photograph its style wasn't in any way as grand as Kensal Green or Highgate cemeteries, but instead combined a rather ordinary brick building to an archway entrance, adjacent to Waterloo's railway bridge, which was leading to the actual station (see Fig. 28).

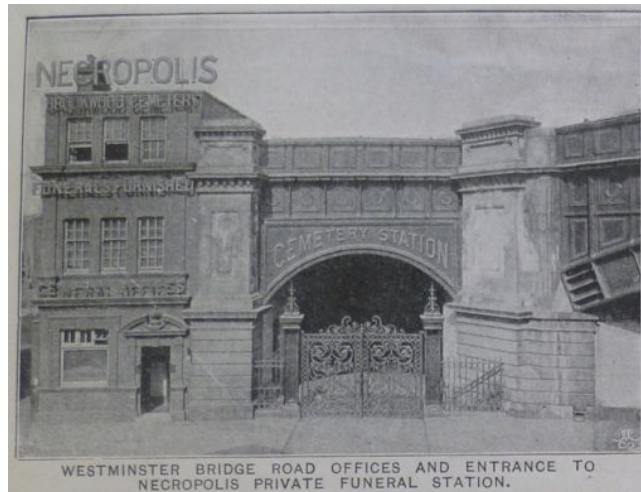


Fig. 28 – 1854. Façade of the Necropolis Station – London Necropolis Company.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

As well as burial services the London Necropolis Company also provided funeral services that included: preparing the corpse of the deceased for the funeral, designing and building their coffin and their gravestone or memorial. The company therefore must have integrated all of these activities and spaces for offices, mortuaries, workshops and a railway station in the very congested site we have seen in the mentioned above photograph. The interior of the Necropolis Station, as seen in an undated engraving published at the time in the press, was unadorned and utilitarian; its scale was modest as its accommodated only two rail tracks and one platform (see Fig. 29).

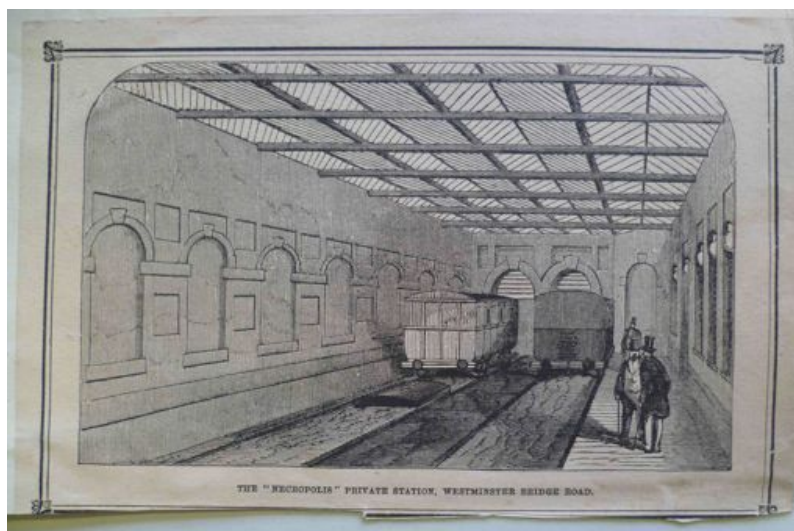


Fig. 29 – Undated. Interiors of the private Necropolis Station London Necropolis Company.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

By contrast the architectural styles adopted for the chapels in Brookwood Cemetery were referencing to a rustic country vernacular. The buildings here tried to blend in with the landscape along graves and memorials (see Fig. 30), just as the premises at the London end were blended in with the city's urban context.

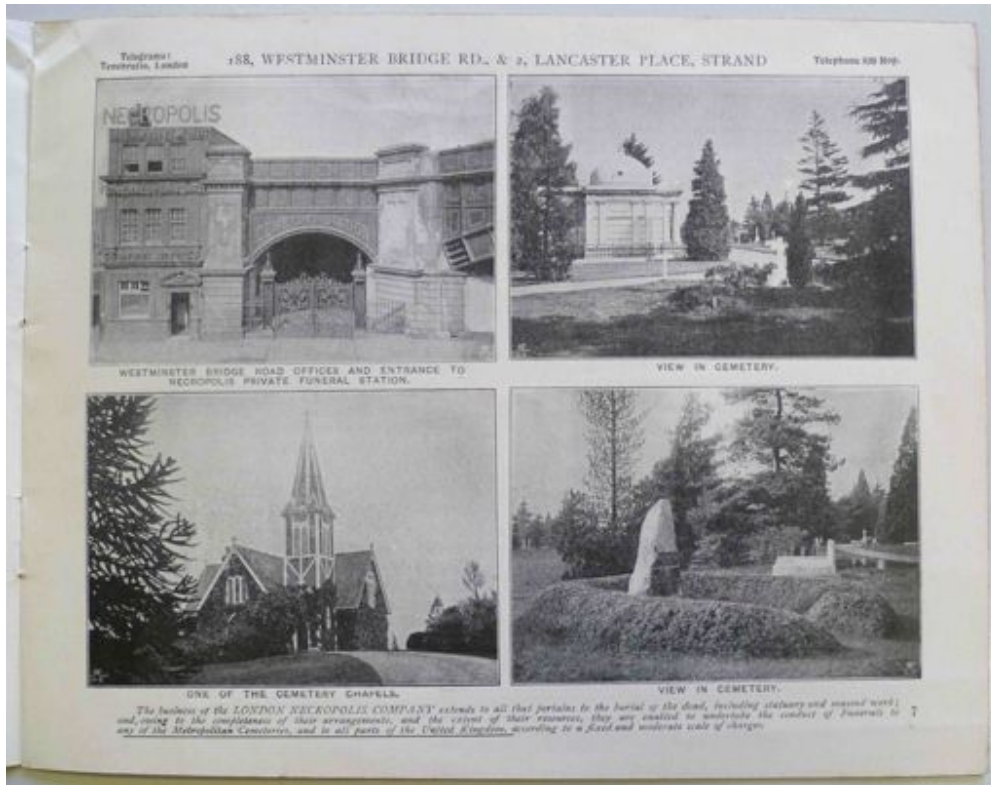


Fig. 30 – 1898. Extract from promotional brochure for the promotion of the burial services which were offered by the London Necropolis Company.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

As the works for the expansion of Waterloo Station were undertaken around the turn of the nineteenth century, the London Necropolis Company had to relocate further down the Westminster Bridge Road. The scheme was designed by Tubbs in 1899 and completed in 1903. Tubbs' front façade is tall and narrow on the street front and features an archway entrance at street level (see Fig. 31).

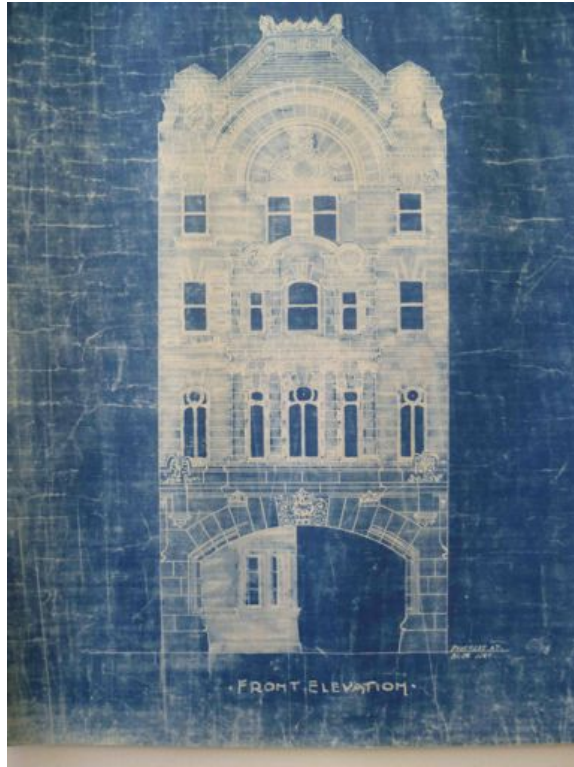


Fig. 31 – 1899. Cyril B. Tubbs – Front façade, office London Necropolis Company.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

Horse-drawn carriages and later automobiles would drive through this archway and turn left to the mortuaries where corpses were taken up to be prepared for their funeral, which would have taken place in the new chapel that Tubbs incorporated in the new scheme. The coffin and mourners would then board specially designed trains directed to Brookwood Cemetery for the actual burial. This new type of funeral was not only more discreet but was also extremely efficient as all the aspects connected to the preparation and funeral ceremony itself were in essence taking place within one site and under the same roof. The spatial organisation devised by Tubbs for this scheme is admirable, given the modest scale of the site. The interiors are functional yet well detailed and crafted, both the company office and the station platform (see Figs. 32 to 34).



Fig. 32 – 1904. A view of the new London Necropolis Company offices.
Source: Surrey History Centre.



Fig. 33 – 1904. A view of the new chapel.
Source: Surrey History Centre.



Fig. 34 – 1904. The new station spaces with access door to the chapel (right).
Source: Surrey History Centre.

In one of the existing drawings for the station level (see Fig. 35) it is possible to observe that two separate entrances existed for first-class (right hand platform) and second/third class funerals (left hand platform). The length of the first-class platform is outlined with individual waiting rooms for the different parties of mourners waiting to board the train to Brookwood Cemetery.⁹²

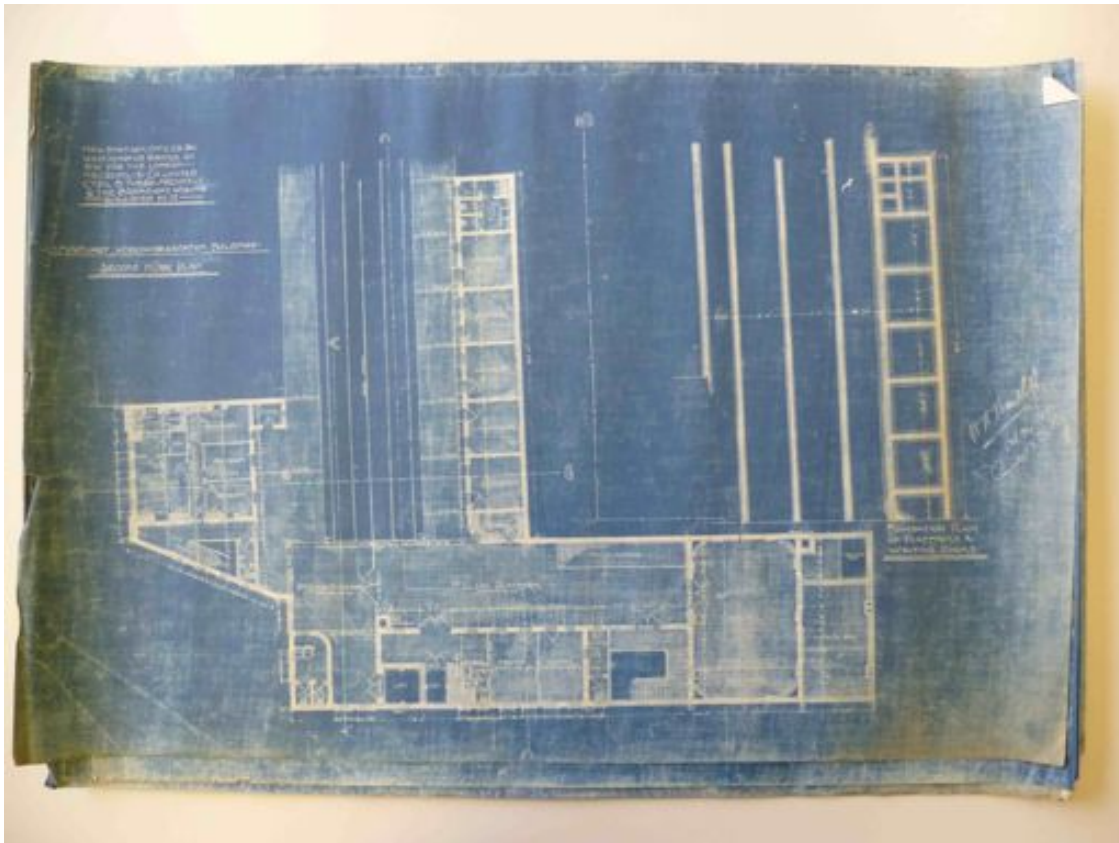


Fig. 35 – 1899. Cyril B. Tubbs, plan of workshops for the London Necropolis Company.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

However, privacy also meant the separation of different social groups, as seen in the design of the new Necropolis Station. Here first-class mourners did not meet with the second and third- class ones, as the spaces were designed specifically to avoid this direct contact. From a photograph featured in the promotional brochure of the new facilities, it is possible to see the even the two platforms were separated along their length by a partition which would avoid any visual contacts between the different social groups of mourners (see Fig. 36). Surely the intention was to give everyone a private space of his or her own in such a moment of sorrow. From this we can assume that, by the turn of the century, the fashion for funerals had shifted considerably in tones from a lavish affair to

⁹² More drawings can be seen in *Appendix -ii* at the end of the thesis.

a private and intimate phenomenon, which started to address the needs of the broader society and not only the wealthy classes.



Fig. 36 – 1904. The platform of the new Necropolis Station. Note that a partition separated the first-class platform (left) from the second/third-class departures to Brookwood Cemetery.
Source: National Railway Museum.

To summarise, so far we have seen that stylistically the architecture of cemetery companies did adopt architectural styles that suited their identities. However this was more relevant to early companies that saw architecture styles as a way to demonstrate their position and perhaps their reliability. Although the architectural language chosen by the speculative cemetery companies discussed in this section was intentionally lavish to disguise their lucrative intentions, we also saw how companies gradually moved away from elaborate architecture to embraced a more restrained and functional aesthetic language in accordance with society's changes in taste. This becomes more evident when observing how the notion of individuality, independence, and self-expression advocated by cemetery companies was mirrored by the funerary architecture. This phenomenon has been widely researched by existing literature, so this section will not delve in it substantially to avoid repetitions, but will give a quick overview to contextualise the occurrence.

As seen earlier on in this chapter, the companies offering for sale the burial rights in perpetuity gave an assurance to the deceased and their families as an incentive to invest

in the design and construction of elaborate funerary architecture. This lack of restrictions by the cemetery companies in regulating the scale or style of the memorials to be erected, encouraged the flourishing of commercialised mourning. Although this has been identified as a phenomenon of national scale it was in London that it reached its peak in terms of concentration and diversity of funeral architecture. The reason for this limited geographical setting was the concentration of wealth to be found in Victorian London, which was well complemented by the presence of speculative cemetery companies that offered their luxury burial services to a thriving market.⁹³ The celebration of death was not however an occurrence restricted to the UK but it was experienced across the continent in mainland Europe, in the same vigorous and individualistic spirit of memorialisation of the individual through funerary architecture.

Many examples of such freedom of expression remain standing today in most of London's Victorian cemeteries. These give a flavour of the London Victorian middle classes' lavish and individualistic need for expression in funerary architecture. Even judged from a contemporary perspective, the result is over-exaggerated monumentality. This freedom of self-expression in funerary architecture came with a price tag, however, as it was the result of a financial transaction between the two agents: the cemetery company and the individual. This was not a novelty to burials, as it was replicating, in a secular way, the model of church burial whereby only the wealthier classes could be buried within the church itself.

However, self-expression in funerary architecture wasn't granted to all. It was closely intertwined with the social status and wealth of individuals and coincided with the rise of the Victorian middle classes, giving people the opportunity to leave their mark on history. To some extent, it is possible to say that this wasn't dissimilar to what happened in the Renaissance period in Italy with families such as the Medici in Florence. The Medici family didn't belong to the aristocratic circle but ascended to it and, therefore, wanted to create an identity for themselves, a history that would disguise their recently assumed status. For this reason, such families adopted and adapted architectural styles drawn from the past. London's Victorian middle classes in particular emulated this process, as they wanted to establish a legacy for themselves. This was expressed in London's town houses as it was in funerary architecture, however this would later change and become more understated and subtle. In relation to this transition, Malcolm Andrews comments that:

⁹³ Rugg, pp. 79, 232-4

The Victorian bourgeoisie was promoting architectural idiosyncrasy and individualism in a period when the powerful members of that class were themselves becoming more uniform... just as in its architecture it repudiated the stucco facades of Nash's Regency terraces.⁹⁴

This gives us clues on how architecture and design were used by a restricted group within Victorian society as a vehicle to express their unique individual taste and personality, whether it was a house or a grave (see Fig. 37).



Fig. 37 – 2013. The elaborate monument erected in Kensal Green Cemetery to the memory of English painter Elizabeth Emma Soyer (1813-1842) by her husband Alexis Soyer; renowned Victorian chef.
Source: Author

We can see that as the middle classes became more visible in the space of the Victorian cemeteries, the graves of the working-class individuals and poor became practically invisible. In most Victorian cemeteries the burial spaces allocated to the poor were in more secluded parts of the cemeteries, where the quality of the land was poor, or along the boundary walls. This was a noticeable step forward from the conditions of new burials for the poor were managed in the London's churchyards described as by Walker. We have seen though, how in cases such as the London Necropolis Company, burials and funerals started to become less exclusive, and basic standards started to be set in terms of affordability and decorum. Paradoxically people at the opposite end of the social spectrum experienced, in different ways, the same pressure with regards to carrying out their burial duties for their families and relatives, as they too were trying to give an affordable, decent and safe burial to their lost ones.

⁹⁴ Andrews, p. 286

Following up on how architecture was both used by the companies and individuals to express respectively their motives and legacy, the next section will research more specifically into which role and meaning the landscaped vegetation had in the paradigm of the Victorian cemeteries and how it complemented architecture styles and funerary design.

2.4. Reason and Nature: the use of landscape in Victorian cemeteries

The aims of this section are to identify what meanings and functions the landscape had in the context of the paradigm of Victorian cemeteries. In particular it will focus on how scientific research identified the healthy effects of vegetation and how they started to be associated with cemeteries. As we will see the combination of architecture and landscape became the distinctive signature of a new paradigm of burial. This sparked a new civic sense in nineteenth-century towns and cities.

I will start by looking into how and why vegetation was introduced in Victorian cemeteries, and what were its meanings. In his book, *The Space of Death* (1983), French historian Michel Ragon (1924-), explains that, since ancient times, vegetal elements such as flowers, shrubs and trees were used to adorn burial spaces and graves. This could be seen in some ancient Greek and Roman burial grounds, which were decorated by funerary gardens that included flowerbeds of roses (among other flowers), as offerings to the dead. Evergreen conifers were also planted in graveyards as they symbolised immortality. With the advent of Christianity, the practice of using vegetation in burial grounds was dismissed for its association with pagan cultures. Eventually, plants were thought to be responsible for making graveyards unhealthy. For example, all planting was forbidden in cemeteries in seventeenth and eighteenth-century France in the name of hygiene, as trees were thought to hinder the air circulation in graveyards, and, therefore, made them insalubrious places.⁹⁵

These interpretations emphasise the equivocal and conflicting relationship man has had with nature. Historically, man has given nature a role, which is the antithesis of man's social power because it is understood as destructive and violent. French historian Ariès explores this in his book, *The Hour of Our Death*, and explains that for thousands of years the progress of man was possible because of the defence system that he developed against nature. For Ariès, this system was achieved by organising society along main axes, which acted as control barriers, namely morality, religion and collective discipline.⁹⁶ These two contrasting aspects of nature (one benevolent, contemplative and symbolically associated with immortality, the other, destructive, violent and incompatible with man) constitute a useful platform from which to observe if, and how, they were present in the landscape of the Victorian cemeteries.

⁹⁵ Ragon, pp. 113-5

⁹⁶ Ariès, pp. 391-3

To understand how this process evolved, we need to look into the origins of the garden cemetery in France. In his book, *The Architecture of Death*, Etlin explains the transformations of the Parisian cemeteries, from mid eighteenth-century to the development of garden cemeteries, in particular of Père Lachaise, the first of its kind, which opened for burial in 1804. A key and innovative feature to this cemetery was its vegetation. In conducting his research, Etlin was interested in understanding how this shift in attitude towards vegetation in mid eighteenth-century France coincided with the Enlightenment. For Etlin, this process of “dechristianisation” was able to take place as people started to discover scientific reasons that explained the positive effects of good air quality and of urban hygiene.⁹⁷ This process of the rationalisation of nature followed the 1773 scientific discovery by English natural philosopher and theologian Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), that vegetation regenerates the air.

Plants wonderfully thrive in putrid air; and the vegetation of a plant could correct air fouled by the burning of a candle, and restore it again to its former purity and fitness for supporting flame and for the respiration of animals.⁹⁸

According to John Ingen-Housz (1730-1799),⁹⁹ Priestley’s discovery was first made public during a speech delivered at the Royal Society in November 1773 by the Society’s President Sir John Pringle (1707-1782):

[From Priestley’s] discoveries we are assured, that no vegetable grows in vain, but that, from the oak of the forest to the grass in the field, every individual plant is serviceable to mankind; if not always distinguished by some private virtue, yet making a part of the whole, which cleanses and purifies our atmosphere.¹⁰⁰

Nature, however, was not just praised for its – scientifically proved – healthy connotations, but also because its aesthetic qualities contributed to the embellishment of

⁹⁷ Etlin, p. 15

⁹⁸ Full title: *Experiments Upon Vegetables Discovering Their Great Power of Purifying the Common Air in the Sun-shine, and of Injuring it in the Shade and at Night. To which is joined, A new Method of Examining the Accurate Degree of Salubrity of the Atmosphere* by John Ingen-Housz, Counsellor of the Court and Body Physician to their Imperial and Royal Majesties. (p. xv)

⁹⁹ Priestley and Ingen-Housz were friends. In 1779, Ingen-Housz moved to Calne (Wiltshire) to Bowood Manor House, to use Priestley’s laboratory (where just a few years prior, Priestley discovered oxygen). It was there that Ingen-Housz carried out his research on the photosynthesis process.

<http://www.macroevolution.net/jan-ingenhousz.html#.Tvxxp0qKVbk>

¹⁰⁰ Ingen-Housz, p. xvi

the urban and metropolitan spaces alike. On 21st February 1833¹⁰¹, the House of Commons appointed a Select Committee, which was to secure “open places in the neighbourhood of great towns, for the healthful exercise of the population.’ The committee was largely appointed because of panic following the cholera epidemics. Concern was expressed over the health of London’s population and of other large industrial cities, such as Manchester. The fast and unregulated expansion of most British cities left little open spaces available to the working classes for recreation on Sundays or holidays. London counted three parks alone, all belonging to the Crown and of which just one was open to the public.¹⁰² It is important to notice, however, that most factory workers or artisans were not located in the western part of London, and that those benefitting from public open spaces such as St James’ Park,¹⁰³ were the more local middle-class residents of west London. The Royal Parks were used as a tissue to connect the otherwise fragmented areas around Westminster, which was gradually being built up in the nineteenth century. The Royal Parks provided a link between otherwise separated parts of West London.¹⁰⁴

Although a British scientist discovered the healthy properties of vegetation, the first cemetery design to integrate these new findings was by the hand of French architect Jacques Denise Antoine (1733-1801). In one of his design proposals for a cemetery, Antoine introduced trees in the style of a formal garden, with planting ordered along pathways and borders. His inspiration came from the engravings of English country houses, executed by Dutch draughtsman and engraver Johannes Kip (1652-1722). Antoine also referenced the use of intersecting geometrical forms, such as the circle in the square, as seen in the Italian gardens at Villa Lante and Villa d’Este.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Etlin argues that the idea of the landscaped cemetery originated from the early eighteenth-century English landscape garden, which then later influenced landscape and cemetery design on the continent. To support his theory, Etlin provides two examples: Leasowes Gardens, designed and developed by English poet William Shenstone (1714-1763) between 1743 and 1763, and Stowe, designed by William Kent (1685-1748) and Charles Bridgeman (1690-1738) between 1730 and 1738. For Etlin, Leasowes combined the dual aspects of “pastoral amusement” and “solemn meditation,” two contrasting

¹⁰¹ Coincidentally, Kensal Green Cemetery opened to burial in 1833 as the first of a new generation of London cemeteries that featured landscaped vegetation.

¹⁰² Houses of Parliament Archives - Public Health, 1833

¹⁰³ This was the first of the Royal Parks to be opened to the public in 1814 (by the Prince Regent), upon payment of an entry fee. (Arnold D., p. 161)

¹⁰⁴ Arnold, D., p. 159

¹⁰⁵ Etlin, pp. 93-5

aspects that, in his view, were to become the “underlying feature of the English landscape garden.”¹⁰⁶ By contrast, the distinctive feature at Stowe was the Elysian Fields in which memorials to great thinkers, in Etlin’s view, “popularised the ideal of honouring public virtues” (including Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, Locke and Newton). In Etlin’s words:

The Elysian Fields at Stowe, perhaps more than any other British landscape garden, were to affect profoundly the French idea of what a cemetery should be. The history of Stowe is inseparable from that of the evolution of the landscape garden.¹⁰⁷

Building on Etlin’s findings, it is possible to say that Priestley’s discovery provided a scientific explanation to vegetation that justified its presence in the space of the cemetery. The garden cemetery became therefore a healthy alternative to the otherwise unhygienic and deleterious churchyards. This passage also marked a step forward in the process of secularisation of burial culture in modernity. The writer also asserts that contemplative approach to nature originated in the gardens at Leasowes and Stowe. This reinforces – or shows continuity in history – the use of flowers and vegetation in the cemetery space as we saw with Ragon. Nature is still an integral part of burials, but its benefits are now rationally explained by a scientific discovery. Furthermore, Etlin clarifies that the broadly disseminated idea that Victorian cemeteries were inspired by Père Lachaise is not fully accurate, as it was inspired by the English landscape garden of the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth-century. Lastly, we saw how the landscape, especially in Stowe, anticipated the celebration of human achievements and knowledge in the form of memorials set within the landscape. This suggests the reconciliation between man and nature, in a kind of new cosmological order, which is not understood in terms of faith and religious belief (whether pagan or otherwise), but explained by human reason, and its scientific advances.

Whether they were an inspiration or not to London’s companies, the Parisian cemeteries made us of the landscape in a very different way from Kensal Green or Highgate cemeteries. Père Lachaise for example has a specific urban feel to it with vegetation

¹⁰⁶ Etlin, pp. 163, 176

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 184

contained in specific areas and cobbled stone avenues, which mimic Parisian avenues. Unlike the more rural and picturesque looks of Kensal Green Cemetery (see Figs. 38-9).



Fig. 38 – 2011. A paved avenue in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris conveys the sense of a city road.
Source: Author.



Fig. 39 – 2011. The central avenue in Kensal Green Cemetery conveys the idea of a path in a rural park.
Source: Author.

To further understand the relationship between architectural language and landscape in London's Victorian cemeteries we will need to look into the idea of urban picturesque. In his essay 'The Metropolitan Picturesque' published in 1994, Malcolm Andrews (1942-) discusses the role of the picturesque in the context of nineteenth-century London.

In particular, I will draw on one of his comments that help to investigate the architecture and the role of the picturesque at the time. Andrews juxtaposes his critical statement on British nineteenth-century architecture with a remark on the picturesque, stating that:

[The] picturesque connotes, then, variety, idiosyncrasy and individuality, cornerstones of the new political and economical philosophy of the age – laissez-faire, self-help, and entrepreneurial freedom.¹⁰⁸

Andrews' statement can be taken as a good starting point to understand the Victorian cemetery and ascertain which picturesque elements were used as a metaphor to express individuality in Victorian times. In line with Andrews' statement, we could say that the architectural language of Victorian cemeteries was not particularly innovative per se, as they borrow their aesthetics from existing languages, (Kensal Green Cemetery in Greek Revival, Highgate Cemetery in Gothic Revival, however, these new cemeteries tested new combinations of architecture and landscape in an unprecedented way, to form new types of cemeteries. The architecture of Victorian cemeteries with their chapels, monuments and mausoleums, is at one with the context of the natural landscape. This combination informed a perception of the cemetery that has been defined as picturesque. In the context of the privately owned Victorian cemeteries, this quality was used commercially for the sale of private burial plots. Although the idea of the picturesque is closely associated with the Regency architecture and landscape style of the late seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, it became relevant to the urban developments of nineteenth-century London.

Although located in London's suburbs, these spaces complied with the rules adopted for the supervision of other open spaces in the urban environment, such as squares, parks or leisure gardens, including a system to regulate the access of visitors by issuing especially designed tokens (see Fig. 40).

¹⁰⁸ Andrews, p. 285



Fig. 40 – Undated. Access token to Highgate Cemetery.
Source: British Museum Archives.

In this respect, the new Victorian cemeteries encapsulated the idea of civic order and culture of a locality or even community. Towns and cities authorities were competing with one another to be seen carry improvements. If the collective meanings of landscape were connected to civic order and decorum and cultural progress, for the individual purchasing a private burial plot, they had still to do with legacy and social status. The landscape, just like funerary architecture, was an instrument to create a benevolent façade to what was in reality, a business asset for a company.

Although the landscape of these cemeteries was laid out in such a way as to be perceived as one coherent piece of design, it was pragmatically subdivided into burial plots (of differing sizes), available for sale. Graves were therefore marketed in relation to their size, prominence, features, accessibility and geological makeup. In the case of Kensal Green Cemetery the more costly plots were in proximity to royal graves, such as that of Prince Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex and his sister Princess Sophia, and that of Prince George, Duke of Cambridge.¹⁰⁹ Their presence contributed towards the reputation of this cemetery and the General Cemetery Company. This later also happened in Highgate Cemetery where famous thinkers, writers and artists chose to be buried. Similarly on an undated map of Brookwood Cemetery burial plots are ranked as 2nd and 3rd class (see Fig. 41). Thus we can say that the social hierarchy of the urban space is reproduced and imposed along the contours of the cemetery's landscape, according to the commercial laws that established the fee scale for burial plots.

¹⁰⁹ All relations of King George III, father of Prince Augustus Frederick and Princess Sophia, and the grandfather of Prince George.

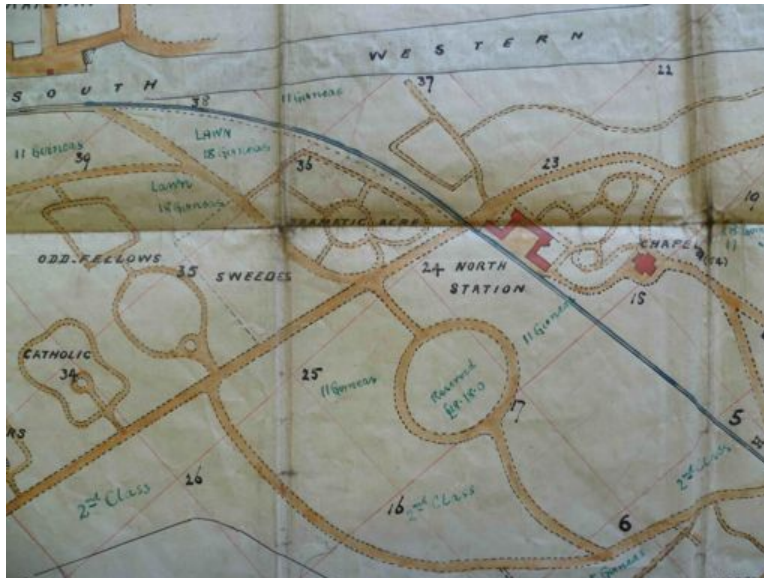


Fig. 41 – Undated. Plan of Brookwood Cemetery mapping of plot fees.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

These arrangements encapsulated what the middle classes ultimately aspired to and wanted be associated with: social status and legacy. Therefore, buying a burial plot within these landscapes satisfied both needs. However, when observed on the small scale of a private burial plot, it is possible to notice how privacy was also important, as the landscape acted as a curtain that screened with a layer of privacy even over the most extravagant Victorian graves and monuments (see Fig. 42).



Fig. 42 – 2010. The extravagant mausoleum designed by Victorian circus producer Andrew Ducrow (1793-1842) for his wife and himself, it features an eclectic mix of Greek and Egyptian architecture.
Source: Author.

Lastly, we can say that when the Victorian cemeteries first opened, their landscape was a prominent feature and was more legible and coherent. As they became filled, however, the landscape changed and became one of graves. One could argue that the companies did not retain the same interest in the long-term aesthetics of landscape. This is demonstrated by the tight filling of new graves, tombs, and mausoleums especially apparent in the case of Kensal Green Cemetery. At the time of writing, its landscape is barely legible, among a sea of derelict tombstones and monuments (see Fig. 43).



Fig. 43 – 2012. Derelict graves at Kensal Green Cemetery.
Source: Author.

To conclude, we can say that ultimately the landscape in the Victorian cemetery attempted to address two contrasting aspects of nature by utilising the scientific rational explanations of nature’s healthy qualities as a point of mediation. As its benefits were scientifically explained, nature became neutral with regards to past associations with pagan, Christian or other religious beliefs and therefore could be integrated in the new paradigm of burial in a way which suited the cemetery companies irrespective of their own motives.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to deconstruct and analyse the main elements composing the paradigm of London's Victorian private cemeteries. From the existing literature and research material gathered there is strong evidence suggesting that the changes brought by cemetery companies to death culture in London were unprecedented and impressive in scale when observed in relation to time. We should remind ourselves how relatively quickly things changed over twenty years in terms of cemetery design, from the opening of Kensal Green Cemetery in 1833 to the integration of a railway link between London and Brookwood Cemetery in 1854.

These companies contributed to a process of rationalisation of burial that eventually played a part in setting new standards in funerals, by making them available to the larger spectrum of society. The directors of the cemetery companies were stimulated to activate change in burials on many levels, from religious and political to hygienic and financial. The administrative structure set in place by these companies allowed for new registers and paperwork to be introduced to manage the large administration of the newly formed businesses.

Motives were matched by the architectural styles and landscape design the companies adopted, which shaped their public image and perception. Funerary architecture became a metaphor that expressed individualistic values and social status for the middle classes at the time. Paradoxically, as the middle classes became more visible in the space of the Victorian cemeteries, the graves of the lower classes became almost completely invisible. We saw also how the landscape in the Victorian cemeteries attempted to address the two contrasting aspects of nature (benevolent and destructive) through the medium of science and its findings about the healthy qualities of vegetation. The landscape in the Victorian cemeteries drew heavily from the eighteenth-century arrangements seen in aristocratic country estates, and became a commercial version of the more traditional English landscaped garden. By observing the paradigm of the Victorian cemetery we can also identify what kind of social changes were taking place at the time. Firstly, we can say that it was a sign of the social changes that took place in death culture in Victorian London. The speculative companies were after commercial success and needed to expand their market and meet the needs of the potential clients. However, leaving aside the commercial aspects of these companies, London's burial reform would not have happened without the intervention of private enterprises that initiated a process of

dramatic transformation in death culture. Although these changes initially affected only the wealthier classes, they eventually reached a wider section of society.

Lastly we have seen how the private initiative of cemetery companies influenced dramatically the evolution of death culture in London and beyond that stimulated urban improvements for the city. This notion of civic improvements, will be researched further in the next chapter where it will be questioned how implementation of the new private cemeteries influenced the character of their immediate local context. Particularly, it will examine how private or philanthropic institutions such as hospitals, medical schools, parks, prisons and asylums, were located in the vicinity of cemeteries.

3. *The contribution of Victorian cemeteries to the character of London's suburbs*

Summary

In the previous chapter we saw how the new paradigm of burial implemented by cemetery companies changed dramatically the arrangement, organisation and management of cemeteries. These radical innovations contributed to the shift in perception of burial spaces from unhealthy and unpleasant, to salubrious destinations for rational recreation and contemplation.

This chapter studies how Victorian cemeteries influenced the character of their immediate surroundings, considering how their implementation may have sparked further improvements and development in towns and cities. These included the reformation of institutions such as hospitals, prisons, asylums and workhouses along the introduction of new transport infrastructures, parks and dwellings.

Specific geographical zones within one-mile radius from each chosen cemetery have been identified as study areas, with the aim of understanding how they developed in character following the creation of a cemetery. To provide a theoretical framework to this research, the first section of this chapter introduces a selection of existing theories that link the rise of capitalism to the formation of urban space in nineteenth-century London. This will be followed by individual studies on the development of each neighbourhood from the inception of a new cemetery to the first part of the twentieth century.

The chapter concludes that along with new cemeteries, other reformed institutions were also found in London's suburbs, as well as model dwellings and new parks. These too, promoted civic pride, decorum and modernisation by pioneering new rational ways of organising spaces and functions. Moreover, this chapter argues that the combined presence of Victorian cemeteries, institutions and other improvements formed the framework for a new spatial model of living. This contributed to the unique character of London's suburbs and stimulated the emergence of planning strategies that were eventually developed in the twentieth century.

3.1. Spatial order and Victorian London.

In the previous chapter we saw how cemetery companies influenced the reformation of burial spaces. We also saw how the introduction of new private cemeteries promoted civic pride and stimulated the improvement of London's built environment, as well as competition between cities. Indeed private commercial entrepreneurships had influential effects, which extended well beyond cemeteries, and broadly contributed to the spatial arrangement of nineteenth-century London. However, the relationship between commercial enterprises and the formation of urban space is a problematic one and a subject much-debated by contemporary historians and theorists.

The interpretations of this relationship are relevant to this thesis as they provide a theoretical framework to the research work undertaken in this chapter, on the observation of spatial arrangements in the proximity of Victorian cemeteries.

The following section therefore, aims to offer a glimpse into these studies, by gathering the key arguments and speculations that emerged from existing published literature.

I will start with the book *The Urban Experience* (1992) by Harvey. Here the author theorises on how capitalist economies influenced the physical urban space of cities and, by extension society, from the Industrial Revolution to present day. Harvey explains that the process of "capital accumulation and the production of urbanisation go hand in hand." For Harvey, the power to shape space coincides with the power to control social reproduction. The author identifies the professional and intellectual skills of engineers, architects and planners as those able to shape physical space. According to Harvey, the combination of rational thinking and secular forces such as the politic and power of capitalism, contributed to the fragmentation and institutionalisation of urban space. Rationally, space is organised by functions of production and consumption: the factory, the school, the market, the shopping centre, the prison, the hospital, and so on. Furthermore, this process of continuous innovation was driven by "interurban competition."¹¹⁰

Although for Harvey the interurban competition between cities and towns did speed up the process of urban improvement and development, he also affirms that the real accelerator to the urbanisation process was the implementation of new transport systems; which reduced geographical distances and facilitated exchange relations. This as well as the media, in Harvey's view, contributed to: "a new sense of simultaneity over

¹¹⁰ Harvey, pp. 22, 26, 187

space.” Similarly, metropolitan life became a patchwork held together by punctuality, starting from the schedules of the transport system to the subdivision of time between work and leisure.¹¹¹ In the context of new transport infrastructure, the organisation of space and function started to become even more relevant.

We have seen how cemetery companies addressed the process of rationalisation of burial spaces and its functions by also pioneering the integration of new transport infrastructures. These principles, however, were relevant to the reformation of institutions such as hospitals, prisons and asylums and even new models of dwelling types, as we will see later in this chapter.

A critique over the formation of the urban space has also been studied and theorised by Foucault. In his lecture series book *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78* (2009) the author explains that since the eighteenth century, the urban space of the city had undergone dramatic changes. These included cutting new routes through the existing fabric of the city, widening roads to improve ventilation and prevent the nesting of diseases. Although these interventions were primarily done for hygienic reasons, they were also implemented to improve the economy of the city, its trade networks of exchange, and circulation of goods in and out of the city. For Foucault, this process was also related to that of security and surveillance over the circulation of goods and people.¹¹² Therefore for Foucault trade networks and commercial aspects generated the improvements of the built environment of a city, yet the urban space was primarily tailored to fit the purpose of production and consumption. To summarise for Harvey and Foucault the urban space of the city started to become a clockwork-like structure that promoted efficiency and functionality, through spatial and social order in the name of commerce, governance and hygiene.

It is worth to remembering however, that although Harvey and Foucault’s theories provide a critical and valid platform for discussion, they are only partly applicable to the specific context of nineteenth-century London. Indeed private commercial initiatives had a prime role in transforming London’s built environment, where possible, into a more efficient and rationally organised sequence of interconnected spaces. However, other complex networks also contributed to the formation of the London urban arrangement, such as the work of philanthropists and charitable organisations. As we will see later organisations such as the Artisans’ Labourers’ and General Dwellings Company and the

¹¹¹ Harvey, pp. 18, 17

¹¹² Foucault, 2009, p. 18

Improved Industrial Dwellings Company set up by philanthropist Sydney Waterlow (1822-1906) which among others, were actively pioneering new types of affordable dwellings for London's working classes. We saw earlier how Southwood-Smith did set up a charitable organisation named the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes. Southwood Smith, together with Loudon, had collaborated with Chadwick in the 1843 report on the condition of London's cemeteries, which had led to the implementation of Victorian suburban necropolises in the first place. Southwood Smith's niece, Octavia Hill (1838-1912), also one of the founders of the National Trust, carried on the housing work of her grandfather in the neighbouring areas of Kensal Green and Southwark. Hill was also a close friend of John Ruskin (1819-1900), who helped her in projects to improve the dwellings of the poor. Ruskin invested £ 3,000 in Hill's idea to improve the dwellings of London's poor and bought a handful of dilapidated properties to renovate them and rent them out at prices affordable for the lower classes.¹¹³ Hill and her sister Miranda (1836-1910), also a social reformer, worked closely on major housing projects. Miranda between 1875/76 founded the Kyrle Society which brought arts and literature to the poor.

Speculative work on the relationship between capitalism and urban space, also extends to its effects on society. Among other scholars, historian Harold James Dyos (1921-1978) specifically studied the urban expansion of London and its population movement and formulated an original theory that identified two contrasting yet complementary processes of centripetal and centrifugal forces taking place, almost simultaneously, in Victorian London. In his view, "the centripetal forces helped to release the powerful centrifugal ones."¹¹⁴ In his essay, 'Greater and Greater London: Metropolis and Provinces in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' Dyos posits that the "metropolitanisation" process occurred in London during the nineteenth and twentieth-century. For Dyos, London's dominating influence over the national economy and political scene was already emerging, even before new technological progress released the industries from the dependence of coal supplies in the early twentieth century. In this respect, London acted as a magnet not just at a provincial or regional scale, but on a national one as well. In this first centripetal shift, people moved to the city or within its metropolitan radius, attracted by the possibilities that London represented at the time. In an extract from his essay Dyos explains:

¹¹³ Hill, p. 11

¹¹⁴ Dyos, 1982, p. 39

[This] meant packing London with people from the country, with country ways, with provincial attitudes perhaps, foreign customs certainly, which produced in the capital a concentration of wealth or control over it and therefore a disproportionate share per head of benefits (and conceivably, the penalties) of a relatively rich society.¹¹⁵

Dyos defines the second, and contrasting, process as a “centrifugal deployment” of the population into the metropolitan (suburban) areas. The author directly claims that this process was a way to “homogenise” the provincial behaviour and attitudes of a very diverse population of London into a “metropolitan culture.”¹¹⁶

Although Dyos’ argument proposes a new way to engage with the formation of London’s social fabric, it does not take into account that London’s development, not the movements of its population, were greatly linear and regimented. There were however exceptions such as the construction of large infrastructures, as the new railway system, which involved at times the relocation of people, institutions and even coffins, as in the case of St Pancras Old Churchyard, where 8,000 graves had to be relocated, to make way for the construction of the new station (see Fig. 44)



Fig. 44 – 11th August, 1866. Engraving from *The Illustrated London News*, (p 145), showing railway works done in St Pancras Old Churchyard. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

¹¹⁵ Dyos, 1982, p. 39

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39

A critical discourse on the subject of population movement and the social make up in Victorian London started to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century, when the inner suburbs were almost fully built up. It was in this period that scholars started to analyse these new extensions to the city. In an essay published in 1905 on Tooting in South London, politician Charles Masterman (1873-1927) describes the lower middle-class suburbs as “the places of all forgotten things.”¹¹⁷ On a visit to Tooting Cemetery, Masterman realises it is unlike the old English towns. Houses were not gathered around the focal point of a church and churchyard, where death was not forgotten but present in the everyday life of people. By contrast, according to Masterman, in the Victorian city, death was hidden away from sight and from everyday life as the evidence of the end of everything.¹¹⁸ Addressing Tooting previously in his earlier book, *From the Abyss* (1902), Masterman suggests that the clustering of institutions such as cemeteries and workhouses transformed the area into a centre of pathology and segregation and its population formed the forgotten poor, the elderly and orphans, in a kind of death in life.¹¹⁹ But what – or whom – was responsible for such results on a spatial and socio-cultural level? Masterman, from a politician’s perspective, credited the imperialistic politics of Britain. In his publication *In Peril of Change: Essays Written in Time of Tranquillity* (1905), Masterman is accusatory towards England for failing to address its domestic issues and therefore endangering its future legacy.¹²⁰ The country’s focus on the foreign politics of its colonies (the Empire) has detracted attention away from domestic affairs.

Recently in his book, *Semi-Detached Empire: Suburbia and the Colonization of Britain 1880 to Present* (2010), Todd Kutcha (1970-) states that Masterman’s view of the cemetery (in Tooting) should be read within the broader context of other institutions located in the area, such as hospitals, workhouses and asylums.¹²¹ From these descriptions of Tooting, it is evident that dealing with death, illnesses and convicts were perceived as belonging to the same sphere of interests in Victorian times, which accordingly required segregation in similar geographical locations. It is arguable that the presence of a cemetery, a workhouse or a prison affected the price of the land and the quality of a suburb, but this would need to be proved case by case and in relation to the local socio-cultural conditions and even topography. However, it is also true that the primary reason for the relocation of prisons to the suburbs was down to the low cost of the land, as can be seen in the case of Wandsworth Prison. According to historian Richard Byrne (1947-) the Surrey Justices was looking for a site that “had to be within a mile of a railway

¹¹⁷ Masterman, 1905, p. 155

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1905, pp. 155-6

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1905, pp. 157-8

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1905, pp. 157-8

¹²¹ Kutcha, p. 124

station, so as not to expend on travel costs, the savings realised by using cheaper land far out of London.”¹²² The relocation of these institutions not only allowed for geographical rearrangement in the metropolitan areas, but also a rethinking of their structural organisation.

To conclude we can say that as anticipated by some of the theoretical research encountered, the Victorian suburbs have a complex nature, as they organically developed following the combined action of commercial and philanthropic initiatives. These encouraged new ways of organising spaces, which ultimately formed an alternative to the city, and a new model of living. They also emerged throughout of ideals around the notions of efficiency order and governance as well as hygiene and interconnectivity between different parts of the city. The results however, as we will see in the next three sections, were very different. In some cases brave attempts to improve certain areas did fail, although, by contrast, similar interventions in other neighbourhoods activated a process of growth and expansion. This proves the need to look more closely at each one of the cases to understand how, in the process of their formation, the diverse character and intrinsic qualities of London’s suburbs started to emerge.

¹²² Byrne, p. 146

3.2. Kensal Green Cemetery

Kensal Green Cemetery, at the time of its opening for business in 1833, was London's first private Victorian suburban cemetery. It occupies a strategic site in north-west London, along major transport arteries into the capital, that gave to the cemetery its distinctive elongated shape (see Fig. 45).

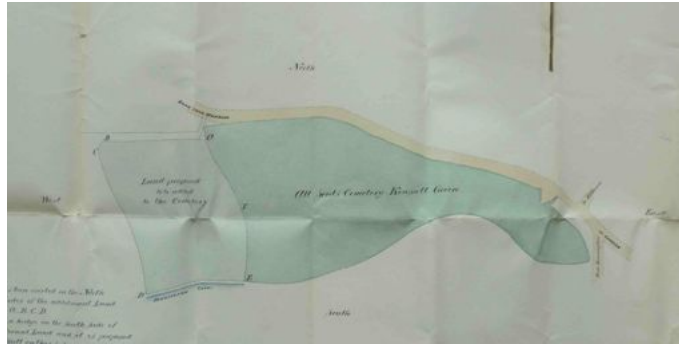


Fig. 45 – Undated – Historic map of Kensal Green Cemetery and its boundaries.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

The Paddington branch of the Grand Junction Canal (completed in 1801) marks the south-end boundary of the cemetery and the northern end follows the contour of the Harrow Road. A tunnelled part of the Great Western Railway, completed in 1838, touches parts of its perimeter and skirts the cemetery along its north-west border.



Fig. 46 – 1841 – Section of the map Environs of London drawn by B. R. Davies, showing Kensington. Kensal Green Cemetery, distinctive shape, can be seen in the top left-hand side.
Source: The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Libraries.

In the first few years, following its opening, Kensal Green Cemetery stood in almost complete isolation surrounded by open land, as it can be seen in the 1841 map *Environs of London* drawn by B. R. Davies (see Fig. 46). New developments however, started to fill the area, within one mile radius from the cemetery itself, in the decade between 1840-50, as it can be seen in the *Plan of London or Atlas of London and its Environs*¹²³, published between 1848-49. The eastern side, towards central London and along the Grand Junction Canal and the Harrow Road, are the areas where new housing for the working classes and new institutions were built. They include: Kensal New Town (initiated in the 1840s), the Paddington Workhouse (1845-1846), St Mary's Hospital (1845), the Female Hospital in Harrow Road and the Lock Asylum, both completed in 1849 (see Fig. 47).

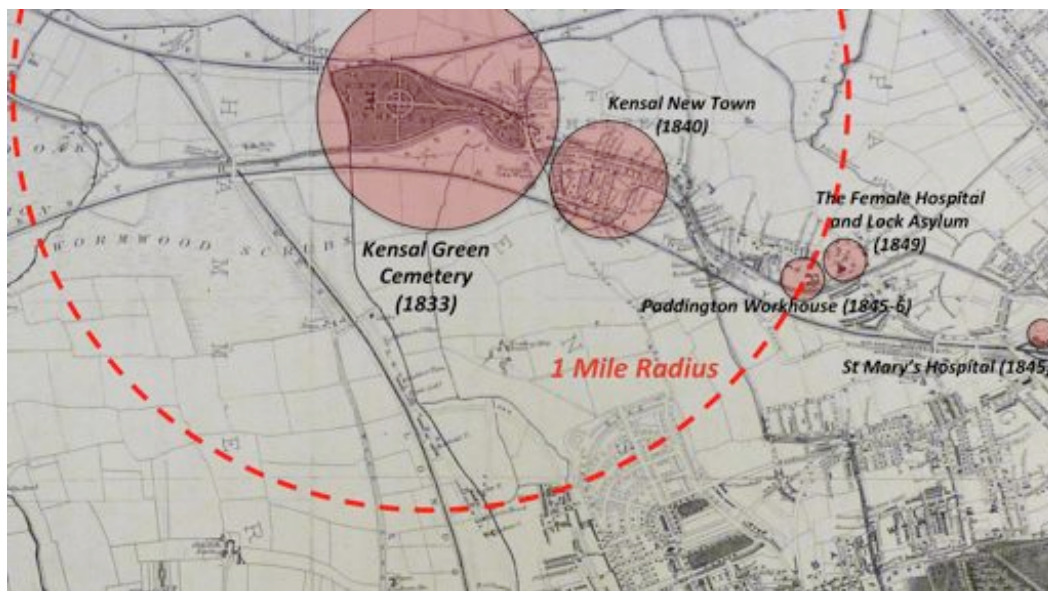


Fig. 47 – 1848-9. A close-up detail of Kensal Green Cemetery from the *Plan of London or Atlas of London and its Environs*, overlaid with relevant details. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

The location of Kensal New Town south of Kensal Green Cemetery and next to the Paddington branch of the Grand Junction Canal provided laundry work as the main source of income for the people living in the area, which was mostly populated by Irish immigrants (see Fig. 48). This was a detachment of the parish of St. Luke's Chelsea that also had dedicated burial space in Kensal Green Cemetery. Kensal New Town featured rows of cottages with front and back gardens, however the area soon degenerated into a slum due to overcrowding and the fast industrialisation and consequent pollution.

¹²³ This map was drawn by cartographer James Wyld (1812-1887).



Fig. 48 – 2010. Kensal Town towpath today (north bank). The Harrow Road runs behind the row of houses facing the canal. Source: Author.

The presence of the cemetery attracted workers, stonemasons as well as wood and iron workshops in the area, some of them are still operating today. The arrival of the railway in the area in 1838 and the Western Gas Works in 1845 attracted smiths, stokers and labourers, for whom housing was constructed around the Harrow Road. By the 1860s, the Metropolitan Railway intensified the need for cheap lodgings for railway workers in the area, which provoked the exodus of the “respectable” from the streets by the canal and railway, condemning the area to become a classic slum.¹²⁴ The development of Kensal New Town carried on into the 1860s and 1870s as houses were occupied as soon as they were built by the people who were moved out of their homes, for the slum clearance in central London. By this time, many local residents were railway workers. The area had an urban feel to it as houses were tightly packed in small sites. Over 55 per cent of the local population were classified as being “in poverty”.¹²⁵

Much effort was put in this area by philanthropic and charitable organisations, with the intent to improve the quality of the living environment in the area, through new housing for the working classes first with Kensal New Town in the first half of the nineteenth century and later through the work of philanthropists such as Hill and the Artisans’ Labourers’ and General Dwellings Company, which introduced new model dwellings in the north of Harrow Road (in the 1870s). Despite these attempts, the area did eventually reverse back into a slum, this was a deterrent from attracting the middle classes to move into the area, and form a degree of social diversity.

As seen briefly above, many institutions started to populate the area. Directly east from Kensal New Town was the Paddington Workhouse, a large institutional building that faced the north

¹²⁴ Porter, 2000, p. 213

¹²⁵ Sheppard, 1973

bank of the canal, and was completed in 1846 (see Fig. 49). It was eventually extended in 1867-68 to accommodate new sick wards. Further east was the Female Hospital in Harrow Road and the Lock Asylum, which had both served the area since 1849. The former specialised in venereal diseases and the latter in tropical diseases and both – as in the case of Paddington Workhouse – faced the north bank of the canal.

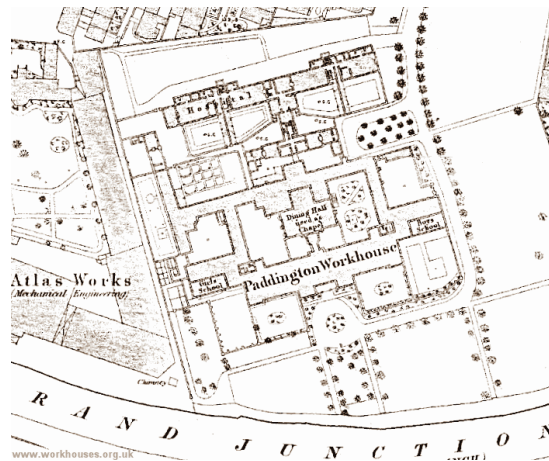


Fig. 49 – 1870. Paddington Workhouse. The Grand Junction Canal marks the south end of the site.
Source: <http://www.workhouse.org.uk>.

The development of the area carried on in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly along the south (towards North Kensington) and the east (Paddington). More institutions were built including the St. Marylebone Infirmary, which was constructed between 1879 and 1881. Designed by Henry Saxon Snell & Son, this cluster of buildings featured a landmark tower, which still stands today. The workhouse was designed to accommodate 744 sick poor. In 1891, Wormwood Scrubs prison was completed. Located within half-a-mile south-west of Kensal Green Cemetery, this prison was built to recover the failure of Millbank Penitentiary, the first national penitentiary, which suffered fundamental problems in the way that the prison was planned, causing practical issues in its running. For this reason, the government started to search for a new site away from central London but accessible by road and rail. The site was bought in 1873. In his design for Wormwood Scrubs, Major-General Edmund Frederick Du Cane (1830-1903) rejected the radiating system based on Bentham's Panopticon and, instead, positioned the blocks in a parallel arrangement.¹²⁶ In 1896, the Parish of Paddington Infirmary was built between the Paddington Workhouse and the Lock Hospital (see Figs. 50-1).

¹²⁶ Byrne, pp. 159-60



Fig. 50 – 1896. The cluster of three institutions: Paddington Workhouse, Parish of Paddington Infirmary and the Lock Hospital. Source: <http://www.workhouse.org.uk>.

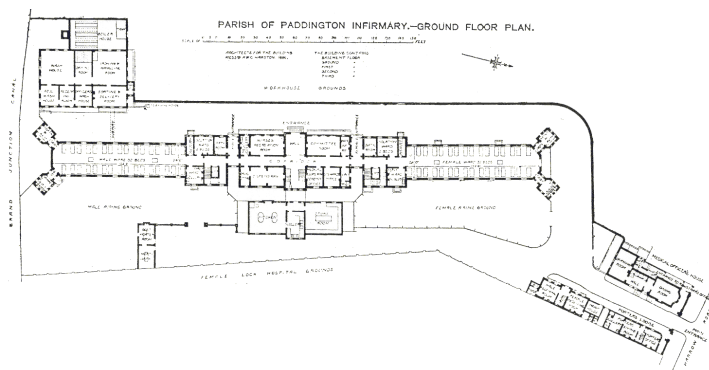


Fig. 51 – 1896. Plan detail of the Parish of Paddington Infirmary. Source: <http://www.workhouse.org.uk>.

In 1905 the Hammersmith Workhouse was completed on a 14-acre site adjacent to Wormwood Scrubs Prison. The land was purchased in 1902 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Before starting the actual construction of the building, a temporary structure in corrugated iron was built on the site to assist with the victims of a Smallpox epidemic that had spread during the winter of 1901-1902. The construction of the permanent building started in 1903 and was completed by 1905.

To visually recapitulate the spatial arrangement of the above-mentioned institutions in relation to Kensal Green Cemetery, I have highlighted them on a 1908 map of the area drawn by Scottish cartographer John George Bartholomew (1860-1920). To understand their distance from Kensal Green Cemetery, I overlaid onto Bartholomew's map a series of concentric circles radiating out from the cemetery, positioned at half-mile distances from one another (see Fig. 52).

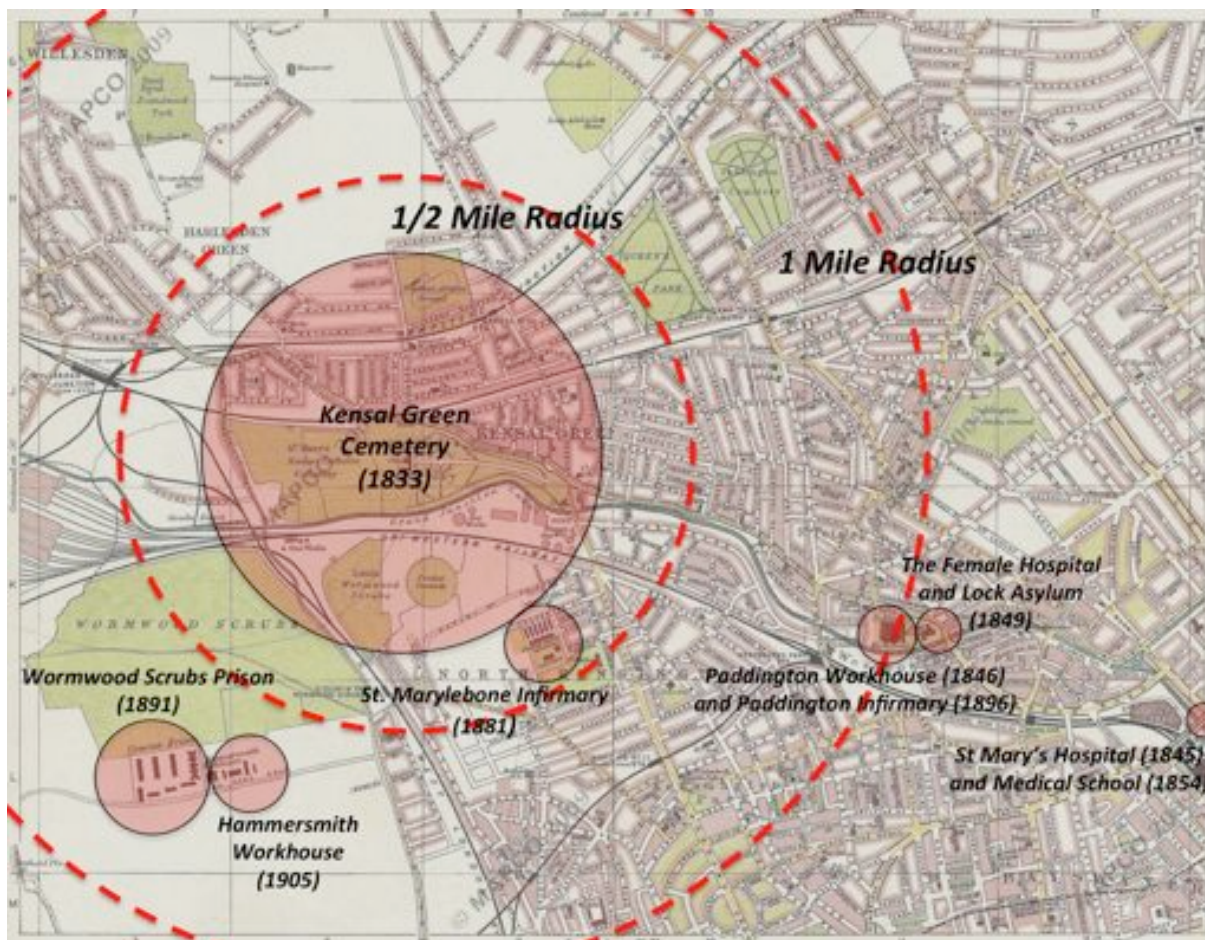


Fig. 52 – 1908. Handy Reference Atlas of London & Suburbs by J.G. Bartholomew. Showing the summary of the institutions identified within a one-mile radius of Kensal Green Cemetery. Source: Map and Plan Collection: <http://www.mapco.net/bart1908/bart1908.htm>

The suburb was completely built by the turn of the nineteenth century, as can be seen in the 1908 Hardy map. Kensal Green Cemetery and Wormwood Scrubs formed a large open area and a stark contrast to the densely built east part of the suburb. Other smaller and isolated pockets of green in the north area, are formed by Paddington Old Cemetery (1855) and Queen's Park (1886).

With regards to why such a high number of institutions flourished in the area, it is possible to say that the main attraction was primarily the low cost of the land, compared to central London. Many of the institutions moved close to the waterways and had direct access to the Great Junction Canal as in the case of the Paddington Workhouse, Infirmary, the Female Asylum and the Lock Hospital. Transport by water in the pre-railway era was faster and more reliable than by road and also safer. In his 1986 book, *The Development of the London Hospital System 1823-1982*, medical historian Geoffrey Rivett mentions the use of waterways in relation to the outbreak of epidemics in London in 1881 and 1884, which confirms that the epidemic of

smallpox, in particular, was spreading from hospitals. To contain the spread of such diseases, in the 1880s the Metropolitan Asylums Board commissioned the construction of ambulance steamers and floating riverside hospitals.¹²⁷ In addition to the waterway connections identified and shown in Fig. 53 (transport routes map), it is also possible to deduce that the railway and road connections surrounding Kensal Green Cemetery formed an access corridor to west-end London.

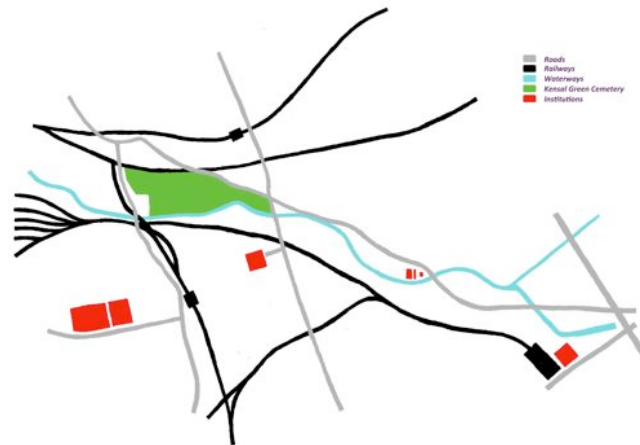


Fig. 53 – 2013. Diagram showing the main positioning of the identified institution, in relation to Kensal Green Cemetery and the main routes of access by road, water and rail. Source: Tim Ellis illustrator.

As it has been established thus far, the area was not made more desirable as a place to live when, in 1831, the General Cemetery Company acquired 54 acres of land (it then became the largest cemetery at the time). Due to its make up, it struggled to attract wealthier classes and remained instead mostly a working class and immigrants area, offering little social diversity. The construction of the Western Gas Company works in 1845, which eventually expanded, occupying both frontages on the canal and the railway, added an industrial atmosphere and aesthetic to the area, as opposed to introducing gentrification. This was also enhanced by the presence of the railway, the waterways and connecting roads that dissected the area and transformed it into a gateway to the city but one lacking any pleasing centre. As a result of its location, the Kensal Green was scarred by multiple forms of infrastructure, which sliced the land (railway, roads, waterways) and turned it into a corridor of communication routes into the city rather than a more coherent inner suburb.

The area remained a liminal space on the edge of the city, a space that is somehow resistant to classifications: is it urban? Sub-urban? Is it in between or something other? The very diverse cityscape, which formed around the cemetery, makes us reflect on how this particular suburb

¹²⁷ Rivett, p. 90

developed a unique character that combined a variety of functions, from industrial estates to institutions and transport infrastructures that have become its matrix.

The essence of the suburb was captured in a 1938 aerial view of Kensal Green, which shows the industrialisation of the area at its peak (see Fig. 54). Here the gasometers of the Gas Light and Coke Company and the Sunbeam Talbot motor manufacturers clings to the railway lines, as in the past warehouses did to wharfs and rivers. Kilburn and Maida Vale with its dense rows of terraced housing can be seen in the distance and, in the foreground, Kensal Green Cemetery also densely filled with graves. Kensal Green was one of London's industrial inner districts, which shows how the relationship between the industry and the urban space of city changed from the early Victorian period, when the two were strictly intertwined. As we can gather from this picture there is a clearer zoning of functions arranged in the space of the suburb with distinct sections dedicated to housing, transport, industry and burial.



Fig. 54 – 1938. Aerial photograph of Kensal Green and Kilburn area. Kensal Green Cemetery can be seen on the bottom left-hand side. Source: The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Libraries

To conclude it is possible to say that Kensal Green, at least at the time, conformed to Harvey's theory on the fragmentation and institutionalisation of space, as at a glance here we can distinctively see areas rationally shaped by secular forces such as trade and industry. It is also possible to see the force of Foucault's argument on the rational improvements of the urban environment for hygienic reasons, hence the separation between residential areas and burial spaces. These also facilitated the growth of the city economy and trade, as Kensal Green was certainly one of those industrial hubs that contributed to it. However it is also true that there is a lack of a civic centre, as Masterman lamented in the case of Tooting. This urban arrangement did break away from the English tradition of spatial arrangement around a church, market or

green or square. It is noticeable that apart from the cemetery there is no visibility of other open areas for recreation, either physical or rational.

As seen in early nineteenth-century maps, Kensal Green Cemetery was the only large development in the area, when first opened. What eventually formed around it constituted a new model of London suburb, suitable for the support of local industries by virtue of its topography, location social make up and transport links. This arrangement was part of a new order that tested new ways of organising urban space, strongly influenced by commerce and trade. In this respect the formation of Kensal Green has a crucial historical importance for its unique character both as an industrial district but also as a testing ground of new urban arrangements as alternatives to the historical urban fabric of the city.

3.3. Highgate Cemetery

Highgate Cemetery is located in North London and was originally the property of a joint-stock company named the London Cemetery Company. Highgate Cemetery is formed of two halves; the West Cemetery (or Old Ground), the original part of Highgate Cemetery that opened for burial in 1839, and the East Cemetery (New Ground), which opened in 1857 (see Fig. 55). Swain's Lane divides the two parts of the cemetery, however in Victorian times an underground tunnel, that was used to transport coffins between cemeteries, connected the two. The tunnel started at the back-end of the West Cemetery Anglican Chapel, where a catafalque was positioned for funeral ceremonies. At the moment of committal, the coffin was lower into the tunnel and then carted across to the East Cemetery where the actual burial would take place.

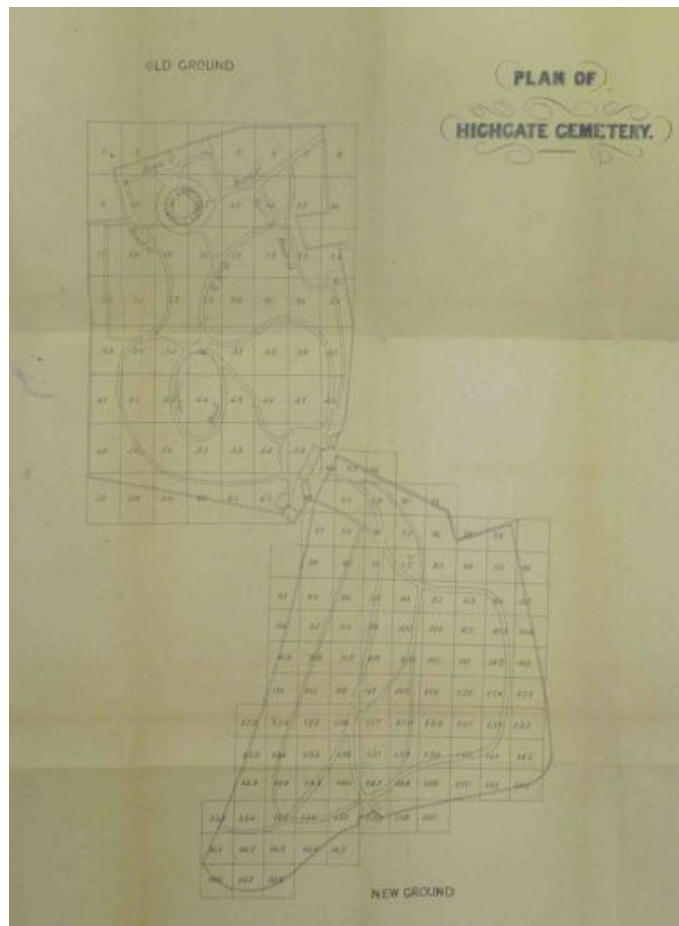


Fig. 55 – 1860 ca. Plan of Highgate Cemetery. Source: Guildhall Library, London.

Although in the first years following its opening, Highgate Cemetery remained mostly isolated, the expansion of the nearby Highgate Village was already underway during its first decade, as shown in a map dated 1848-1849 (Fig. 56). Here, it is possible to see how the knitted fabric

along the High Street and Highgate Hill (Highgate Rise from Kentish Town) is gradually loosened, as new residential developments are constructed in the area.

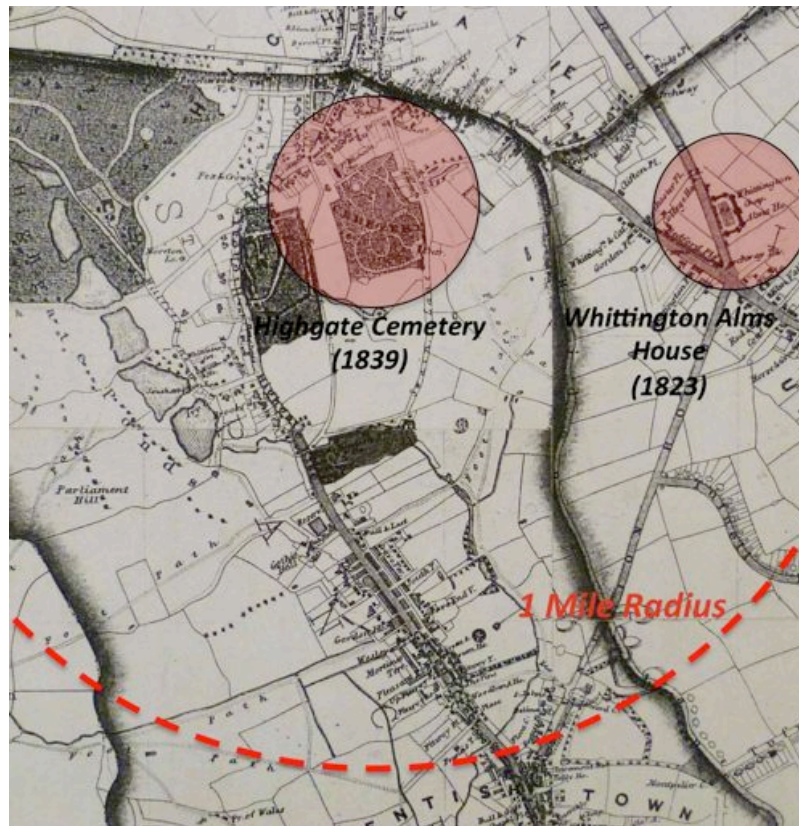


Fig. 56 – 1848-1849. A close-up detail of Highgate Village, from Plan of London or Atlas of London and its Environs by cartographer Wyld. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

We saw earlier how the fast growing development and speculation of the 1860s and 1870s turned Kensal New Town into a slum rather than a suburb, this was mostly due to the outpouring of poor migrants from the city into the fringe of London. By contrast, Highgate Village not only benefitted from the slum clearance of inner London, but also gained from the effects of the improved transport infrastructure in the area in and around King’s Cross. Despite this, institutions such as hospitals and workhouses started to be constructed in the area especially in the proximity to Highgate Cemetery. This was primarily to do to with its location, air quality and vegetation. In some cases, though, these predated Highgate Cemetery, as with the Whittington Alms House (later Whittington College) and Whittington Chapel, located east of the cemetery. Both buildings were constructed in Neo-Gothic architectural style in 1823. The main two-story building contained flats for almswomen widows and unmarried women over 55 years old (see Fig. 57).



Fig. 57 – 1836. The 'Tally-Ho' London to Birmingham Stage Coach Passing Whittington College, Highgate. Painting by James Pollard (1792-1867). On the right-hand side is Highgate Toll-House. Source: The Tate Gallery 1982-84: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions, London 1986.

West of the Whittington Alm House, and within half-a-mile from Highgate Cemetery, the Smallpox and Vaccination Hospital opened in 1846. This institution was relocated to Highgate Hill from Battle Bridge in King's Cross to make way for the building of the new railway station (King's Cross Station). The original building is now part of the Whittington Hospital. From a later map, dated 1864, it is possible to see that east of the Whittington Alms House there is a portion of land set aside for the Birkbeck Land Society, one of the early building societies that enabled their members to purchase freehold land in small plots for the erection of houses, or to cultivate the land as gardens or allotments. From the map, we can see that roads are delineated but no building projects had yet taken place. Further north, there is another parcel of land marked Birkbeck Land Society, on the north side of Highgate Archway Road, where Highgate Station was eventually built. South-east of the Birkbeck Land Society is the West London Union Workhouse (see Fig. 58).



Fig. 58 – 1864. Detail of Stanford Library Map of London and Its Suburbs, showing Highgate Cemetery and Highgate Village with overlay of one and two mile radius showing the proximity to other relevant institutions. Source: Map and Plan Collection: <http://www.london1864.com/>

In 1865 a series of prototype dwellings, named the Holly Village, were completed directly south of the eastern extension of Highgate Cemetery. The project was commissioned by Baroness Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906) and designed in Gothic Revival style by architect Henry Astley Derbyshire (1825-1899). It consisted of a small group of eight residential buildings arranged around a central green area (see Fig. 59), that revived the ideal village as a template for town planning. Considering the details of its features and quality of its materials and design (see Fig. 60), it is credible that the project aimed to attract middle-class residents to the area. The Burdett-Coutts family were local residents and their country villa was on Highgate West Hill. The Holly Village was strategically positioned so as to be visible from the Burdett-Coutts' villa.



Fig. 59 – Undated. Holly Village, a model dwelling for the middle classes, completed in 1865, set at the foot of Highgate Cemetery and financed by Baroness Burdett-Coutts. In the background (far right) the spire of the Parish Church of St Michael completed in 1832 in Gothic Revival style. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.



Fig. 60 – 2013. One of the houses in Holly Village still features the boundary fence, faithful to the original style. Source: Author.

The land to the east side of Swain’s Lane, and opposite the west part of Highgate Cemetery, was acquired in 1871 by philanthropist and politician Sydney Waterlow (1822-1906). These were the grounds of Lauderdale House, which in 1889 Waterlow presented to the London County Council along with the 29-acre ground to be open for the public (see Fig. 61). By doing so the combination of Highgate West and East Cemeteries and the new park formed an extensive open area of almost 70 acre of land in in one of the most beautiful areas of London.



Fig. 61 – 1889. Sketches of Waterlow Park
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

In 1863 Waterlow also founded the Improved Industrial Dwelling Company which provided housing for the working classes, in the areas of central and east London. This housing pioneered new spatial arrangements. In some of plans dated 1870 it is possible to see that each flat had their own toilet facilities, kitchens and coal storage (see Fig. 62). From the records it is also possible to see accounts of the mortality rates in the buildings and estates that the company owned and managed. This was to demonstrate that the better quality of dwellings had an impact on the health and longevity of the tenants.

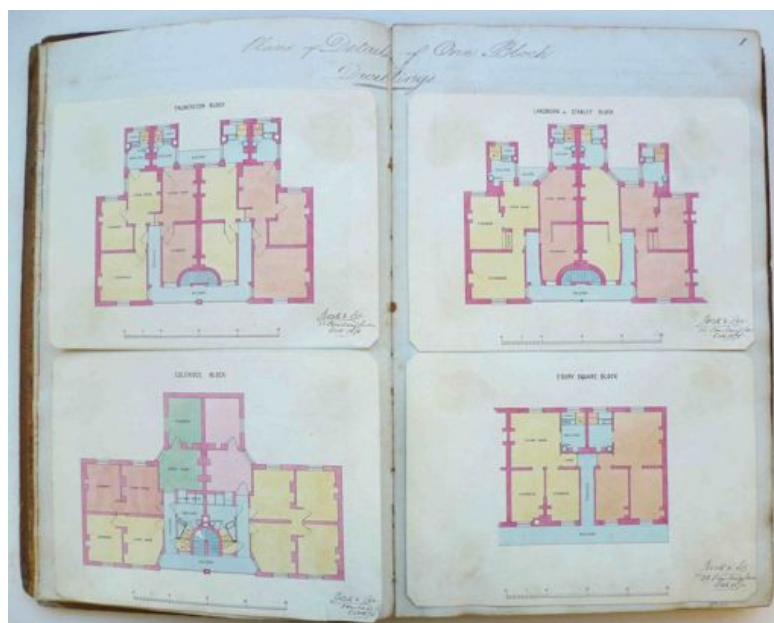


Fig. 62 – 1870. Plan drawings for model dwelling by The Improved Industrial Dwellings Company.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Between the 1840s and 1850s the fast growing developments in the nearby areas of Kings Cross and Islington started to put pressure on Highgate. Large developments started to be implemented, among others, a new cattle market and two prisons. Further from Highgate Cemetery, but still within a two-mile radius, The Metropolitan Cattle Market (later known as Caledonian Cattle Market) was opened on Caledonian Road in 1855, designed by James Bunstone Bunning (1802-1863), the city architect and surveyor of Highgate Western Cemetery. In a short article published in *The Morning Chronicle* in August 1852 (see Fig. 63), a journalist anticipates the developments that will flourish around the suburban cemeteries and the new cattle market, lamenting that brick walls of the new houses will spoil the picturesque view over Highgate, Kentish Town and Fortess-terrace. This is the result of speculation, as the Metropolitan Cattle Market was in fact located on the edge of the urban development and acted as a threshold to the city. It confirms, however, that much like cemeteries and the dead, slaughterhouses and cattle needed more space away from the city centre. What the article does not mention, though, is that in 1852 the Corporation of London purchased the site of Copenhagen House with a plan to demolish the existing buildings to make way for the New Metropolitan Cattle Market.¹²⁸

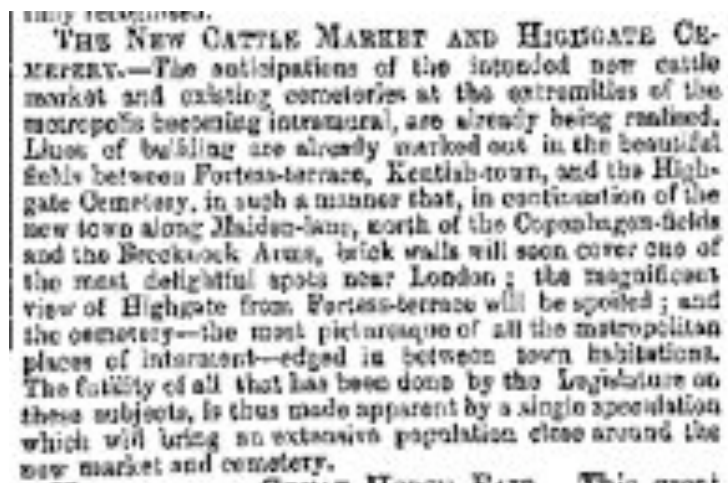


Fig. 63 – 23rd August, 1852. Article on the opening of the Metropolitan Cattle Market in the Monday copy of *The Morning Chronicle* (Issue 26727). Source: The British Newspaper Archives.

As well as the Metropolitan Cattle Market, Bunning also designed the City Prison on the north side of Camden Road (based on Warwick Castle), built between 1849 and 1852 (see Fig. 64). City Prison was for convicts of all classes and was formed from six wings radiating out from a central tower (four for men, one for women, and one for young offenders). Eventually, in 1878

¹²⁸ Baker & Elrington, *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 8; Islington and Stoke Newington Parishes*, 1985

the prison was taken over by the government and used only for women from 1903. The northern part of this area, which leads to Upper Holloway, was still mostly free from buildings. It was here that in 1832, the Corporation of London bought 10 acres to use as a cemetery during the cholera epidemic of 1832 and another 27 acres in 1848, on the north side of the Camden Road, near the City Prison.¹²⁹

Along the south of Caledonian Road (next to the Metropolitan Cattle Market) was Pentonville, a model prison. Built in 1840-1842 with alterations by Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860), it was based on plans by Lieutenant-Colonel Joshua Jebb (1793-1863) and featured a reformed and experimental system of separate confinement. This prison opened in 1842, and, unlike previous prisons that were more dismissive and practically hidden away (such as the Female Convict Prison at Brixton originally built in 1819). Similar to the prison designed by Bunning, Pentonville was built with five radiating blocks with 520 cells. This penitentiary was originally intended for short-term prisoners, but from 1848 was also used for long-stay mentally insane prisoners.¹³⁰ Eventually, it was in Pentonville Prison that British convicts (mostly selected from the Millbank prison) were prepared for eviction to the British colonies.¹³¹

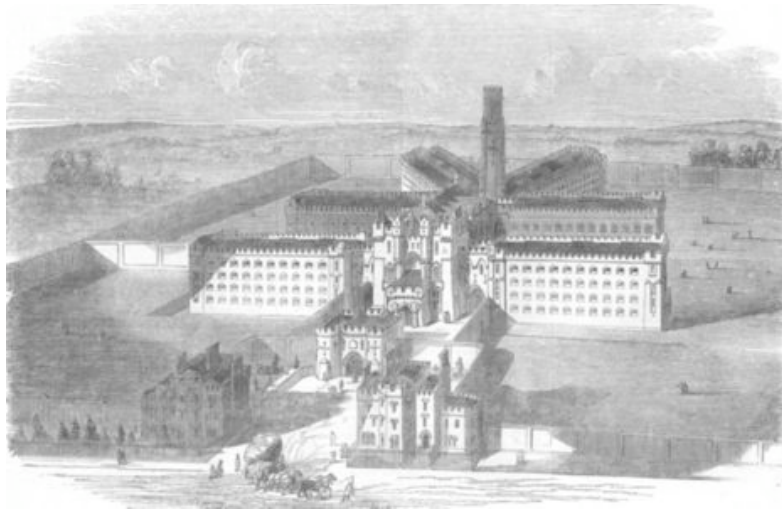


Fig. 64 – 5th February, 1853. City Prison completed in 1853 and designed by Bunstone Bunning, in an engraving appeared in *The Illustrated London News* page 97. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

¹²⁹ Baker & Elrington, *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 8; Islington and Stoke Newington Parishes*, 1985

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Byrne, p. 138. The writer also includes an extract from Sir James Graham, (1792-1861) Home Secretary in 1841: "I propose, therefore, that no prisoner shall be admitted into Pentonville without the knowledge that it is the portal to the penal colony and without the certainty that he bids adieu to his connections in England, and that he must henceforth look forward to a life of labour in another hemisphere." Byrne points out that this metaphorical portal was indeed Barry's grand entrance to the prison. The prison's entrance like that of the Victorian necropolis was celebrated as a ritual passage. Indeed, there is an uncanny parallel between the two (cemetery and prison) as they both mark the movement into another condition, in death or life. Despite Graham's statement, this form of punishment largely stopped in the 1840s.

On the north side of Pentonville prison was the Royal Caledonian Asylum.¹³² This was built in 1827-1828 on the east side of Copenhagen Fields (by 1855, this was the Metropolitan Cattle Market), and was a replacement for the original premises in Hatton Garden. The asylum was a charity that supported and educated the children of Scottish servicemen killed or wounded in war, and of poor Scots living in London. The building was constructed in 1828 by George Tappen¹³³ (1771-1830) in Greek Revival style and remained here until 1903.¹³⁴ (Baker & Elrington, 1985)

An 1878 geological map of the area (see Fig. 65) shows that several institutions started to appear on the flank of Highgate Hill and Holloway.

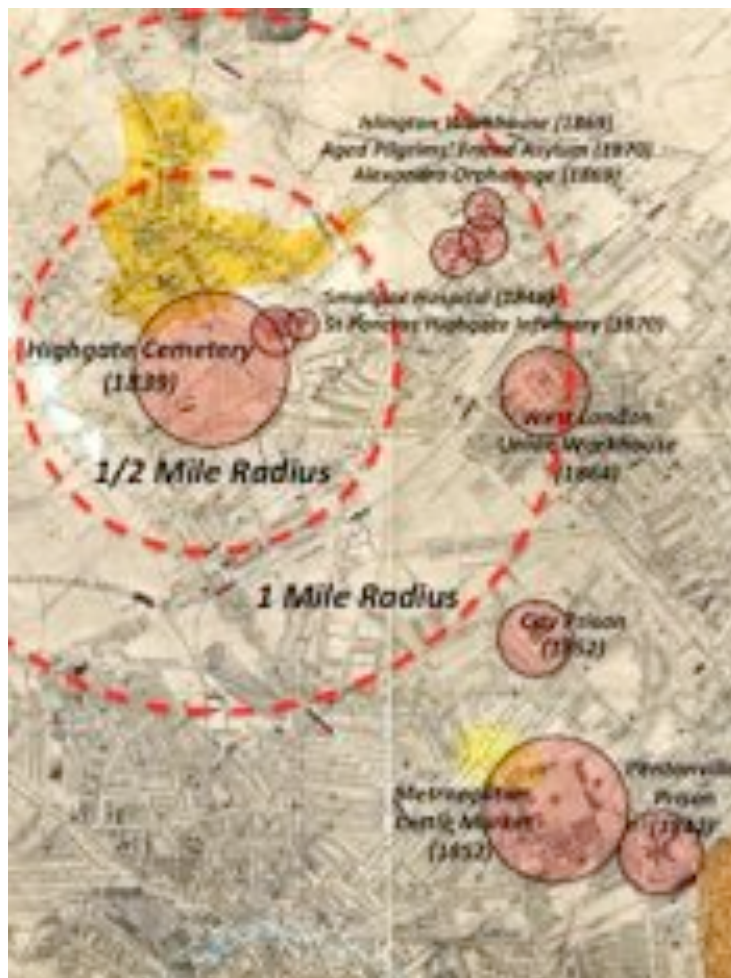


Fig. 65 – 1878. Detail of Stanford Library Geological Map. Highgate to Holloway, and St Pancras with an overlay showing the institutions and developments within a half-mile, one-mile and two-mile radius.

Source: Map and Plan Collection Online website at: <http://www.london1878.com>

¹³³ Tappen was a friend of Sir John Soane and, in 1813, he took over from Soane and supervised the construction of the Picture Gallery in Dulwich. Source: <http://www.dulwichsociety.com/journal-archive/64-winter-2009/473-george-tappen>

¹³⁴ Baker & Elrington, A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 8; Islington and Stoke Newington Parishes, 1985

These included the Islington Workhouse (1865), the Alexandra Orphanage (1869), the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Asylum (1870), and the Highgate Infirmary (1870). All these institutions were located within a one-mile radius from Highgate Cemetery, and were primarily located there because the area was considered healthier being on higher ground, and away from the congested urban centre.¹³⁵ Highgate Infirmary (now Highgate Mental Health Centre) was closest to the cemetery (see Fig. 66) and was constructed along the eastern border of Highgate Cemetery's extension in 1870.¹³⁶ It was also known as St Pancras North Infirmary to distinguish it from the St Pancras South Infirmary (now St Pancras Hospital), both part of the St Pancras Workhouse.



Fig. 66 – 2013. St Pancras Highgate Infirmary today. Source: Author.

Further east towards Holloway, within a mile from the cemetery, was the Islington Workhouse (now Whittington Hospital) on St John's Road (see Fig. 67), which was completed in 1865. Next to this was the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Asylum, built in 1870 to house up to 120 poor people. The building was designed in a Tudor Gothic style and developed around a central courtyard.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Baker & Elrington, *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 8; Islington and Stoke Newington Parishes*, 1985

¹³⁶ Walford, *Old and New London: Volume 5: Highgate: Part 1 of 2*, 1878

¹³⁷ Baker & Elrington, *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 8; Islington and Stoke Newington Parishes*, 1985



Fig. 67 – 2013. Islington Union Workhouse Infirmary, today part of the NHS Whittington Hospital. Source: Author.

In 1879 the West London Union Workhouse was completed (see Fig. 68). The building located at the junction between Highgate Hill and Archway road was designed by Henry Saxon Snell (1831-1904).



Fig. 68 – 2013. West London Union Workhouse is part of UCL today. Source: Author.

From the 1870s, residential buildings filled the remaining land in the area and the existing streets were laid out. By the mid-1890s, the only open spaces were the grounds of the institutions, two sports grounds, and the gardens of a few large houses, especially along

Hornsey Lane. Most of the building was crowded terraces from the 1870s and early 1880s. Houses in the area between Highgate and Holloway were still villas, although the demand for them was not as high as for lower middle-class terraces, which, by the 1860s, dominated the typology of houses in the area.¹³⁸ By the beginning of the twentieth century, the development of Highgate as one of London's inner suburbs was completed. In an historical map dated 1908 (see Fig. 69), it is possible to see how the open spaces were drastically reduced, and how, by then, a cluster of open land in this relatively dense area was formed by Highgate Cemetery with Waterlow Park. The map by Bartholomew shows the institutions mentioned in the previous pages.

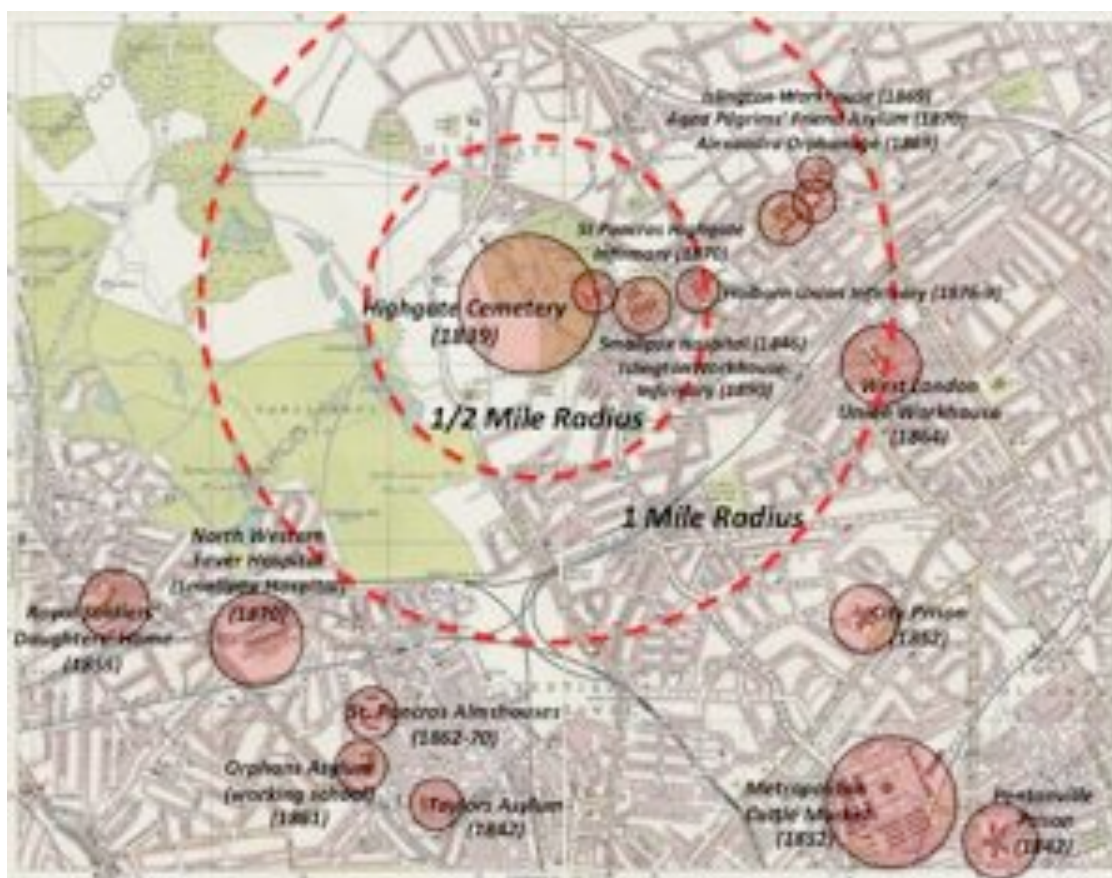


Fig. 69 – 1908. Handy Reference Atlas of London & Suburbs by J.G. Bartholomew. Details of Highgate Cemetery, Holloway and St Pancras with overlay showing the proximity of specific developments and institutions. Source: Map and Plan Collection Online website at: <http://www.mapco.net/bart1908/bart1908.htm>

Because of its topographical configuration, on top of a hill with striking views over London, Highgate was considered a desirable place for living, particularly for its improved air quality, which as seen, made it also attractive for hospitals and other institutions. Unlike Kensal Green Cemetery, Highgate was only accessible by road and later by railway, but because of its height,

¹³⁸ Baker & Elrington, *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 8; Islington and Stoke Newington Parishes*, 1985

its landscape remained only partially scarred by train lines and access roads. Both visually and in terms of development, Highgate has a more cohesive and intimate appearance. Even the number of institutions (which are still partially visible today), are less exposed, as in the case of the Kensal Green area. Highgate, despite its extensive development in the nineteenth century, had a pre-existing village and an active local community (unlike Kensal Green). This allowed the area to be more carefully planned in accordance with the existing buildings. Today, the cemetery is considered a key feature of Highgate that did not detract from its status as a desirable suburb of London.

To conclude we can say that the topography, its vegetation and the pre-existing history of Highgate Village determined the character of this suburb. The presence of Highgate Cemetery contributed to this character by primarily retaining the green open spaces and views over the city, which together with the opening of Waterlow Park preserved its green heart. The topography of the area discouraged industry from settling in Highgate as it did develop on the flatland around King's Cross, where the railway infrastructure and warehouses were located to serve the north part of London. The green areas in Highgate also acted as a screen and provided both privacy and retained the healthy qualities of the air and the environments, hence the desire for institutions such as hospitals and asylums to relocate in the area. The examples of housing present in the area are different in scale and considerations. The quality of the Holly Village development reinterpreted, perhaps in a nostalgic way, the model of the English hamlet or village that clustered around a green.

Reviewing the findings on the Highgate area, with the theoretical framework set at the beginning of this chapter, we can say that the presence of a pre-existing settlement in the area, prior to the opening of the cemetery had a impact on the formation of the area. The local community was already active and influential in the decision-making even when it came to the consecration of the cemetery. Having as local residents philanthropists such as Waterlow also did have a major impact in the shaping of the area. This confirms Harvey's theory, which suggested that the combination of rational thinking and secular forces such as the political and capitalist power, contributed to the fragmentation and institutionalisation of urban space. However, in the case of Highgate the institutionalisation of space it is mostly detectable through the number of institutions present in the area. This was primarily to do with the intrinsic qualities of the suburb, being positioned on a hill overlooking the city and away from industrial areas. Thanks to these qualities, there was no need in Highgate to intervene in the urban fabric of the area to improve the local hygiene, which as Foucault suggested was the case in many cities and towns since the late eighteenth century.

The pre-existence of Highgate Village and its long history and social make up provided the foundation upon which the next development phase of the suburb took place, and that initiated with the implementation of Highgate Cemetery. The contribution of this new institution was strong proving that a hygienically sound and modern cemetery could co-exist in proximity to a residential area. In this respect as a suburb Highgate had all the requirements that Masterman lamented he could not find in Tooting, and that in his mind broke away from the English traditional urban settlements. In the light of what has been asserted we can say that in the case of Highgate the presence of a cemetery not only offered an innovative and modern addition to the area, but also enhanced its character and contributed to its preservation and growth.

3.4. Brookwood Cemetery

Brookwood Cemetery is located in Surrey and was founded in 1849 by the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company. The owners of the cemetery aimed to provide the ultimate solution to the issue of burial space for London and expected the 2,000 acres of land they owned to accommodate thousands of burials and last 500 years (see Fig. 70).

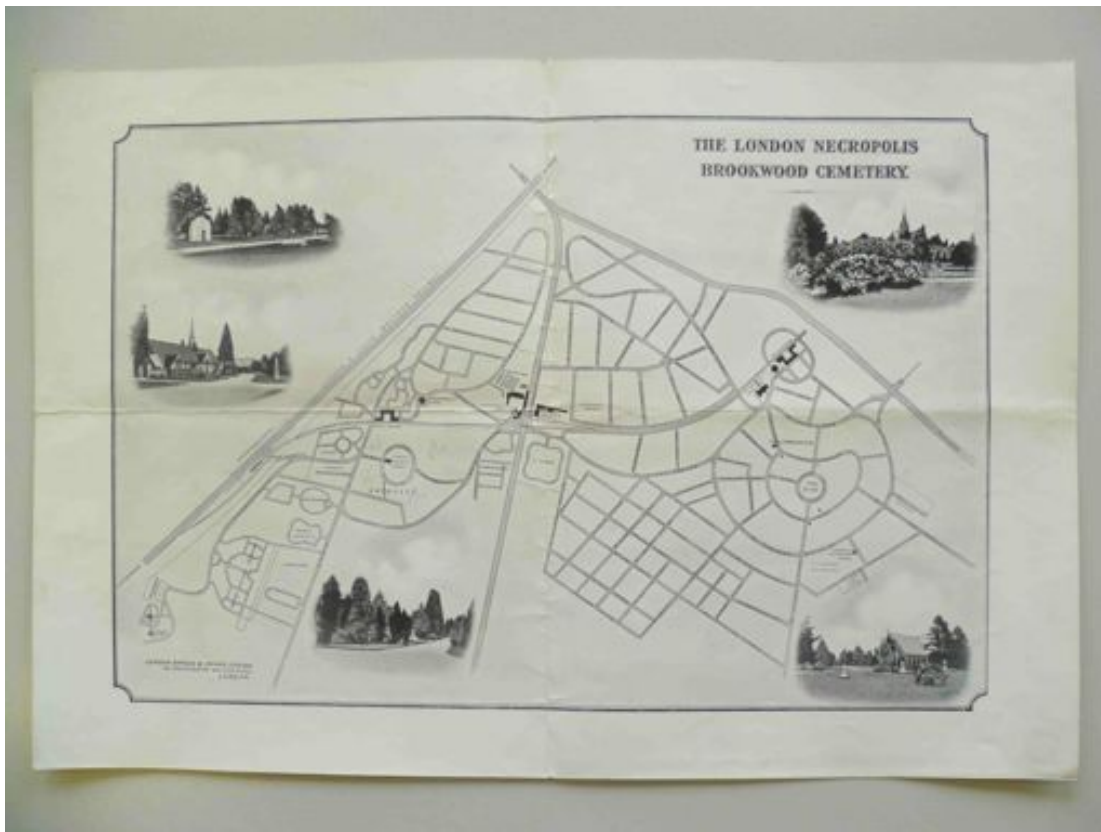


Fig. 70 – Undated. Plan of Brookwood Cemetery. Source: Surrey History Centre.

The government initially didn't support the idea of a cemetery serviced by a necropolis railway:

There appear to be great difficulties in bringing at any one time a large number of mourners of different classes, with different sorts of funeral processions, to a railway terminus.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Minutes of the General Board Of Health relating to the Metropolitan Interments Act. 20th February, 1851

The government was more interested in the idea of a new cemetery in the “beautiful and appropriate borough of Erith.” (*The Literary Gazette London*, 9th March, 1850.) which was also to be accessed by the Thames:

Because a river-way site affords by far the most economical means of removal [and] with very few exceptions it affords a greater comparative freedom of transit day and night.¹⁴⁰

The rail link proposal was, however, investigated. The company was registered in February 1851, and then incorporated by Act of Parliament in June 1852. Shortly before the Burial Act was passed in the same year, about 2,200 acres of common land in Brookwood near Woking were purchased from the Earl of Onslow for £ 35,000. However, the Act prevented the Company from reselling the land for private building development and it also provided an arrangement between the London Necropolis Company and the London and South Western Railway for the conveyance of coffins and mourners from Waterloo to Brookwood at a particularly advantageous rate. This would have effectively made the burial at Brookwood more affordable to the lower classes, saving them at least 25 per cent on funeral costs at the time.¹⁴¹

The first burial took place in Brookwood Cemetery in November 1854. As with Kensal Green Cemetery and Highgate Cemetery, Brookwood Cemetery too had contracts with London’s parishes to take paupers’ burials. This allowed for individual (unmarked) graves for the poor, which formed around 80 per cent of burials at Brookwood Cemetery. Upon its opening, though, the London Necropolis Company was on the verge of bankruptcy and it needed to make quick profits, possibly by selling part of the surplus land. By the end of the same year, the cemetery company had already drafted an amendment Act to allow it to sell part of the land.¹⁴²

Eventually, Acts of 1855 and 1869 enabled the Company to sell the majority of its land with considerable profit, with the aim of influencing the development of the new town of Woking, nearby Brookwood Cemetery.¹⁴³

Although the London Necropolis Company managed to have the amendments to the Acts approved by Parliament, there were still restrictions to what the Company could sell. Out of the 2,200 acres, about 500 acres were designated for the cemetery, 200 acres for a reserve for the cemetery, while a further 200 acres were preserved from being built on. The remaining 1,300

¹⁴⁰ Minutes of the General Board Of Health relating to the Metropolitan Interments Act. 20th February, 1851

¹⁴¹ Surrey History Centre, 2000

¹⁴² Clarke, p. 14-6

¹⁴³ Surrey History Centre, 2000

acres were at the disposal of the company to be sold for profit. By 1865, the Company had sold 346 acres of land, which was in fact bought by the Government. In 1858 the Woking Invalid Convict Prison (also known as Knaphill Prison) was built on 64 acres of this land and, in 1860, the County Lunatic Asylum was built on 150 acres.¹⁴⁴ Jebb and Arthur Blomfield (1829-1899) designed the main buildings of the Woking Invalid Convicts Prison, which opened in 1858 (see Fig. 71). The prison was extended in 1870 with the construction of a section for convicted women. It was the first prison to be designed for convicts suffering mental illnesses. At this time the prison had about 1,400 detainees, which required a large number of staff, from gatekeepers to carpenters and bakers.



Fig. 71 – Undated. Woking Invalid Convicts Prison. Source: Surrey History Centre.

As a consequence, the Home Office provided housing for the prison workers nearby, between St John and Knaphill. By 1886, the Government had decided to close the prison over the next 10 years and, by March 1889, the invalid prison was defunct and the property was transferred to the War Department. A portion of the prison that housed women convicts continued to be used until October 1895, when they were transferred to Holloway Prison.¹⁴⁵ On a local map dated 1897 (see Fig. 72), currently held at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, both institutions are shown, located within a mile radius from the cemetery.

¹⁴⁴ Clarke, p. 15

¹⁴⁵ *Surrey History Chronicles*

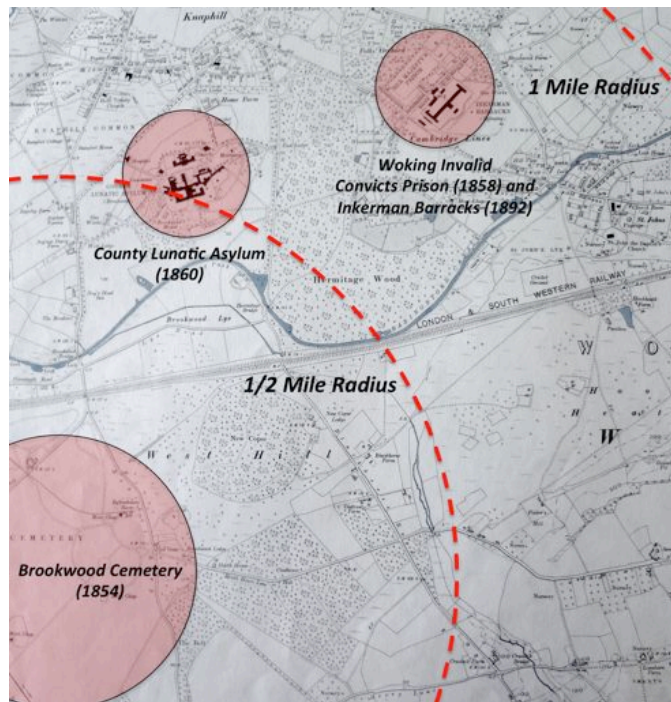


Fig. 72 – 1897. Map of the Brookwood area including Knaphill (north of the Basingstoke Canal and railway line) Brookwood Cemetery (below the railway line on the left) and Hook Heath (bottom right).
Source: Surrey History Centre.

The Woking Invalid Convict Prison and the County Lunatic Asylum attracted workers that eventually provoked the construction of new residential buildings, roads and, ultimately, the expansion of the transport infrastructure (Brookwood and Woking station were both built on the land owned by the London Necropolis Company). Despite this modest development, the two imposing institutions were also a deterrent to the type of clientele that the London Necropolis Company wanted to attract. The company's lack of a clear vision in terms of planning was also an obstacle to the development of the land. It was only with the appointment of Tubbs, first as a surveyor and land agent and later as the company's architect, that the management of the company's landholdings changed. Tubbs advised the company on subdividing the administration of the estate into three parts: Woking Station, Knaphill and Hook Heath. Two agents were appointed for Woking Station area and Knaphill, while Tubbs was responsible for Hook Heath.¹⁴⁶ The London Necropolis Company tried to auction the land in 1888 (see Fig. 73) on a prime site, near Woking station (Woking Common Freehold Building Estate). The sale was not successful and showed that there was no market for this premium suburban land, within commuting distance from London (40 minutes from London Waterloo Station at the time).

¹⁴⁶ Clarke, pp. 22-3

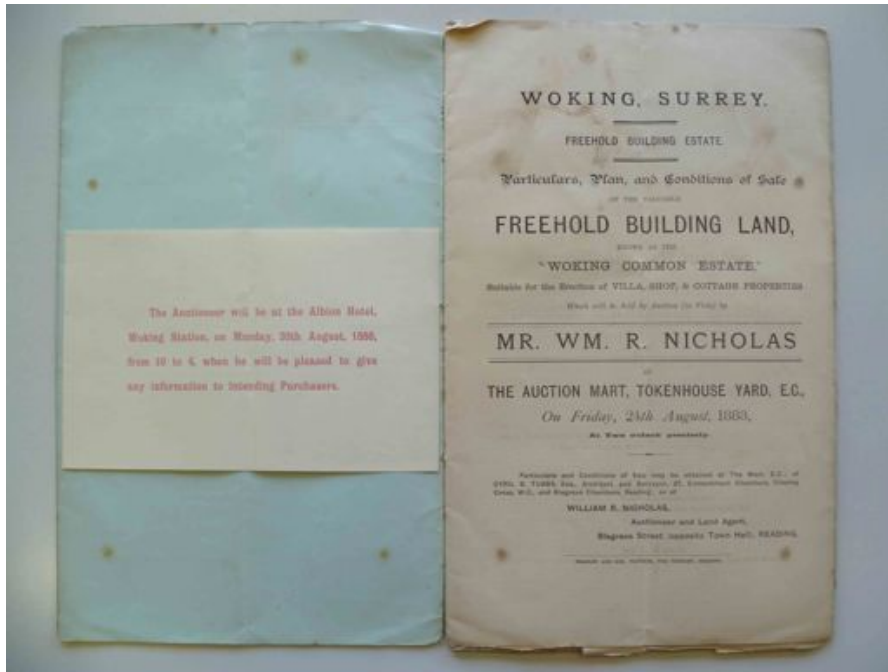


Fig. 73 – 24th August, 1888. The auction pamphlet for the Woking Common Freehold Building. Source: Surrey History Centre.



Fig. 74 – 1888. Plan of the Woking Common Freehold Building Estate (north-east of Woking station) included in the auction pamphlet. Source: Surrey History Centre.

The drawn plans included in the pamphlet demonstrate that Tubbs and the London Necropolis Company were interested in selling the land (see Figs. 73-4) to developers for high-density residential buildings. Tubbs and the company did not see the opportunity to develop the area under their control and plan at the time. However, we will see in Chapter Four that when

Messer became involved in 1898, when he returned from America, new visions were considered and a planning programme started to be implemented.

Having focused mainly on the developments around Brookwood Cemetery itself, I will now report on the area around Waterloo Station in London, where the head offices of the London Necropolis Company were located, as well as its workshops and private station. In a map of the area, dated 1878, it is possible to see that, unlike the case studies encountered earlier in this chapter and indeed Brookwood Cemetery itself, the only institution in the vicinity is St Thomas' Hospital. This was located within half-a-mile from the Necropolis Station. St Thomas' was located in Southwark until 1862, when the hospital was demolished to make way for the Charing Cross Railway viaduct (at London Bridge Station). Eventually, the new building was completed in 1870 and featured a façade extending along the newly built embankment directly opposite the Palace of Westminster, and completed around the same time.

However studying the arrangement of this area we can say that a new "civic" heart of London materialised towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as shown in the 1878 map (see Fig. 75). This new power hub was made up of the Palace of Westminster, Whitehall, Westminster Abbey, St Thomas' Hospital and the Necropolis Station. Within this amalgamation, the political and religious institutions were those historically more connected with the area, while others, such as St Thomas' had a more recent history. Amongst this cluster of civic interests, the Necropolis Station acted as a portal to London's new cemetery (with a vision of longevity). Although the cemetery did not have a physical presence – geographically it was dislocated (for health reasons, spatial issues) – it still had a "virtual" presence in the civic and social heart of the capital. This is not dissimilar from what we have seen in the case of Highgate Cemetery, albeit a step further. The railway enabled the actual cemetery to be located elsewhere, away from the urban centre itself.

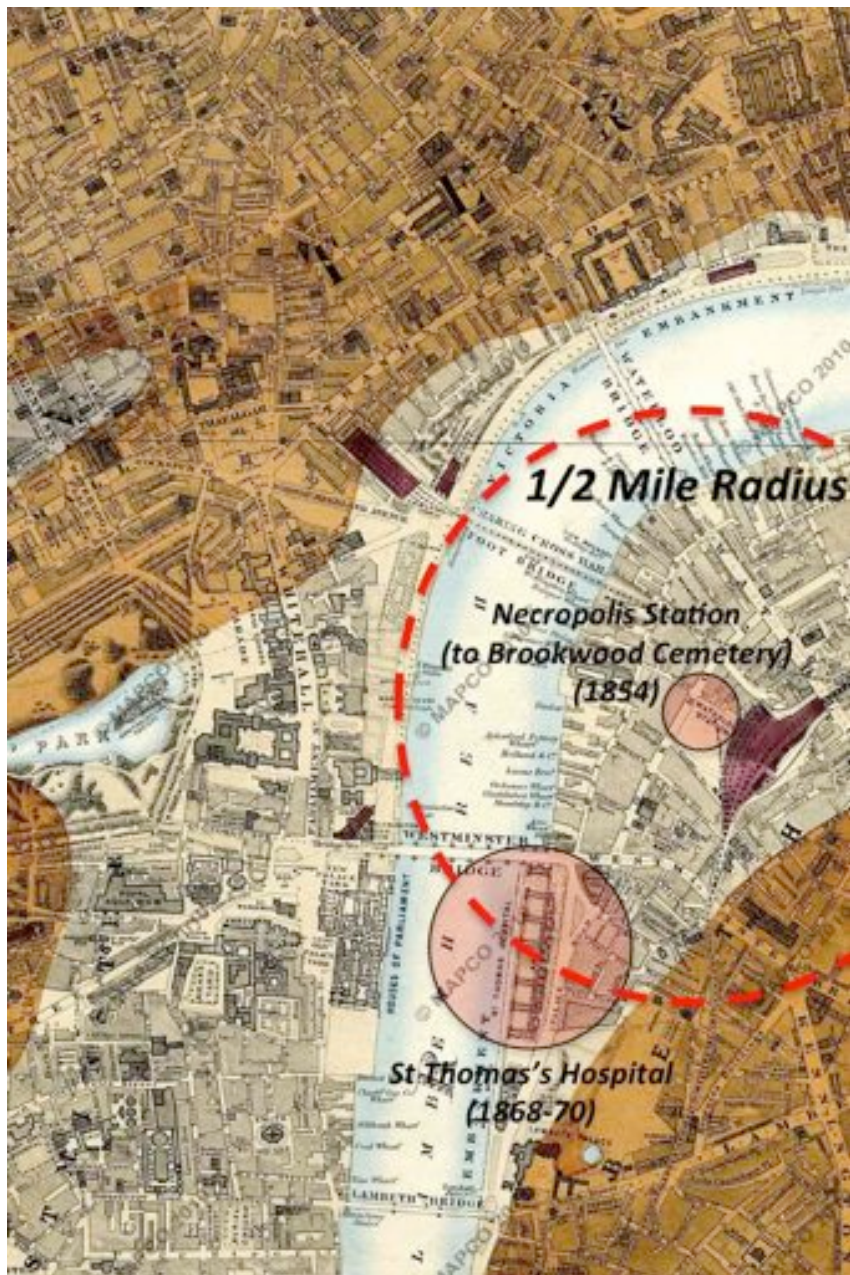


Fig. 75 – 1878. Detail of the Stanford Library Geological Map, showing Waterloo and Westminster areas.
 Source: <http://www.london1878.com/>

Given the evidence presented here about the London Necropolis Company, it is clear that, by the end of the nineteenth century, death culture and the London's burial spaces had come full circle. The Necropolis Station stands as a reminder about cemeteries, which, although more as a notion than a physical space, were part of the civic hub of the city – as they always had been.

Ultimately we can say that the influence of the London Necropolis Company and Brookwood Cemetery was twofold. On one side it strictly related to the urban context of London with the presence of the Necropolis Station and the companies headquarters (offices and workshops). The other, in Brookwood itself, contributed to the formation of a new area between the

cemetery and Woking. This was built from the very beginning, as we saw in the case of Kensal Green, however, by contrast, the owners of the London Necropolis Company had complete control both in vision and actual power to steer the development of the area. Although they did not establish a coherent planning strategy for the area they were in a position to influence its formation and arrangement and even its individual buildings and quality of architecture; effectively they acted as a local planning office. For example they did realise from earlier on, that if they did sell land to third parties such as local councils, perhaps more institutions would have moved into the area. This would have affected the commercial value of land. Ultimately it also helped to preserve the green open spaces, which gave to the area its unique character.

What the arrangement of this area tells us, when we look at it through the theoretical framework we set at the beginning of this chapter? If we look at the work done here by the London Necropolis Company through the lens of Harvey's theory, we can say that commercial forces had a great deal of power in shaping the character of the area. These forces were not connected to industry, as in the case of Kensal Green, but more specifically to land speculation. In this case the fragmentation and institutionalisation, as suggested by Harvey, was seen as a threat to the commercial aims of the company, and was controlled and regulated by the owners which understood that the introduction of further institutions, beyond the cemetery, could have commercially damaged the future development of the area. Certainly the control over the land gave the opportunity to the owners to test new ideas both in spatial organisation and architectural styles, as seen both in the cases of the station in Waterloo and the actual cemetery.

The specific settings of Brookwood Cemetery did not require the implementation any spatial rearrangements due to hygienic reasons, as suggested by Foucault, as the cemetery was not set in the urban context of the city, but instead was completely removed from it. However, the station and offices formed a very innovative and hygienically sound combination of spaces in which corpses were treated and prepared for their funeral and literally for their last journey. We will see in more details later that the London Necropolis Company was not trying to reframe or reconstruct the traditional English model of the village green and hamlet, in the land they had available, but understood that different areas could serve different purposes and accommodate different density.

To summarise we can say that Brookwood Cemetery contributed to two aspects of modern settlement - the urban and the rural - by responding to each one of them separately. As Brookwood was not in any way a suburb of London its development started to become relevant only in the post-World War II years when architect-planner Patrick Abercrombie

(1879-1957) understood the expansion of London on a regional scale. The presence of the cemetery there however, added to the character of the area in terms of privacy as the quality of the open green spaces. With regard to the urban aspect, the offices of the London Necropolis Company, by being located in the history and civic centre of the city, as discussed above, reintegrated, in a hygienically safe-way, the cemetery with its former site right in the heart of the city.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that the influence Victorian cemeteries had in the formation of their local context was different from case to case, and for this reason, produced a very diverse range of outcomes. From the individual analyses of each case study, it also emerged that the formation of London's suburbs was the result of a combined action of commercial enterprises, philanthropic initiative and government intervention. As seen, their operations did partially meet the theoretical speculations advanced by scholars that discussed the formation of urban space since the Industrial Revolution.

It is curious to note that, without adhering to the regulations or constraints of any centralised planning programmes, institutions such as prisons and workhouses – and particularly hospitals – were arranged in proximity to the suburban cemeteries. These, just as the reformed private cemeteries, did test new ideas and arrangements that did need larger sites for their implementation at lower costs, therefore new inner suburbs presented the right fit for these institutions. The combined presence of Victorian cemeteries, institutions and other improvements did eventually form the framework for a new spatial model of living. These were very different in their outcomes and varied in relation to the pre-existing settlements, transport infrastructures, topography and socio-cultural make up.

It is worth mentioning that although private enterprises and commerce certainly influenced the formation of London's urban space – including the reorganisation of the city's cemeteries, they were not able to fully take them over, as cemeteries were sacred spaces. In this respect the cemetery companies were not able to fully dispose of the corpses at any time to accommodate the changes in the market forces or other commercial forces. Private cemeteries were not such a flexible and adaptable venture, as the graves were not to be disturbed or displaced, unless specifically requested by the relatives or descendants of the deceased. This condition made it almost impossible for cemeteries to be converted, reused or demolished, as happened with other urban commercial developments.

To summarise suburbs started to be associated with a new model of modern life in a cleaner and healthier environment and gradually attracted new residents that identified with those values and could afford the expenses of a new home and the commute to work. However by contrast for the poor and the destitute, the sick and the convicts, the insane and the elderly, the

suburbs were a place with gloomier prospects. For the maligned groups in society at the time, it was a place of segregation, as Masterman observes, “the places of all forgotten things”.¹⁴⁷

Ultimately we can assert that the presence of a cemetery in a local context contributed to the unique character of its surrounding and stimulated change, experimentation development in terms of spatial arrangement. Their diverse range, overall, contributed to the character of modern London. Lastly, on the basis of the findings presented in this chapter, it is evident that a process of rationalisation of space started to take place in the inner suburbs of London since the early nineteenth century, as a consequence of the reformation of cemeteries, institutions and even parks and dwelling typologies. However this urban growth was still very organic and not cohesively regulated.

In the next chapter we will see how London’s nineteenth-century suburban sprawl amplified its spatial and social issues such as overcrowding, housing the poor, the lack of open spaces and cemeteries. As a response to this condition researchers and thinkers started to evaluate alternative models for urban development that would address those issues. Particularly with regards to burials, new methods of disposal proposed to make burials more hygienically safe, and minimise the allocation of space to cemeteries.

¹⁴⁷ Masterman, 1905, p. 155

4 ■ *Embracing change: Victorian cemeteries and the future of burials in late nineteenth-century*

Summary

In the previous chapter we saw how the introduction of new Victorian cemeteries, encouraged a process of rationalisation of burial spaces. This reformation and modernisation extended to institutions such as hospitals, asylums and prisons; it also stimulated the development of new typologies of dwellings and public spaces. The combinations of all these elements ultimately contributed to the character of London's suburbs, which was new and different from that of the city's historical areas.

This chapter, however, reports on the consequences of London's suburban expansion, and how its organic growth exacerbated spatial and social issues such as overcrowding, housing the poor and the lack of open spaces. Private developers were criticised for their lack of consideration towards the impact of their speculative building activities. Cemetery companies too were criticised for their monopoly over the funeral industry, for subtracting large portions of valuable land to other uses, and for the poor management of their cemeteries. This condition sparked concerns over the future of burials and provided an opportunity for new ideas to emerge, and propose alternatives to earth burial. Pressurised by this new landscape of possibilities, cemetery companies had to respond to the challenges and where possible, find ways to adapt and embrace change.

This chapter ultimately demonstrates that in order to make disposal affordable, less space consuming and more hygienically sound, there was a need to rethink and rationalise its processes. Cemetery companies such as the London Necropolis Company supported new disposal ideas, such as 'earth-to-earth' burials and cremation since their inception and made them available to their clients. Beyond burials, the company also explored the commercial possibilities of their landholdings in Brookwood and Woking by effectively becoming an all-in-one undertaker, building developer and mortgage provider.

4.1. Consequences to London's nineteenth-century suburban sprawl

This section reports on how the unregulated growth of London's suburbs in the nineteenth century exacerbated spatial and social issues such as overcrowding, housing the poor and the lack of open spaces. Most of the new buildings were speculative private initiatives and not designed to engage with the larger context of London urban context, or indeed address issues such as population growth, hygiene and circulation. This condition highlighted the urgent need to develop a strategic framework that would cohesively address London's, social and spatial issues, conjointly rather than in isolation.

In 1800, London had a population of around 1 million, by 1881 it had grown to 4.5 million, and by the beginning of the twentieth century (1911) it had reached over 7 million. This sudden growth highlighted a startling contrast of how slowly other central districts developed, such as the West End, which emerged in the Georgian era.¹⁴⁸ The fragmented ownership of the land, together with the equally complex local administration of London, made it difficult to control the development of the city and its outwards expansion into the suburbs. This was also prevented by a laissez-faire attitude of the government at the time, which with a very light hand supervised private speculative initiatives.

One of the key issues connected with the London's urban growth was housing the poor. This problem was yet not addressed on a large scale and left to the charity of individual benefactors and philanthropists who embraced it as an opportunity to pioneer and test their own ideas in providing affordable housing. It was with the formation of the London County Council in 1888, that the problem of social housing was finally taken under the administrative wing of a local authority.

A further consequence of the suburban sprawl was the lack of open spaces both in the new suburbs and inner parts of the city. We saw how the suburban expansion of London in the course of the nineteenth century affected the areas surrounding Victorian cemeteries, and how diverse were the effects and results, both in terms of quality of the built environment and diversity in terms of services and architectural styles, across each one of the case studies. Some areas however lacked open spaces or recreational grounds, in parts of the city a cemetery or a disused graveyard became the only open green space available. Octavia Hill addressed this issue publicly with a paper entitled *Open Spaces*,

¹⁴⁸ Porter, 2000, p. 249

that she presented to the National Health Society on 9th May, 1877, and proposed to transform the once poisonous parish churchyards of inner London into public gardens or, as Hill suggested, into “out-door sitting rooms” for the poor. In an extract from her essay she outlines the visionary project:

There are, all over London, little spots unbuilt over, still strangely preserved among this sea of houses – our graveyards. They are capable of being made into beautiful out-door sitting rooms. They should be planted with trees, creepers should be trained up their walls, seats should be placed in them, fountains might be fixed there, the brightest flowers set there, possibly in some cases bird cages might be kept to delight the children. To these the neighbouring poor should be admitted free, under whatever regulations should seem best.¹⁴⁹

Hill saw in London’s disused graveyards the opportunity to give to the poor an urban version of the traditional village green found in rural areas in the British countryside. Hill’s idea eventually came to fruition over the following years, as a selection of disused graveyards converted into gardens were included in the book: *The London Burial Grounds: Notes on Their History From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1896) written by Isabella Holmes (1861-?). The author, like Hill, endorsed the conversion of London’s disused graveyards into public gardens.¹⁵⁰ Holmes’ interest in the issue was sparked by a research she conducted for the London Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (founded in 1882 and which also advocated the initiative, and encouraged the enactment of the 1884 Disused Burial Ground Act). In her book Holmes airs her own views on the issue:

The more public interest is brought to bear upon the burial-grounds, the more likely is it that they will be preserved from encroachments. The London County Council has special powers to put in force the provisions of the Disused Burial Ground Act [1884], and it has the record of their actual sites on the plans prepared by me. It is for the public to see that these provisions are carried out not only for historical, sentimental, and sanitary reasons, but also because each burial-ground that is curtailed or annihilated means the loss of another space which may one day be available for public recreation; and considering that land, even in the poorest part of Whitechapel, fetches about £ 30,000 per acre, it is

¹⁴⁹ A copy of this essay is in the archives of The Cremation Society of Great Britain (special collections), held at Palace Green Library, Durham University. Archive reference: CRE/H5. Page 64.

¹⁵⁰Disused Burial Grounds Act 1884. Source: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/18/section/1>

easily understood of what inestimable value is a plot of ground which cannot be built upon.¹⁵¹

In another section of her book, Holmes gives guidelines on how to proceed for the acquisition and conservation of a churchyard, which steps to take and which offices to consult. Her crusade was against ruthless speculative developers that were looking to build on any pocket of land available, and she reinforces this statement more than once in the book. In one instance, Holmes describes the disused graveyards as a new kind of village green and makes a comparison between the two:

A playground such as Spa Fields is about as different from an ordinary village green, where country boys and girls romp and shout, as two things with the same purpose can well be. For the soft, green grass, you have gritty gravel; for the cackling geese who waddle into the pond, you have a few stray cats walking on the walls; for the picturesque cottages overgrown with roses and honeysuckle, you have the backs of little houses, monotonous in structure, in colour and in dirt; and instead of resting 'underneath the shadow vast of patriarchal tree,' you must be content with a wooden bench close to the wall, bearing on its back the name of the association which laid out the ground. But it is only necessary to have once seen the joy with which the children of our crowded cities hail the formation of such a playground, and the use to which they put it, to be convinced that the trouble of acquiring it, or the cost of laying it out, is amply repaid.¹⁵²

Holmes was also very vocal about the entire funeral system imposed at the time, and defined it as "an extravagant imposition." She was a supporter of cremation and even considered burial at sea as an alternative to the construction of new cemeteries, which she abhorred, especially Kensal Green. In a passage the author states:

But Kensal Green Cemetery is truly awful, with its catacombs, its huge mausoleums, family vaults, statues, broken pillars, weeping images, and oceans of tombstones, good, bad, and indifferent. I think the indifferent are to be preferred, the bad should not be anywhere, and the good are utterly out of place. It is also the largest in the metropolis, and as the Roman Catholic ground joins it there are in this spot, or there very soon will be, ninety-nine acres of dead bodies.

¹⁵¹ Holmes, p. 22

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 277

There are many sad sights in London, but to me there are few so sad as the one of these huge graveyards.¹⁵³

The criticism addressed by Holmes to cemetery companies, was not only questioning the possibility of burial overcrowding and its related hygienic concerns, but also arguing that the practice of earth burial wasn't suitable anymore to the modern city. Holmes expresses her anxiety over the future of London burial spaces, and questions if more precious space should be allocated to new burials, or if the existing cemeteries should be reused over and over:

But the question of paramount importance is how to stop the increase of cemeteries. Are we ever to allow England to be divided like a chessboard into towns and burial-places? What we have to consider is how to dispose of the dead without taking so much valuable space from the living. In the metropolitan area alone we have almost filled (and in some places overfilled) twenty-four new cemeteries within sixty years, with an area of above six hundred acres; and this is nothing compared with the huge extent of land used for interments just outside the limits of the metropolis. If the cemeteries are not to extend indefinitely they must in time be built upon, or they must be used for burial over and over again, or the ground must revert to its original state as agricultural land, or we must turn our parks and commons into cemeteries, and let our cemeteries be our only recreation grounds – which Heaven forbid!¹⁵⁴

The sense of urgency that can be detected in Holmes's writing could be compared to that of Walker's 1839 survey of London's graveyards, although less graphic in her descriptions than Walker, Holmes is equally incisive and expressive in her statements. The author's concerns over the future of London's burials prove that a new awareness started to emerge at the time that questioned burial solutions not as a temporary solution, but in the long term and broader context of the fast city expansion. New burial strategies in this respect had to understand social issues in a more holistic way, and not only in relation to economics or population growth, but also considering complex issues such as overcrowding, housing and hygiene.

¹⁵³ Holmes, p. 256

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 269

To conclude we can say that Hill's initiative to convert disused graveyards was brave and significant, considering that these were the very same burial places, that just forty years earlier, had been reported by Walker as hazardous and poisonous to the health of Londoners. With Hill's proposal, they were preserved and valued for their location and for being breathing spaces in what was at the time a congested city centre.

However, by contrast, we saw how cemetery companies and the funerary industry at large were criticised, both for their monopoly and for the use of land that could be otherwise utilised for better means. The questions over the future of cemeteries and the use of burial space were addressed, as in the case of the suggestions advanced by Holmes. These questions were not simply about extending the existing Victorian cemeteries, where possible, or creating new ones, but more specifically considered ways to rationalise further burials and possibly reduce them to a minimum.

As we will see in the next section, new disposal methods started to be theorised and experimented with, years before Holmes brought the issue to the public attention. The new burial proposals started to address the complex condition of London's expansion, with the aim of harmonising social, economic and special issues. These thoughts and ideas set into motion the transition from earth burial to cremation, which eventually gained momentum by the first half of the twentieth century.

4.2. New burials: ideas and practices in the late nineteenth century

In the previous section we saw how overcrowding and lack of space was affecting the living conditions of Londoners and how the issue of overcrowding and the hygiene of burial spaces came to the fore once again. New ideas were indeed needed to rethink the future burials, as cemetery companies did just partially relieve the problem of overcrowding when they established their new suburban cemeteries. New disposal methods therefore, to be effective in the longer term, needed to foresee the future development of London.

This section studies how a selection of new disposal methods emerged in the late nineteenth century. As we will see, some focused primarily on the technological aspects, others envisaged, in a utopian way, a deeper socio-cultural revolution, which also involved a transformation of burial practices. Prior to Holmes' critique on Victorian cemeteries and the funeral industry at large, thinkers were already at work on proposals that would in some cases address specifically new typologies of burial in isolation. In other cases however they were also part of new and holistic suggestions for the future urban growth of cities.

Earlier on in this thesis we saw how the medical profession was directly involved in the reformation of burials, first in 1839 with Walker's survey of London's graveyards and then with Southwood Smith's involvement in Chadwick's 1843 report, that contributed to the shaping of new sanitary and burial laws. As we will see here, disposal and burial practices carried on being of interest to the medical profession later on in the century. This was the case of Sir Henry Thompson (1820-1904), a surgeon and physician to Queen Victoria, who became a key figure in the promotion of cremation. In 1873 Thompson visited the Universal Exhibition in Vienna and was impressed by the research on a cremation apparatus presented by scientist Paolo Gorini (1813-1881) and anatomist Lodovico Brunetti (1813-1899). As a result of this visit in January 1874 Thompson initiated the Cremation Society of Great Britain with the aim of promoting cremation as a new solution to the hygienic and spatial issues related to disposal and burial. As we will see in more detail later, the Cremation Society established the first crematorium in Woking in 1878, near Brookwood Cemetery, on land bought from the London Necropolis Company. Eventually, in 1884, Thompson made a stronger case for cremation with his book *Cremation, the Treatment of the Body after Death*. Here the author outlines the reasons for the need to implement cremation, without going into

technical details, but amplifying the benefits of the new method, in the broader context of the unprecedented growth of urban population. In an extract he explains:

When the globe was thinly peopled and when there were no large bodies of men living in close neighbourhood, the subject was an inconsiderable one and could afford to wait, and might indeed be left for its solution to sentiment of any kind. But the rapid increase of population forces it into notice, and especially man's tendency to live in crowded cities. There is no necessity to prove, as the fact is too patent, that our present mode of treating the dead, namely, that by burial beneath the soil, is full of danger to the living. Hence intramural interment has been recently forbidden, first step in a series of reforms which must follow.¹⁵⁵

Thompson reinforces his point on the necessity of switching from earth burial to cremation, by stating that in the modern context man should be able to remove the dead from the city, by adopting an appropriate and hygienic method of disposal. He maintains that:

Modern science is equal to the task of thus removing the dead of a great city without instituting any form of nuisance; none such as those we tolerate everywhere from many factories, both to air and streams.¹⁵⁶

Although Thompson strongly believes in the benefits of cremation, he is also aware of the resistance towards it that other practitioners and society at large have expressed towards it and therefore uses his book to clarify that the scepticism towards cremation could be overcome. One of the major concerns associated with cremation had to do with premature death, as at the time there was no medical procedure to declare a person officially dead. Thompson therefore proposed to introduce an inspection of the whole body by an appointed health officer, before proceeding to the actual cremation of a corpse. The author also is aware that time was needed for cremation to be accepted by the wider society; in a passage he states:

Perhaps no great change can be expected at present in the public opinions current, or rather in the conventional views which obtain, on the subject of burial, so ancient in the practice and so closely associated is it with sentiments

¹⁵⁵ Thompson H., pp. 5, 6

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 10

and affection and reverence for the deceased. To many persons, any kind of change in our treatment of the dead will be suggestive of sacrilegious interference, however remote, either in fact or by resemblance to it, such change may be.¹⁵⁷

If cremation in Thompson's view would have taken time to be accepted by society because of its association with technology and rational thinking, there were alternative disposal methods that instead celebrated the more natural, yet perfectly engineered process of decomposition and regeneration of the earth such as the 'earth-to-earth' burial method. This was the brainchild of Francis Seymour Haden (1818-1910), also a surgeon like Thompson, who theorised and promoted this new method of disposal in his 1875 publication titled *Earth To Earth: A plea for a change of system in our burial of the dead*. This booklet contains three letters the author wrote to the then editor of 'The Times', which were a response to:

[...] the proposal of certain German and Italian writers in their own country, and of an eminent surgeon in this, to substitute the burning of the dead for their interment.¹⁵⁸

Haden was referring here to Gorini and Brunetti, whom, as we saw earlier, Thompson met in Vienna in 1873. Friedrich August Siemens (1826-1904) was also developing a cremation technology. Haden was fundamentally against any technological intervention in the disposal process and argued that the dead were improperly buried and that wooden coffins slowed down the process of decomposition. His suggestion therefore was to bury corpses in shrouds or coffins materials lighter than wood:

No coffins at all would, of course, be best, or a coffin of the thinnest substance which would not long resist the action of the earth, or a coffin the top and sides of which admitted removal after the body had been lowered into the grave, or a coffin of some light permeable material, such as wicker or lattice-work, open at the top, and filled in with any fragrant herbaceous matters that happened to be most readily obtainable.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Thompson H. , p. 13

¹⁵⁸ Haden, p. 5

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 16

The author also reinforces the competence of nature in finding its way to regenerate itself through a process of transformation which starts from decomposition, a process so perfect that not even a technologically advanced method such as cremation could supersede it:

To question the competency of the earth, thus endowed, to effect the resolution and conversion of its dead, or to fail to perceive and profit by that competency, would pass comprehension if habit had not taught us to shut our eyes to it, and if the advocates of Cremation had not stepped in to tell us that we may improve upon it.¹⁶⁰

As well as criticising cremation, Haden also expresses his disapproval on cemetery companies and the government that let commercial enterprises make a business of death and burial.

It is neither to the interest nor the dignity of a great nation to intrust the burial of the dead to speculative associations – ignorant of their duties as we have seen them to be, and animated by no higher impulses than such as arise out of a spirit of trade – it is also inadmissible. If the Burial of the Dead, in short, may not unreasonably be compared in importance with the main drainage, is it not at least as fit – would it not be much fitter – that so serious a trust should be undertaken either by the Board of Works, or by a special department under its immediate supervision?¹⁶¹

Haden's criticism towards cemetery companies however was not paramount, as the author indicates, that the best suitable cemetery for 'earth-to-earth' burials, in terms of availability of both space and of geology, was Brookwood Cemetery. As we will see later in the next section, the London Necropolis Company supported Haden's ideas along Thompson's, even if the two were very different in their approach to disposal.

The Woking Cemetery is also the only existing cemetery in which the burial of a body can be effected with the present certainty that it will not be disturbed for ten years. In the absence, therefore, of any ameliorations whatever of our present cemeterial system being obtainable, it is plainly

¹⁶⁰ Haden, p. 8

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63

to the interest of every class, high and low, to avoid seething suburban cemeteries and to bury their dead in Woking.¹⁶²

If Thompson and Haden researched specifically into finding new ways of disposing corpses, another fellow physician, Benjamin Ward Richardson (1828-1896), approached the hygienic issues connected to burials, in the broader context of city planning and put forward a visionary theory of urban planning that foresaw the city of the future as a healthy place in its entirety. Ward Richardson trained at the Faculty of Physicians in Glasgow and then moved to London; he was a friend of John Snow (1813-1858),¹⁶³ and Chadwick. In 1876 he published *Hygeia, A City of Health* (and dedicated it to Chadwick), just one year after the Public Health Act came to force (1875). This law, together with the evolution of the London building acts, helped shape the growth of London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century.

Ward Richardson develops a comprehensive model for a utopian city, which is an imaginative representation of the principles of public sanitation encompassing all components of the city: from the single private dwelling to public spaces including the cemetery. The author depicts a city design, which, aims to be the healthiest for its inhabitants and therefore have the lowest mortality in comparison with other existing cities. In one extract the physician describes his vision:

Our city, which may be named *Hygeia*, has the advantage of being a new foundation, but it is so built that existing cities might be largely modelled upon it. The population of the city may be placed at 100,000, living in 20,000 houses, built in 4,000 acres of land, - an average of 25 persons per acre. This may be considered a large population for the space occupied, but, since the effect of density on vitality tells only determinately when it reaches a certain extreme degree, as in Liverpool or Glasgow, the estimate may be ventured.¹⁶⁴

Ward Richardson foresees his urban revolution working its way out, projecting change from the inner urban space of the city towards the suburbs. He envisages his model city to have:

¹⁶² Haden, p. 66

¹⁶³ Roberts, 1999, p. 43

¹⁶⁴ Ward Richardson, p. 18

[...] three wide main streets or boulevards, which run from east to west, and which are the main thoroughfares. Beneath each of these is a railway along which the heavy traffic of the city is carried on.¹⁶⁵

Ward Richardson's descriptive plan for Hygeia is detailed on all levels, from the arrangement of public buildings such as churches, hospitals, warehouses and stables, which are all to be 'forming parts of streets' to dwellings. The author is very meticulous in explaining the changes that needed to occur in the home to achieve better sanitation, starting from the decorations and materials used. In a passage he suggests:

The bricks intended for the inside walls of the house, those which form the walls of the rooms, are glazed in different colours, according to the taste of the owner, and are laid so neatly, that the after adornment of the walls is considered unnecessary, and indeed, objectionable. [...] By this means those most unhealthy parts of the household accommodation, layers of mouldy paste and size, layers of poisonous paper, or layers of absorbing colour stuff or distemper, are entirely done away with. The walls of the rooms can be made clean at any time by the simple use of water, and the ceilings, which are turned in light arches of thinner bricks, or tile, coloured to match the wall, are open to the same cleansing process.¹⁶⁶

Ward Richardson's methodical, yet clinical descriptions of living spaces are similar in tone to Loudon's rational writings about cemeteries. It is not by coincidence that they both shared Bentham's Utilitarian principles and a very scientific approach to living solutions that leaves little space to individual expression through participation. It is worth noticing that forty years earlier physicians started to be involved in the observation of the health and hygiene of the urban space of the city, by questioning the burials spaces. The results of their research, as seen with Walker, changed radically the history of burial and death culture. Less than forty years later, another generation of physicians – Ward Richardson - puts this time the home under scrutiny, as the hotbed of disease. Along new healthier dwellings, in his vision for Hygeia Ward Richardson also includes a proposal for a new typology of hygienically sound earth burial. A special type of engineered soil is utilised in the new cemetery, which helps to naturally accelerate the process of the decomposition of corpses:

¹⁶⁵ Ward Richardson, pp. 19, 20

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3

Thus the cemetery holds its place in our city, but in a form much modified from the ordinary cemetery. The burial ground is artificially made of fine carboniferous earth. Vegetation of rapid growth is cultivated over it. The dead are placed in the earth from the bier, either in basket work or simply in the shroud; and the monumental slab, instead of being set over or at the head or foot of a raised grave, is placed in a spacious covered hall or temple, and records simply the fact that the person commemorated was recommitted to earth in those grounds. In a few months, indeed, no monument would indicate the remains of any dead. In that rapidly-resolving soil the transformation of dust into dust is too perfect to leave a trace of residuum. The natural circle of transmutation is harmlessly completed, and the economy of nature conserved.¹⁶⁷

Although Ward Richardson does not endorse cremation, there are elements to his idea of a cemetery for Hygeia that may have inspired William Robinson's later proposal of urn-burial, in particular with regard to the distinction between the burial spaces, which in both cases were not marked by tombstones or monuments, leaving the space of the cemetery visually free from any funerary element. Known primarily for introducing the idea of the "wild garden" – a movement that rejected the regimented Victorian formal gardening, Robinson was also a journalist and friend of Ruskin and William Morris (1834-1896) among other notable figures at the time. In his book *God's Acre Beautiful; Or The Cemeteries of the Future* he warned that the commercial scope of the funeral industry would have led to overcrowding in the suburban cemeteries. One extract from the book reads:

So large and so important a question as the burial of the dead should never be in the hands of those who merely regard it from the point of view of moneymaking. It is well known that the profits from certain cemeteries in some of the pleasantest suburbs of London are very large; the temptation to continue burial in them, longer than decency or sanitary reasons would permit, will probably lead to danger in the future from pollution of air and water. The present state of some of our cemeteries close to London is already dangerous and offensive.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Ward Richardson, p. 43

¹⁶⁸ Robinson, p. 59

What Robinson envisages for the future cemetery in London is to shift the focus from gravestones dotting the landscape to buildings (columbaria) containing thousands of urns. In this way the landscape remain undisturbed and the overall feeling is that of a communal garden.

The cemetery of the future not only prevents the need of occupying large areas of ground with decaying bodies, in a ratio increasing with the population and with time, but leaves ample space to spare for those open green lawns, without which no good natural effect is possible in such places. It is to be a national garden in the best sense; safe from violation as the *via sacra*, and having the added charms of pure air, trees, grass and flowers. The open central lawns should always be preserved from the follies of the geometrical and stone gardeners, so as to secure freedom of view and air, and a resting place for the eye.¹⁶⁹

In *God's Acre* Robinson also explains in detail how society should rethink the approach to burial and funerary architecture. His book was republished a number of times, and in each edition he adds further details and notes about the technological advances in cremation. Although he was a landscape architect, Robinson wasn't as specific about the planting in cemeteries as Loudon. Though Robinson describes which type of buildings might be suitable his proposal wasn't as detailed as Loudon's. Robinson's vision of cremation and urn-burial was broad – hinting at the possibilities of re-integrating the cemetery into the city. Robinson suggests, "Buildings, sacred or otherwise, may be adapted for urn-burial."¹⁷⁰ In Robinson's view, any building could be suitable for urn-burial on the basis that the cremation of the remains will need to happen in a separate place due to health considerations. Somehow reading Robinson's alarming statements on London's cemeteries, one more instinctively associates him with Walker.

A single burial in such an urn-tomb need not be so expensive as one in the commonest of the graves with which such a large areas in our cities are now covered. The disturbance of the ground would not be necessary, as it is now; not to speak of the abolition of other onerous charges. The question of space is settled by the fact that one hundred of the simple forms of urn could be placed in the space necessary for the burial of a single body in the ordinary way.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Robinson, p. 28

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15

Following the first publication of *God's Acre*, Robinson's enthusiasm and support evidently grew, and the republication of his book (in 1883 and 1889) must have supported the cause and helped establish the practice. Some of the theoretical ideas Robinson's put forward in *God's Acre* eventually were tested in real life, as he was commissioned to design the landscape of London's first crematorium in Golders Green (1902). Here Robinson introduced an innovative design solution for the landscape, which freed the open space from tombstones and monuments. Robinson's idea was to make the land available for the scattering of the ashes, a landscaped garden of remembrance, freed from any tombstone, memorial or monument dedicated to individuals. What Robinson advocated for the crematorium, was therefore completely the opposite of what was to be seen in any of London's Victorian necropolises at the time. The ethos of Golders Green Crematorium was quite different from the one promoted by the Victorian necropolises, which as we seen, was more about individuality and social status.

Areas within the landscape in Golders Green Crematorium were allocated to the scattering of the ashes based on a rotation calendar system, which allowed for the soil to absorb the ashes and regenerate. The innovations Robinson introduced however a separation between the actual place where the ashes were scattered and where the memorial plaques were located. The landscaped garden was the place where the ashes were scattered, but the memorial plaques were located in an especially designed covered space (see arched gallery on the left hand-side of Fig. 76).



Fig. 76 – 2007, Golders Green Crematorium, view over the landscape gardens designed by Robinson.

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stefz/478692826/>

This solution allowed for the plaques to be protected them from direct exposure to the elements (such as rain, frost and strong sunlight), and preserved them for longer. Because of their size, these were also less expensive to maintain, unlike traditional tombstones, graves and memorials. Robinson's design principles for the landscaped

garden of Golders Green Crematorium, promoted social equality by removing any visible element that would indicate social status and diversity. This marked a major shift in death culture and funerary architecture. Although it did not immediately phase out the traditional cemeteries or indeed funerary architecture, it provided a more rational, yet democratic solution to hygienic disposal and burial. It also provided a tangible answer to the questions on the future allocation of precious space that could be allocated for burial. This new consciousness also demonstrated that the time of cemetery companies was over. Fresh new ideas were raised to address not only the use of space but also funeral and burial charges, to make them more affordable for society at large. Cremation presented itself as the alternative to earth burial, being more hygienic, less expensive and saving on space.

How did cemetery companies adapt to the introduction of cremation? As we saw in the first section of this chapter, there were still concerns on the risk of overcrowding and hygiene in the suburban Victorian cemeteries. To further complicate the issue, most of the cemeteries were now integrated in the urban fabric of London, in consequence of the suburban expansion of the capital, as in the case of Kensal Green Cemetery or Highgate Cemetery. This condition limited their possibility of expansion, and reduced their commercial viability as the cemeteries were getting congested.

As we will see in the next section, some cemetery companies were more successful than others in adapting to change, as in the case of the London Necropolis Company, which also facilitated the diffusion and growth of very diverse disposal methods like cremation and 'earth-to-earth' burial. This allowed the company to broaden the range of the services offered, demonstrating a commercial adaptability and a will to instigate change in burial culture. This distinct approach was so diverse and unique that it eventually drove the cemetery company to encompass services that would range from funerals to housing.

4.3. Pioneering new ground: The evolution of the London Necropolis Company from cemetery company to building developer

In the previous section we saw how cemetery companies were criticised for their monopoly over the funeral industry and for the poor maintenance of their cemeteries. The criticism was specifically directed to the General Cemetery Company and Kensal Green Cemetery, as well as the London Cemetery Company and Highgate Cemetery. By contrast, the London Necropolis Company and Brookwood Cemetery were perceived in a more positive light, as we saw in the case of Haden.¹⁷²

In this section we will see how the London Necropolis Company successfully managed to keep itself abreast with alternative burial practices that started to emerge in the second part of the nineteenth century; in particular the 'earth-to-earth' method and cremation. We will also see how, as part of their growth, the company expanded their commercial interests from graves to housing, and initiated the development of Woking and Brookwood into new towns, in the early decades of the twentieth century.

It is worth mentioning that the location of Brookwood Cemetery, further out of London, made a substantial difference for the London Necropolis Company when compared to the other London-based cemetery companies. Unlike Kensal Green Cemetery and Highgate Cemetery, Brookwood Cemetery was not integrated in any way with the city's urban fabric, yet it was directly connected to it by a train link. As a consequence of London's organic suburban growth, cemeteries that were once in rural or semi-rural settings, became locked into a network of roads, transport infrastructures, and buildings. Therefore they could not expand beyond the existing boundaries of their cemeteries. Even when cremation became available, the possibility to establish a crematorium in their existing cemeteries was not an option, as the Church would have not granted the permission for a building to be constructed on consecrated ground. Furthermore, the new technology was also in the hands of a private organisation that, just like the cemetery companies had interests in making cremation commercially viable.

The London Necropolis Company by contrast, was based in London, yet with enough landholdings in Surrey at their disposal to accommodate future burials, but also to explore new commercial ideas related to funeral services. In one case the London

¹⁷² Perhaps their judgement was tinted by personal interests as both, had dealings this cemetery company.

Necropolis Company contributed to the diffusion of Haden's 'earth-to-earth' burial method and later on to the establishment of Thompson's cremation technique. The support of Haden's method can be found in a pamphlet published in 1887 London Necropolis Company, where the earth-to-earth burial approach is preferred to cremation (see Figs. 77-8).

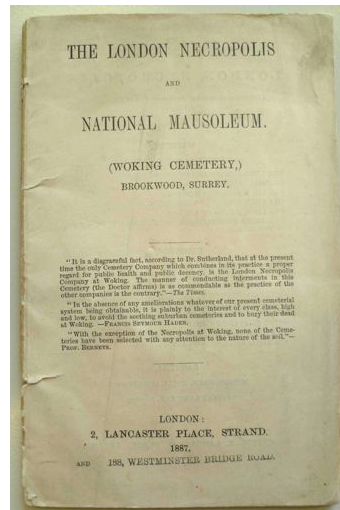


Fig. 77 – 1887. The London Necropolis Company. Pamphlet on the details of the funeral services provided. Source: Surrey History Centre.

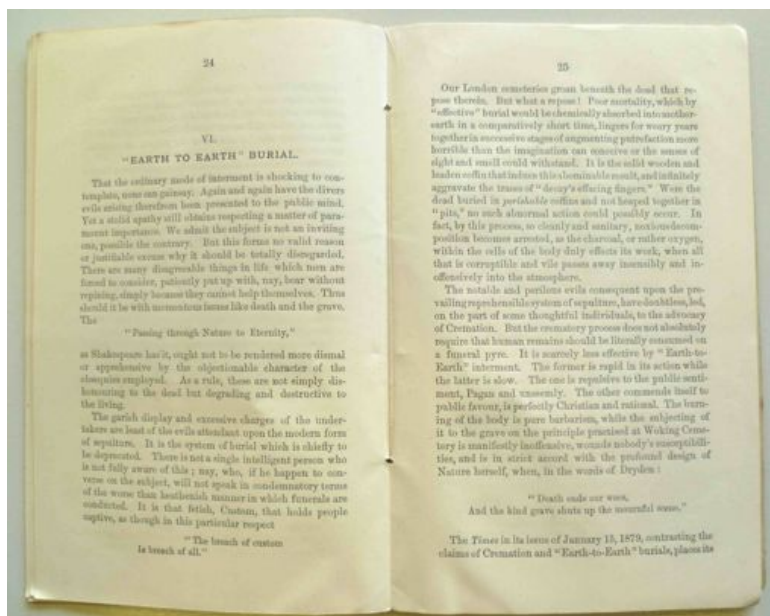


Fig. 78 – 1887. The London Necropolis Company. Details on the 'Earth-to-Earth' burial method. Source: Surrey History Centre.

Paradoxically, only one year later, in 1878, the company sold one acre of land to the newly formed Cremation Society of England in the vicinity of Brookwood Cemetery. The

location was chosen, for its strategic position being in close proximity to the large cemetery and the company's private existing railway link to London. The society built there a crematorium to carry out tests and develop the new technology. In 1885 the St. John Crematorium in Woking was completed and officially opened for public use. From the existing documentation of the London Necropolis Company, in particular their prospectuses, one can assume that the directors of the cemetery company and the cremation society had reached a definite agreement to work together. In a pamphlet published by the London Necropolis Company, in 1898, cremation charges and details about Woking Crematorium, form an integral part of the company's offerings of burial services (see Fig. 79).



Fig. 79 – 1898. London Necropolis Company's brochure featuring pricing for cremation services and details of the Woking Crematorium. Source: Surrey History Centre.

In 1902 the Cremation Act fully regulated this method of disposal including the establishment of crematoria in England, Wales and Scotland. Following the implementation of the Act the London Necropolis Company Cremation strengthened their relation with the Cremation Society of England and agreed to make their burial facilities and train link services available to cremation mourners. To promote this service the London Necropolis Company published a separate pamphlet specifically for cremation, which featured both Woking and Golders Green crematoria (see Figs. 80-1).

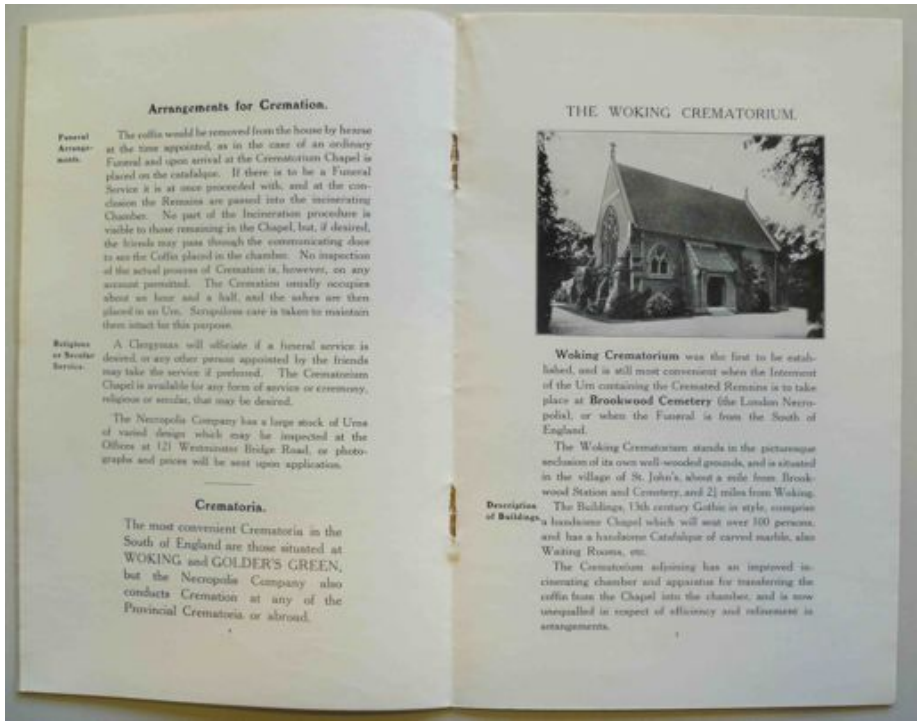


Fig. 80 - 1904. London Necropolis Company's brochure featuring details of Woking Crematorium. Source: Surrey History Centre.

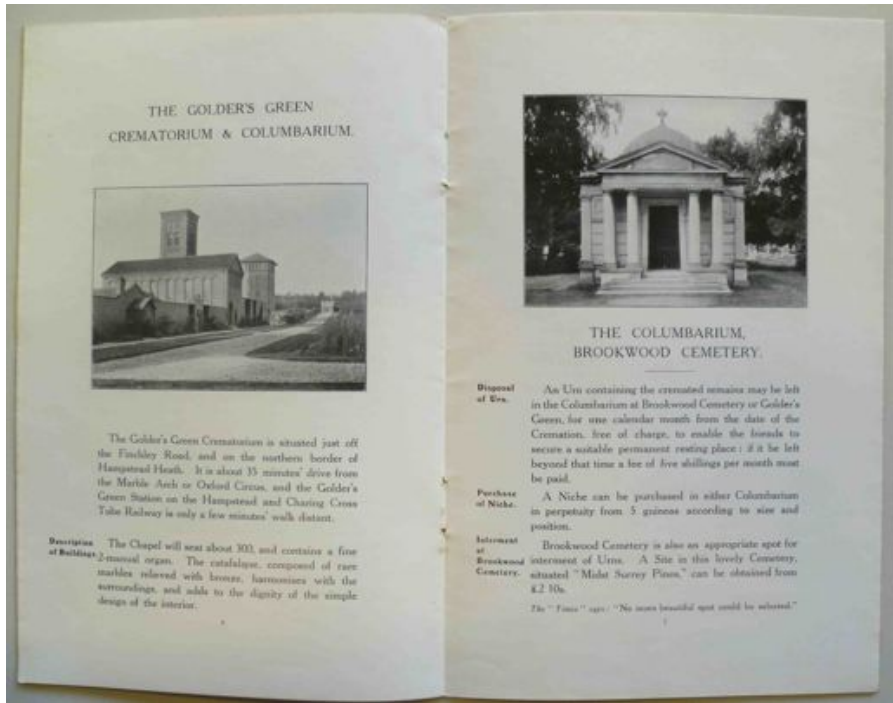


Fig. 81 - 1904. London Necropolis Company's brochure featuring details of Golders Green Crematorium. Source: Surrey History Centre.

As part of this process of commercial expansion and diversification, first promoting 'earth-to-earth' burials and then establishing close connections with the Cremation Society, the London Necropolis Company branched out into a new activity as building developers, which aimed to turn their landholdings in the two areas of Brookwood and Woking into new towns.

In the next section, I will endeavour to explain how, at the turn of the nineteenth-century, the London Necropolis Company developed part of its landholdings between Woking and Brookwood Cemetery into the Woking Residential Estates. My aim is to clarify how the residential developments of the London Cemetery Company contributed to London's suburban expansion at the time.

In 1904, the London Necropolis Company published a pamphlet to introduce its new premises at 121 Westminster Bridge Road, near Waterloo Station in south-west London. The pamphlet describes in great detail the new offices and workshops, dwelling on the distinctive architectural style of the building, the accuracy of the interior details and materials, which were all designed by Tubbs, architect, surveyor and director of the London Necropolis Company. The Arts & Crafts movement inspired Tubbs' architectural style and interior design of the building, and every detail from the façade to the door handles and furniture were custom-made. Within a narrow and awkward-shaped site, Tubbs managed to accommodate all the departments needed for the running of the Company's funeral services. These included a chapel and a private railway station, which connected the offices directly to Brookwood Cemetery. In this way, all the stages of preparation for a funeral took place in the same building: from preparing the corpses for burial to making the coffins. The coffin and mourners would then board a special train to Brookwood Cemetery for the burial ceremony.

This was the largest cemetery in Britain, and was initially thought to become a national cemetery rather than just serving London and its metropolitan area. Since opening the necropolis for burial in 1854, the Company attempted to develop the remaining land. As we saw earlier in this thesis, the Company succeeded twice, when it sold parcels of land in the first instance to build a lunatic asylum, and in the second to accommodate a prison specially designed for disabled prisoners. Dwelling for the staff was also built in the nearby areas, in addition to some shops and services, however the presence of the two institutions discouraged further residential developments at the time. At the turn of the century, the Company attempted again to develop their land and launched its Woking

Residential Estates (see Fig. 82) – a high-class low-density suburban development, which promoted good architecture in rural settings with easy access to London. From 1898, Tubbs had entered a professional partnership with Messer and together they designed houses for the Estates. Messer trained in Birmingham and in 1888 moved to New York where he worked for Withers & Dickson and then for Frederick Clarke Withers (1828-1901). Later that year, he set up his own practice with his brother Howard Messer (1861-1950) in Fort Worth, Texas, specialising in large family houses. On returning to England in 1898, Messer established an architectural practice with Tubbs. Together they completed the chapel in Brookwood Cemetery and other residential projects on the Estates in 1899.¹⁷³

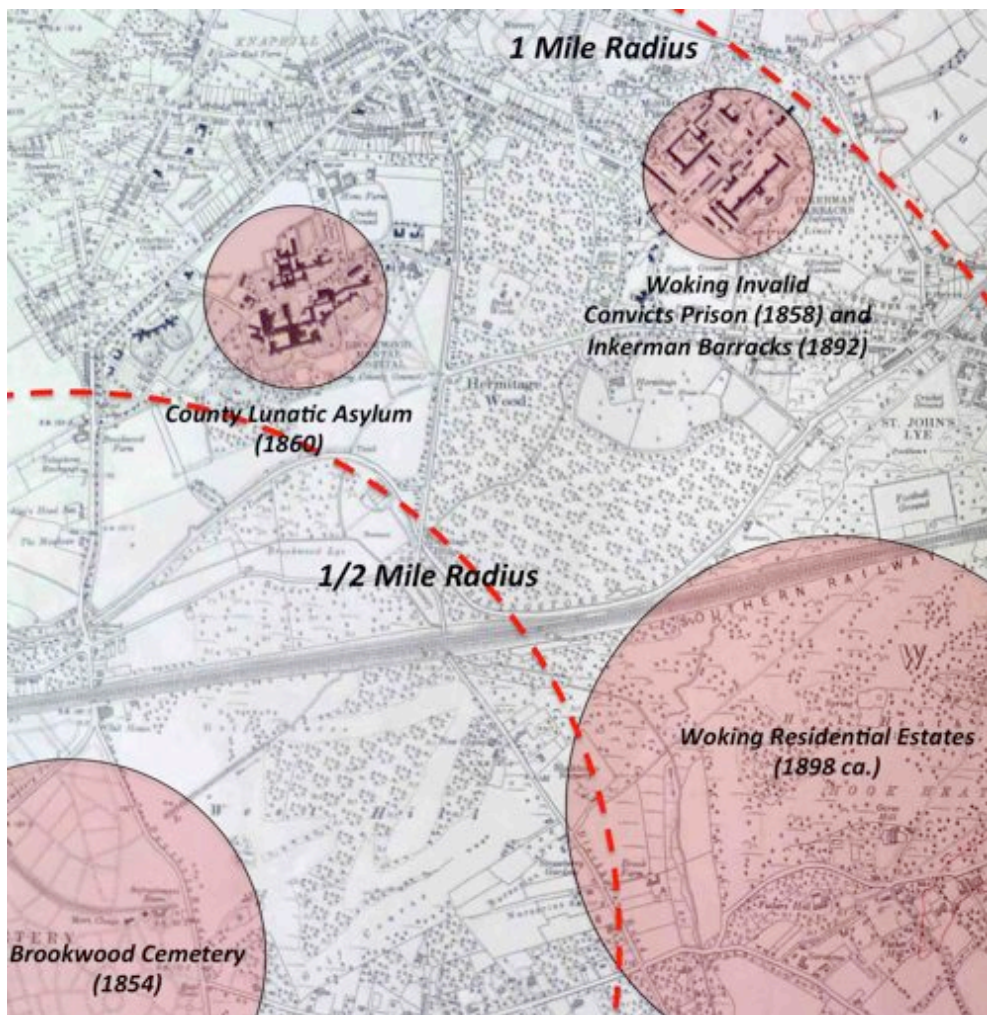


Fig. 82 – 1934. Plan of land property of the London Necropolis Company between Brookwood, Knaphill and Woking. Source: Surrey History Centre.

¹⁷³ George, 2010, pp. 22-3

The land allocated to the development of the Estates was set east to existing cemetery and south of the railway line, which connected Brookwood and Woking to London. Brookwood Cemetery was already self-contained, as the majority of the funerals arrived by rail from London directly into the cemetery, and interfered little with the day-to-day life on the Estates and nearby areas. The architectural style Tubbs and Messer adopted for the Estates was infused with the subdued rustic qualities of the Surrey vernacular style embodied in timber-framed houses with pitched roofs and terracotta hanging tiles. Overall, the development was formed by four Estates with distinctive characters and aimed at different typologies of residents: from wealthy aristocrats to the City bank clerks. The Hook Heath Estate and the Hermitage Woods developments were very low density and included the largest plots of land; this can be gathered from the existing architectural drawings of some of the properties (see Fig. 83).

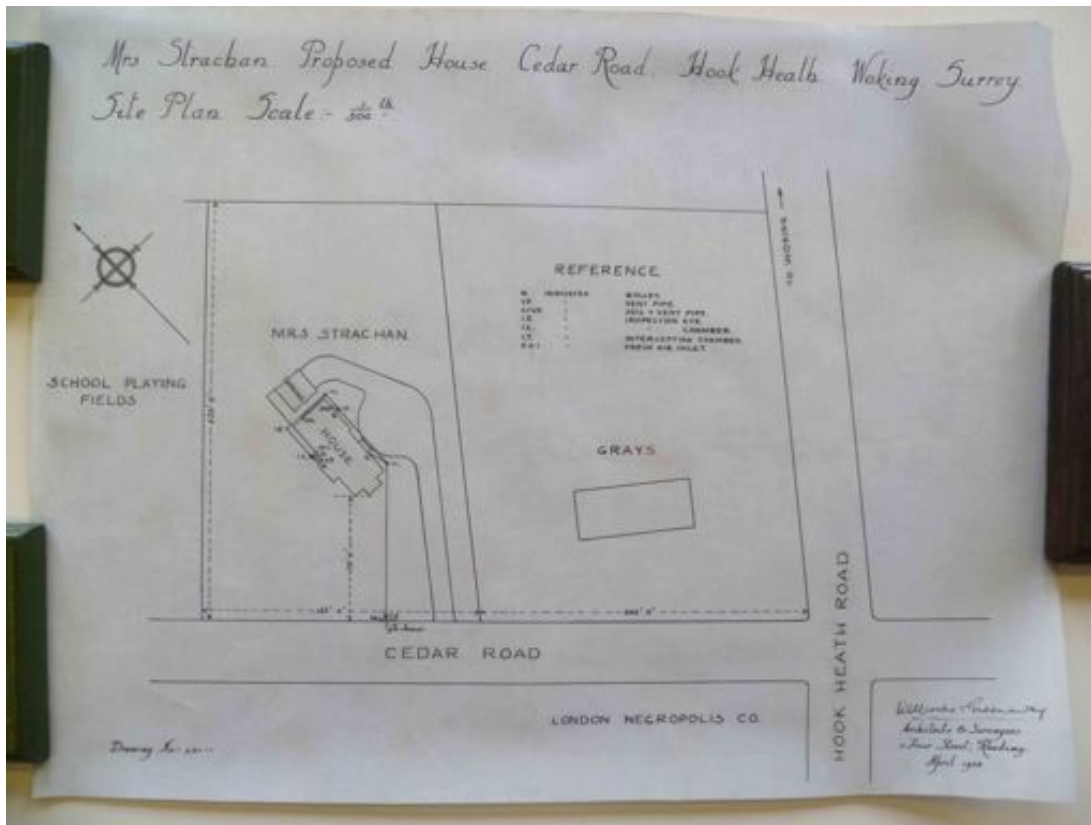


Fig. 83 – 1928. Willcocks and Greenaway Architects. Plan for a family house in Hook Heath.
 Source: Surrey History Centre.

The Hermitage Woods had a similar arrangement to Hook Heath in terms of setting, but the plots of land offered here were smaller, and there was also land available for farming within the vicinity. The Knaphill and Maybury Estates were higher density (semi-detached houses mostly) and closer to Woking Station for easier access to the city.

Amenities such as golf courses, cricket grounds and playing fields, as well as woodland, were available in the Estates. Instead of showing all this in a plan, the company promoted their residential developments with the image of a golf course and a nearby lake, which set the tone for the type of residents they wanted to move into the area (see Fig. 84).

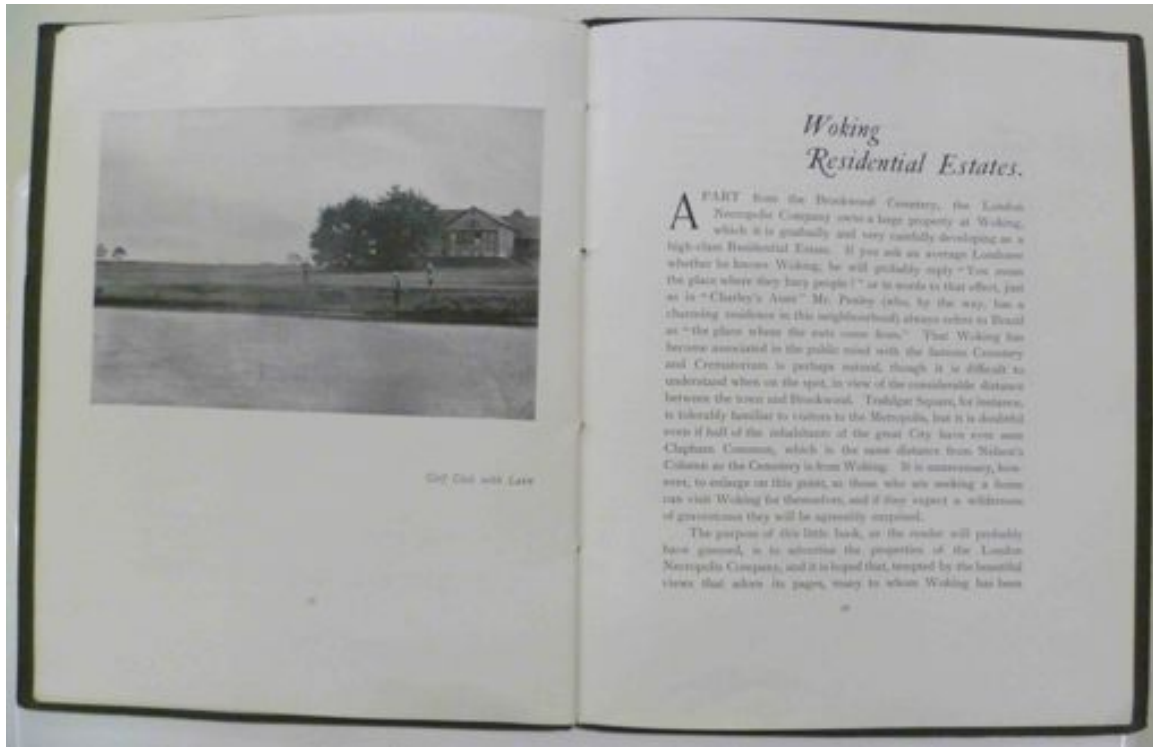


Fig. 84 – 1904. An extract from the pamphlet by the London Necropolis Company, advertising the Woking Residential Estates. The image on the left shows the golf course on Woking Common.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

There are no plans to complement the written statements in the London Necropolis' pamphlet to show how the Estates were arranged. Had these been included, it would have given the reader a better understanding of each geographical location, context and the relationship to one another. However, the only visual references provided are photographs of the houses on the Estates, from which it is possible to gather the architectural style and variety of scales from mansions to cottages (see Fig. 85). Perhaps committing to a plan would have restricted the directors in their operations, and this approach instead gave them a range of flexibility in the development of the Estates. Although this was a commercial enterprise, the directors employed a strict policy of control over the architecture of the buildings on the Estates, which showed little interest in rows of semi-detached houses, but rather inclined to obtain a diverse visual arrangement, in terms of scale and architectural languages, which might also reflect

social variety. To encourage new residents to move to the area, the company also offered mortgages for first-time homebuyers.

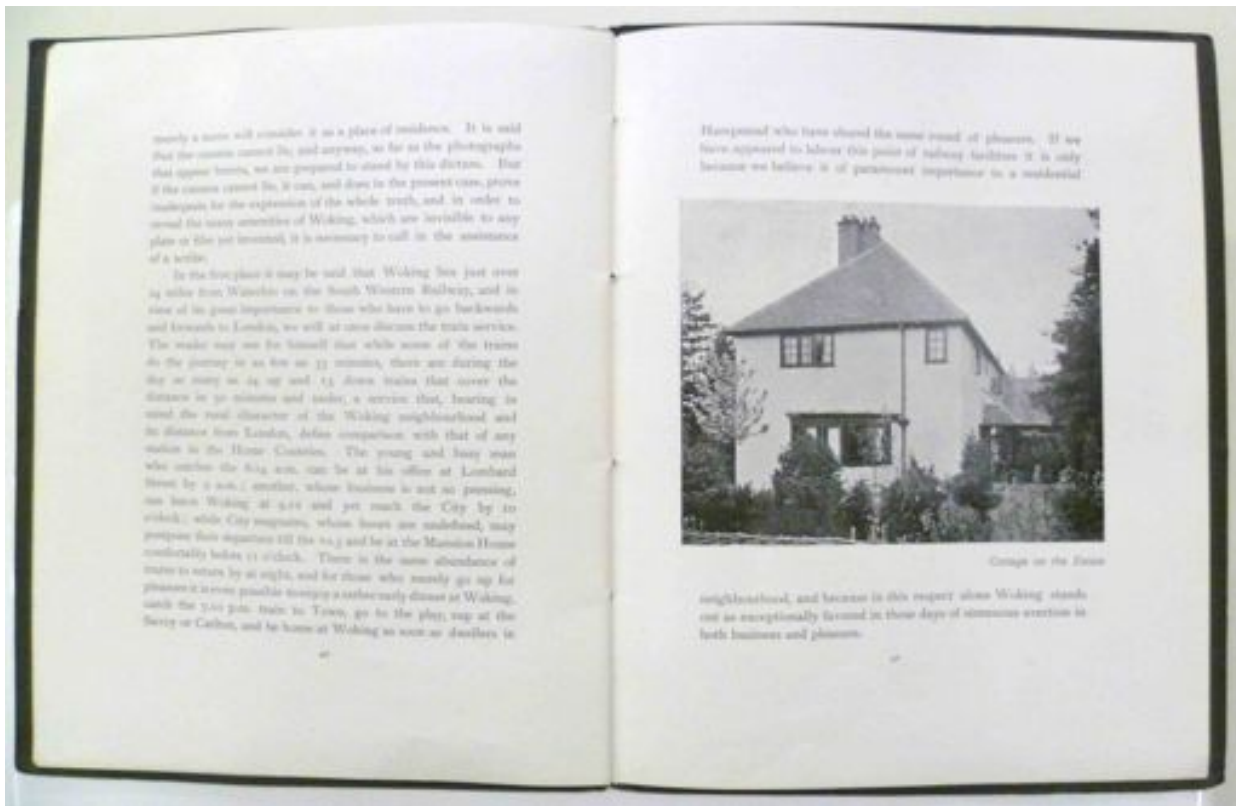


Fig. 85- 1904. Another section of the same brochure, showing a typical home in the Residential Woking Estates. Source: Surrey History Centre.

The directors specified that no trees would be cut down to make space for new houses, particularly in the Hook Heath Estate. This was in line with the residential qualities of the estate. It was not permitted to build shops, public houses, reading rooms, or concert halls in the area. An extract from the company’s pamphlet reads:

The Agent of the Estate has laid down certain broad lines which, while making Hook Heath sites equally desirable purchases for the rich or people of moderate means, will preserve it for many years as a delight for those whose refinement revolts at the sordid results of modern building schemes. In fact the line has been rigidly drawn at that absolute abomination the suburban villa, and there are many who will be thankful to know that they can come and build either a mansion or a cottage, as their circumstances require, with no fear of their neighbours surrounding them with rows of jerry-built dwellings.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ London Necropolis Company – 1904 brochure, p. 43

The presence of the notorious Victorian necropolis was addressed with an equally resolute tone. The directors knew that most people associated Woking with Brookwood Cemetery, and anticipated their readers by saying that:

Those who are seeking a home can visit Woking for themselves, and if they expect a wilderness of gravestones they will be agreeably surprised.¹⁷⁵

To promote its estates, the London Necropolis Company also compared Woking to Hampstead, highlighting how the connecting railway services available between Woking and London were just as frequent as the ones from Hampstead. Although the company's aim was to attract potential new residents, there were already settlers in Hook Heath by the time the pamphlet was distributed. Possibly the most important of them – also mentioned in the pamphlet – was Gerald Balfour (1853-1945) nobleman and conservative politician (see Fig. 86). This was a calculated move by the company's directors, to tell their readers the calibre of residents already living in the neighbourhood. The intention here must have been to convey to the reader that the Estates were already established, at least socially, and rather different from other similar developments that were waiting to be colonised by a community.



Fig. 86– 2007, 31st March. Fisher's Hill house in Hook Heath designed by Lutyens and Jekyll for Gerald Balfour.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/property/3357401/Past-master.html>

¹⁷⁵London Necropolis Company – 1904 brochure, p. 39

The image of the Estates that we see emerging so far is a schematic one, based around ideas and fundamental principles, rather than a conventional formal plan. The foremost aspects covered were: quality of the architecture; preservation of the natural features of the area; strategy to regulate density of population and of farming, industry and businesses, and lastly, the idea of building the Estates around an existing community in the area. Although the Estates were a commercial venture, the supervision of the quality of the architecture, its surroundings and community (mostly restricted to the middle classes), were monitored by Tubbs and Messer. With regards to density, we saw how the estates were organised in a radiating system: it was high in the areas which were closest to the station – such as Maybury – and gradually lowered in those further away, as in the case of Hook Heath. There was an inverse proportion between density and plot sizes. In areas where the density was higher, plots were reduced in size. In those areas in which density was lower, the plots of land were larger. The larger properties were located on the fringes of the Estates, and like Hook Heath, were secluded among open spaces, golf grounds and farmland. In this way, they attracted a variety of buyers, from commuters to aristocrats. In the Estates we also saw that a core community was already established in the area. This element helped set the tone for the actual development, giving it a strong identity. Allocating land to farms and other industries was intended to open the area out, not just to new residents but also to new industries, and offer an alternative for those intending to move out of the congested centre of London. This set into motion a process of growth that helped to shape Woking into a new town over the course of the twentieth century, set within a larger framework of new towns planned within easy reach to London and intended to relieve the capital from the growing population numbers (see Fig. 87).

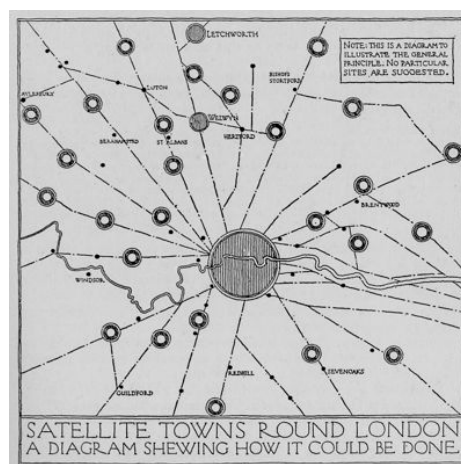


Fig. 87 – 1920. Diagram showing the proposal for new towns around London, presented at the 1920 Ideal Home Exhibition.

Source: <http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924025952445#page/n49/mode/2up>

But why did an established and regarded cemetery company suddenly decide to move into an unchartered area such as building development? One explanation could be linked to the company's directors Tubbs and Messer. Although little documentation is available about their activity, it is possible that their combined experience must have been key to the company's new venture. As we saw, Messer in the US was directly involved in the development of Fort Worth in the suburbs of Dallas, and Tubbs in the UK worked as surveyor and architect. Perhaps the directors were also aware of Howard's book *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, which by coincidence was published in 1898, the same year Messer came back to the UK. In the same year also the Waterloo and City Line was opened in 1898; this new link would have made it easier for commuters from Woking or Brookwood to access the City.

Certainly there was an aspiration of the London Necropolis Company that was connected to the prospects of commercial returns, but also the opportunity to be associated with a movement that, at the time, was promoting suburban living. The opening of new tube stations particularly in north areas of London such as Golders Green was already promising new prospects for the middle-classes that wanted to escape the city (see Fig. 88). The London Necropolis Company and the Woking Residential Estates were equally echoing this new tendency.



Fig. 88 – 1907. Underground advert for Golders Green new suburb.
Source: London Transport Museum.

Clearly the London Necropolis Company and their Woking Residential Estates did not have a coherent planning framework that integrated in a more cohesive way residential, socio-cultural and economic issues, as Tubbs and Messer were primarily interested in preserving the picturesque qualities of the local settings and of the architecture styles adopted in the area.

However, it is also true that the work carried out by the London Necropolis Company directly affected London from the mid nineteenth century onwards. First with the implementation of the Brookwood Cemetery and its railway link, it relieved the city from the overcrowding of its graveyards and its dead. Then later, towards the end of the century, it supported the inception and dissemination of new disposal methods, by directly contributing to a process of further rationalisation of death culture. Lastly with the development of Woking it ultimately transformed the area from a small settlement into a new town.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that towards the end of the nineteenth century the quality of London's suburban development came under the scrutiny of representatives of the medical profession, philanthropists and thinkers. They expressed concerns over the freedom given to private commercial enterprises to shape the new expansion of the city, as a commercial opportunity without paying attention to social and spatial issues such as overcrowding and space management. The relation between space and its functional organisation became prime and urgent, and consequently more rational. Although, Victorian cemeteries contributed to the character of an area, their inception contributed to magnify the above-mentioned issues of overcrowding, and lack of open spaces. There were however positive examples, which were initiated by philanthropists such as Hill, who campaigned to transform the once unhealthy and dangerous London's graveyards, into "outdoor sitting rooms'. By contrast though, cemetery companies were criticised for their indiscriminate use of space, for holding a monopoly over the funeral industry and for their poor management of their cemeteries, as they were at risk of overcrowding and about to become a health hazard to local residents.

As we saw previously in this thesis, Victorian cemeteries were initially welcomed as a solution to London's burial issues, however, in a short period of time they were already showing signs of their limited potentials, and failed in addressing the complex issue of burial in the broader context of a growing metropolis. As a consequence, the problem was again discussed by representatives of the medical profession who, just as they did in the first part of the nineteenth-century, expressed their concerns over the overcrowding and hygiene of the new cemeteries. In this instance however, beyond denouncing the issues, they started to research and work on actual solutions, not only on new ways of disposing human remains, but also proposing new urban strategies. Ward Richardson was an example of this movement. As we saw, his proposal for Hygeia envisaged a new urban arrangement based on hygiene, to improve and safeguard the health of city dwellers. This was a departure from other previous attempts (such as Loudon's proposal seen in Chapter One), as it demonstrated a new awareness on how to approach the organisation of the urban space, not strictly from the point of view of its arrangement and aesthetics, but more holistically framing it in the broader context of the city's future development.

New research also studied ways to make disposal and burial more affordable, less space consuming, and hygienic solutions as in the case of 'earth-to-earth' burial and cremation methods. These innovations challenged cemetery companies and pushed them to adapt or change.

The fast growth of London's suburbs meant that Victorian cemeteries – especially Kensal Green Cemetery and Highgate Cemetery - were soon to be integrated into the urban fabric of the capital, as new buildings encircled them and restricted their possibility to expand and accommodate new burial spaces. However, by contrast, the London Necropolis Company took an active part in the inception and diffusion of new disposal methods. The strategic geographic position of Brookwood Cemetery, its railway connection, and the availability of land to be allocated for burial presented the company with an opportunity to expand their commercial horizons beyond graves and into housing.

This unique and unprecedented situation tells us that although cemetery companies were perceived negatively for their stronghold of the funerary industry, they also facilitated a further process of change in death culture. The case of the London Necropolis Company and its support of innovative ideas for disposal provided not only a commercial opportunity to expand their offering in terms of funeral services, but also to test social attitudes to such an innovation and measure how people would embrace change in death culture. It also shows the will of a commercial cemetery company to make burial more affordable, through a process of rationalisation, so as to make it available to a larger number of people, rather than only to a restricted minority. This demonstrates that a process of rationalisation, especially with the introduction of cremation, was a necessary step to make burial more economically accessible. However, it must be also said that although cremation opened new opportunities for a more affordable alternative to earth burial, it was indeed for some the only affordable burial option.

The London Necropolis Company building development of Woking, although private and speculative, did take into consideration the future growth of the capital, and the need to relieve the city from a fast growing population. Beyond the alluring possibilities of commercial returns, it may be possible that the London Necropolis Company was stimulated to develop Woking also by the planning and building work of Unwin and Parker at Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb. It is worth mentioning that the

Woking Residential Estates, however, primarily engaged with an aesthetic vocabulary which was evocative of a new romanticised notion of suburban living, rather than engage more in depth with the themes and issues that concerned Ebenezer Howard's thinking. These aimed at rebalancing the relation between urban and rural and envisaged an independent socio-economic structure for the new towns, which set them free from the control of the central government. With this in mind, it is possible to say that the Woking Residential estates contributed to shape the misconception of what Howard's idea of a garden city was really about, and created confusion over his message, by predominantly promote suburban living for their aesthetic and healthy qualities, and not for their model of socio-economic independence.

In the next and last chapter of this thesis, we will see how the London Necropolis Company responded to the changes brought by World War I and also how society finally came to terms with cremation following World War II. Lastly this chapter will also report on how contemporary studies have investigated death in contemporary culture and in that context, how London's Victorian cemeteries have managed to carve out a new role for themselves as historical and cultural spaces for the city.

5. *The rationalisation of death culture in twentieth-century London*

Summary

The previous chapter studied key changes in burial culture in late nineteenth century London. We saw how cemetery companies were criticised for monopolising the funeral industry and the poor management of their cemeteries and how surgeons and physicians initiated new research into, more hygienic and less space-consuming alternatives to traditional earth burial.

Expanding on this line of research, this chapter studies how death culture evolved in the course of the twentieth century, and how Victorian cemeteries adjusted to these changes. The first section looks into how a new project of mass memorialisation was undertaken by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission after World War I. The second section explains how within London's post-World War II reconstruction programme, earth burial was discouraged in favour of cremation. The third section, gives an overview on the contemporary discourses on death culture focusing in particular on the notion of the medicalisation of death. Lastly, the fourth section demonstrates how Victorian cemeteries are actively contributing to London's contemporary urban culture.

This chapter concludes that society's perception of death changed dramatically both intellectually and aesthetically as a consequence of the two world conflicts.

Correspondently, this unprecedented shift extended its effects on cemeteries and burial culture at large. In the contemporary cultural context of London, Victorian cemeteries have been acknowledged as receptacles of collective historical memory, yet in the framework of contemporary planning programmes, they are scarcely understood as contributors to the character and culture of new urban areas.

5.1. Death and collective memory post-World War I: the Imperial War Graves Commission and Brookwood War Cemetery

In the previous chapter we saw how, in the late part of the nineteenth century, the London Necropolis Company facilitated the introduction of new methods of disposal and also initiated the development of their landholdings in Woking into a new town. In this section, we will see how, following World War I, the company had the opportunity to expand Brookwood cemetery itself, as part of the mass-memorialisation project initiated by the Imperial War Graves Commission, now known as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (or CWGC). This programme involved the creation of war cemeteries to commemorate soldiers that fought for Britain and lost their lives in the conflict. To do so the commission developed a new and aesthetically earnest vocabulary of funerary architecture and designs that conveyed equality, solemnity and order. Although existing literature has extensively researched into the work of the commission and its architects, little has been written on Messer's contribution to this large-scale project. This section will clarify, within the historical context of the commission, what role Messer had as architect, military man and director of the London Necropolis Company.

The history of the CWGC is recollected by its director, Fabian Ware (1869-1949), in his 1937 book published on the occasion of the Imperial Conference in Wembley in London. The first stages of the CWGC were carried out jointly by the War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem and consisted of a Mobile Unit sent out in September 1914 (at the suggestion of Lord Kitchener) in search of missing soldiers along the front line between the Aisne and the Ourcq in France. Initially, the Mobile Unit was involved in transporting French wounded soldiers from the front line to the hospitals, however later, the Mobile Unit's main job was that of marking and registering the graves of fallen British soldiers in France and Belgium. The Mobile Unit was led by Ware and a group of other veterans who were too old to be directly involved in the activity on the front line; Messer was one of them.

In October 1914, Ware spoke with General Nevil Macready (Adjutant-General to the British Expeditionary Force) to persuade him of the importance of keeping the records of the marking of the British graves. Macready was interested in Ware's project as he (Macready) remembered the chaos and distress caused by the neglect over the British

graves over the Boer War, when he was a staff officer at the Cape.¹⁷⁶ By October 1915, the Mobile Unit was taken over by the British Army and enlarged in terms of personnel and structure, although the Red Cross was still providing the vehicles. Eventually, on 21 May 1917, the Imperial War Graves Commission was officially incorporated by Royal Charter and since then by three further Supplemental Charters in 1921, 1923 and 1930.¹⁷⁷

In 1918 Messer was appointed by Ware as the Assistant Director-General of Graves Registration and Enquiries (France).¹⁷⁸ When involved with the IWGC, Messer was the person in charge of the planning offices for the cemeteries. In the summer of 1918, the last before the end of the hostilities, Ware asked Messer to draft the planning for as many cemeteries as possible. By then, Messer had established a large surveying and planning office in France, which was financed by the Red Cross. By May 1919, Messer's office was absorbed into the Commission and moved into new premises, an eighteenth-century chateau at Longuenesse outside St. Omer, which was to serve as the Commission's headquarters in France until 1929.¹⁷⁹

Alongside Messer, Ware involved many public figures in the CWGC ranging from Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) for literary advice, to Holmes, the late director of the National Gallery, who designed the signage for most of the cemeteries in France and Belgium.¹⁸⁰ Garden designer Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) advised on the planting as did Arthur Hill (1875-1941), assistant director at Kew. Ware commissioned three architects to create designs and memorials, including Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), Herbert Baker (1862-1946) and Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942). The mass-scale memorialisation project initiated by the CWGC was unprecedented. The whole operation was constructed so as to have complete control over the planning and construction of each one of the war cemeteries, down to the finest details, such as the design of the gravestones, lettering and even signage to the cemeteries themselves. Shortly before his death, Kipling, looking back on what had been done since he had joined the Commission as one of their founding members, remarked that it was "The biggest single bit of work since any of the Pharaohs – and they only worked in their own country."¹⁸¹ To deal with the large number of graves, the Commission devised a set of guidelines to control, the planning and construction of the war cemeteries: (1) the memorials should be permanent, (2) the headstones should

¹⁷⁶ Longworth, pp. 5, 6

¹⁷⁷ Ware, 1937, pp. 23-4

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Appendix C

¹⁷⁹ Longworth, pp. 59, 60

¹⁸⁰ Ware, 1993, pp. viii, ix

¹⁸¹ Ware, 1937, p. 56

be uniform, and (3) there should be no distinction made on account of war or civil rank. These principles, which were approved by the Imperial Conference of 1918, were further tested – as far as the United Kingdom was concerned – by a debate in the House of Commons on 4 May 1920. Based on these principles, the Commission constructed 1,850 cemeteries and plots, of which nearly 1,000 were constructed between France and Belgium.¹⁸² By May 1920, work was already underway on 788 cemeteries in France alone.¹⁸³ The commission initiated the construction work on three experimental cemeteries used to test ideas and design solutions. Messer set an initial budget of £ 10 per grave.¹⁸⁴ These cemeteries were not uniform in scale and varied in sizes, the smallest contained just 40 graves, while the largest held 12,000. The Commission constructed a total of 678,000 headstones, which had been made using British stone and erected by British labourers. Varieties of stone were used to withstand the diverse climatic conditions of the cemeteries, although the majority was made from Portland stone.¹⁸⁵

Along war cemeteries in mainland Europe the commission chose to build one in Brookwood. Although the London Necropolis Company had a large amount of land at its disposal, it was also restricted in their actions, by the funding Act of Parliament that established and regulated the company and the cemetery. Following a couple of commercial disasters that resulted in the construction – near to the cemetery – of a lunatic asylum and a prison, the London Necropolis Company was looking into attracting developers and speculators to invest in the area and raise the value of the land with the idea to help shaping Woking into a new town. An opportunity for a further development of the cemetery itself manifested with the IWGC and its need to establish a large war cemetery in the vicinity of London. Brookwood Cemetery was selected by the IWGC to become the largest war cemetery in Britain. Located north of the main Victorian cemetery, the war cemetery in Brookwood occupies about 37 acres of land (the size of Highgate West Cemetery). The two cemeteries coexist side by side today, providing a unique example of British cemetery history.

Although there is no historical evidence to prove why the IWGC chosen the London Necropolis Company and Brookwood Cemetery as the site for a war cemetery, it is possible to speculate that Messer, in his role of director of the company and assistant director of the commission had a degree of influence on Ware, in deciding to involve the

¹⁸² Ware, 1937, p. 30

¹⁸³ Longworth, p. 64

¹⁸⁴ Skelton & Gliddon, p. 112

¹⁸⁵ Ware, 1937, p. 30

London Necropolis Company in the commission's project, by choosing Brookwood Cemetery as a suitable site for a new war cemetery. None of the existing published literature on the IWGC and the formation of Brookwood War Cemetery has speculated on this possible connection. It must be said that in all of the reviewed literature on the subject, Messer's role in the implementation of the commission's programme and Brookwood War Cemetery, appears minimised, rather than celebrated for its crucial contribution.

The war cemeteries programme set up by the IWGC, is an example on how it is possible to rationalise the layout and appearance of a cemetery, by setting up a completely new system of aesthetic principles, which evoked solemnity and dignity through simplicity. Each element in the template of the military cemetery was carefully balanced, from nature to the tombstones and epitaphs. Distinctive features to military cemeteries are the Cross of Sacrifice and the Stone of Remembrance, with their pure and essential forms these two architectural elements are a successful examples of synthesis between classicism and modernism. As the largest military cemetery in Britain, Brookwood War Cemetery is the only one that features two sets of each monument: one in the World War I Section (see Fig. 89) and the other in the World War II Canadian Section (see Fig. 90).



Fig. 89 – 2010. Brookwood War Cemetery. World War I Section. Cross of Sacrifice and Stone of Remembrance. Source: <http://www.stephen-stratford.co.uk/brookwood.htm>



Fig. 90 –2010. Brookwood War Cemetery. World War II Canadian Section. Cross of Sacrifice and Stone of Remembrance. Source: <http://www.stephen-stratford.co.uk/brookwood.htm>

The choreographic quality of these large-scale monuments is intentional, and aimed at emphasising the paramount and communal celebration of those who had fallen in the war, beyond their military grade, social or ethnic background. However, to give an aesthetic coherence to the scheme, the Commission implemented restrictions of use as any additional items such as vases or flowers cannot be placed on graves. These policies are clearly stated in the commission's website:

Any items placed in the borders impact on our ability to plant and maintain them to the standard of excellence we seek to achieve. New graves will be considered those in respect of burials that have taken place within the last three years. At the end of this period each case will be reviewed and allowed to continue for further two years if the family is still placing floral tributes on a regular basis. After five years the traditional uniformity of the war cemetery will be restored by the removal of the vase. The request must be made by next of kin and the cut flowers must be placed in a vase provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in order to ensure uniformity and easy replacement should one be broken during maintenance.¹⁸⁶

Clearly the design of war cemeteries is also the manifestation of how order could be utilised as a metaphor of solemnity to project the idea of a civilised society. Brookwood

¹⁸⁶ Source: <http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/44400/Brookwood%20Military%20Cemetery>

cemeteries demonstrate how two typologies of ordering the dead coexist side by side: the Victorian cemetery and the war cemetery (Fig. 91). This arrangement is a testimony to how death culture has evolved in London and more broadly in Britain in just over sixty years from the opening of Brookwood Cemetery to the end of World War I. In this unique setting the Victorian cemetery represents the commercial aspect of death culture which, aimed at celebrating, through funerary architecture, the wealth and social status of individuals. By contrast, the aesthetic language of the war cemetery commemorates death as a collective and egalitarian experience through a display of cohesive visual principles.

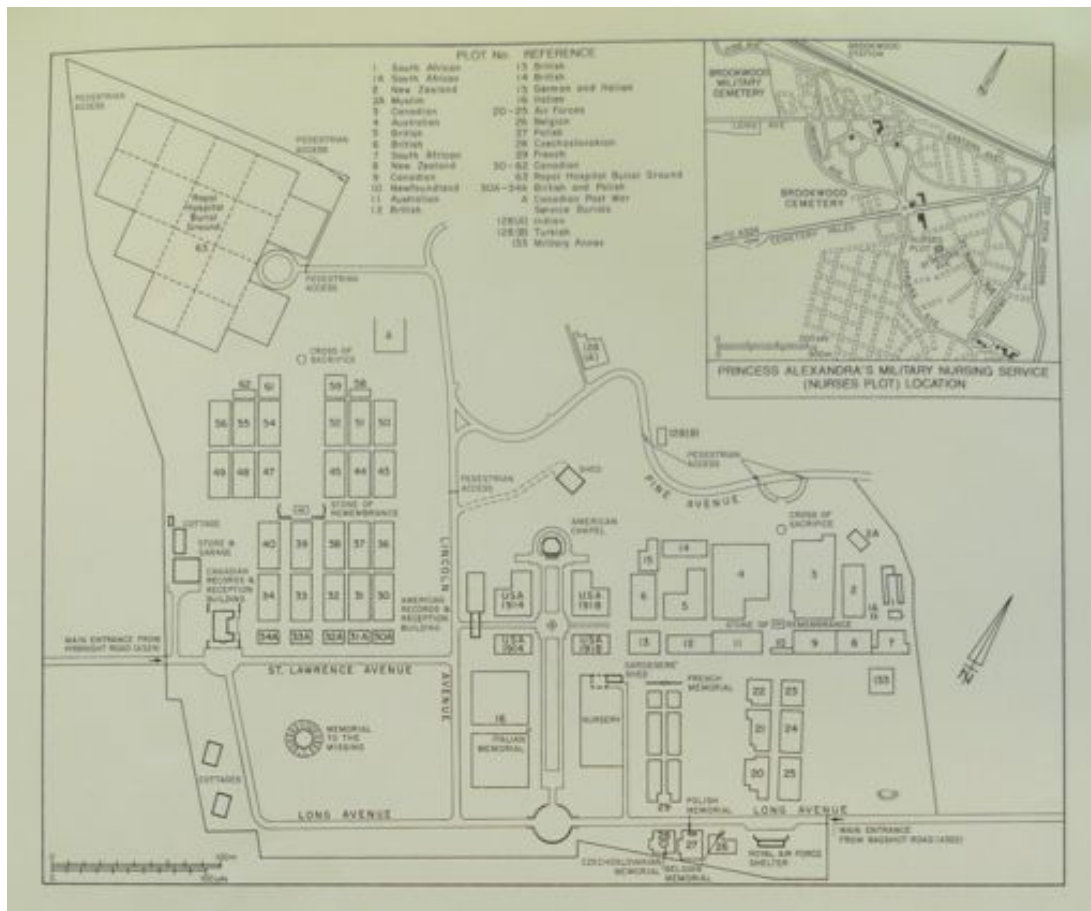


Fig. 91 – Undated. Plan of Brookwood Military Cemetery (centre) and the plan of the original Victorian cemetery (top right). Source: Surrey History Centre.

It could be said that although diverse in their outcomes, both typologies share the same objectives in wanting to project a sense of rational order and governance over death, thought the spatial arrangement of the cemetery. Both typologies also reinforced this message with the use of a specific architectural language and landscaped vegetation arrangements.

For example in the case of the war cemeteries the architecture and landscaped vegetation are carefully calibrated to convey an overall effect of dignified memorialisation. For its aesthetic purity, the architectural language devised for the war cemeteries by the commission could be said to have anticipated the Modern movement in Britain, or at least contributed to that crucial transition from the late Victorian period and Arts & Crafts movement in Britain. Ultimately, the war cemeteries expressed the essence of British patriotism in architectural form. Thus, the purity of the architecture's geometry, abstracted from any direct cultural or religious reference, was designed to convey the notion of timelessness. Although at first the aesthetics of the war cemeteries appear to have broken away from the tradition established by the paradigm of the Victorian necropolis, they appear to draw upon and elaborate on some of its principles. The role of landscaping within the design of the war cemetery was significant, as it also had to convey the British horticultural tradition. Horticulturalists had an active role in the design development of the war cemetery; among other things they advised architects on the maintenance of the cemeteries, which should be simple and "compatible with the dignity of the work".¹⁸⁷

The implementation of the war cemeteries by the commission demonstrates how it was possible to control design, planning and maintenance for cemeteries and create a very homogeneous language of funerary architecture. This had to convey the idea of solemnity and harmony in a measured way and promote the idea of equality, beyond any socio-cultural, religious or ethnic differentiation for the first time in the history of cemeteries. This was a departure from the individualistic approach promoted by the Victorian necropolis, designed primarily as a burial solution for the rich and wealthy. It could be said that this new set of funerary aesthetics, although implemented in the war cemeteries, influenced the perception of death at the time, making it more rational and pragmatic. This shift – as we will see in the next chapter – ultimately helped lay the foundations for the acceptance of cremation as a hygienic, pragmatic and dignified way of disposing of human remains.

The war cemeteries' spatial arrangements, particularly their geometrical qualities, bring to mind the work of Loudon and his rational approach to Victorian cemeteries. As we saw his design proposals were not so successful, as they were not commercially viable for the Victorian cemetery companies. Loudon's sense of aesthetic harmony in cemetery design was strictly connected to the economy of space and the controlled use of nature,

¹⁸⁷ Longworth, p. 65

and was rather pragmatic in its approach. This was not dissimilar in aim to the principles that guided the formation of war cemeteries. Along Loudon perhaps it is worth mentioning also Robinson and his design for Golders Green Crematorium, which anticipated the use of landscaped gardens as collective spaces for the scattering of the cremated ashes. This emphasised that death and grief is a shared experience by every human being beyond any distinction and diversity.

To conclude we could say that the implementation of war cemeteries and particularly the one in Brookwood have a multi-layered significance, replete with of meanings and crucial in the shaping of contemporary death culture. Firstly it tells us once again how the London Necropolis Company, through Messer, actively contributed to the attitude towards death, not only in the context of London but of the whole nation, through the programme of memorialisation and remembrance implemented by the IWGC. The new paradigm developed by the commission for the war cemeteries also demonstrated how it was possible to create a new aesthetic vocabulary that is essential in its proportions and minimal in its decorations. The designs formulated as part of the project, not only provided a new homogenous national language for collective remembrance but also suggested a new association between civilian funerary architecture and discreet simplicity, which unlike Victorians, rejected the use of decoration as a visual display of wealth and social status. Yet, these two contrasting aspects of British attitude to death do coexist side by side as a constant reminder of how society's understanding of death has significantly evolved in a relatively short period of time. As we will see in the next section, a further step forward in the attitude towards death was made in the post-World War II years, in the context of the reconstruction programme for London.

5.2. Reconstruction, space and death: the transition from earth burial to cremation in post-World War II London

This section studies how the reconstruction programme for London, in the post-World War II years, also marked a key moment in the transition from earth burial to cremation. This was prompted by a series of circumstances that included the decision of local authorities to promote cremation as a preferred disposal method, to save on the space allocation to burials and utilise it instead for other more urgent needs such as housing. The wide-scale destruction that London suffered during World War II displaced its communities and made 1.5 million people homeless, especially those living in the inner suburbs of the capital during the war. As a consequence of the bombing, people relocated to areas further from the centre where they could find jobs and houses (see Fig. 92). In most cases this move was permanent. About 3.5 million homes in London were either destroyed or damaged; 20,000 tons of bombs were dropped on the capital between September 1940 and May 1941, resulting in the deaths of 20,000 people with another 25,000 injured. The total number of casualties in the London metropolitan area, during the six-year war was around 50,000.¹⁸⁸.



Fig. 92 – 1946. A still image from the film ‘The Proud City’ directed by Ralph Keene (1902-1963) showing the survey carried out in the bombed areas in London. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

¹⁸⁸ Porter, 2000, pp. 415-17

The post-World War II years were hard for Britain as a whole since, among other repercussions, rationing remained enforced for 14 years, from 8th January 1940 until 4th July 1954. However, the economy of London picked up quickly after the end of the conflict as jobs became available, particularly within industries supported by the British government and those that remained active during the war, such as engineering, electrical and vehicles industries.

The promises of a better life were also portrayed in the exhibition, *Britain Can Make It!* held at the Victoria and Albert Museum between September and November 1946. This was organised by the Council of Industrial Design (COID), which was also established by central government in 1944 to promote design as a catalyst to improve British industry.¹⁸⁹ In 1948 the central government also introduced the National Health System (NHS). A team of experts led by architect-planner Patrick Abercrombie, produced two reports between 1943 and 1944, which laid out guidelines for the planning of post-war London (see Fig. 93).



Fig. 93 – 1946. A still image from the film ‘The Proud City’ directed by Keene showing Abercrombie describing his regional plan for London. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

The Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 afforded local authorities the right of compulsory purchase of blitzed areas to allow the implementation of more coherent planning. Despite Abercrombie’s visionary plan, which considered the expansion of

¹⁸⁹ Darling, 2001-2

London on a regional scale, the actual reconstruction of the capital was cautious and the plan never fully implemented. London's fabric was patched up and street plans, transport infrastructures and the location of employment were not given a fresh approach. From a social point of view, though, the war relaxed London's class division, offering promises of a freer life and creating new aspirations.¹⁹⁰ British writer, activist and Christian socialist Bob Holman (1937-), once said that one of the positive outcomes of the Blitz was that it brought people together and that together they could shape a better Britain. In Holman's view, this condition contributed to the Labour election victory in 1945 and the creation of the welfare state.

Given that London was heavily damaged during the Blitz, were its cemeteries likewise affected? Were they bombed, damaged or in need of repair like the rest of the city? Generally the cemeteries survived the Blitz fairly well. However, the private station and part of the railway line that connected Brookwood Cemetery to London suffered heavy damages between the 16th and 17th of April, 1941 (see Fig. 94). Following these events the station and railway were never rebuilt as deemed too expensive.



Fig. 94 – 1948. Picture taken showing the bombing of the Necropolis Station near London Waterloo Station.
Source: National Railway Museum, York.

In an extract from the Report of the County Planning Committee submitted to the Middlesex County Council at its meeting held on 23rd February 1949 (see Figs 95-6 for

¹⁹⁰ Porter, 2000, pp. 418-19

integral text), it emerges that the Greater London Plan 1944 did not contain any provision for cemeteries. Point five in the Report states that:

The County Council considers that, with a view to reducing the requirements of land for burial purposes, particularly in the Greater London Area, a National Campaign should be organised by the Government for the encouragement of Cremation and that representations be made to the appropriate Government Department accordingly (point 6), (point 8), furthermore was agreed that there may be an opportunity for Authorities to collaborate for the purpose of providing Crematoria.

Indeed, a national campaign to promote cremation was never developed, possibly because cremation was already becoming popular long before the post-war years.

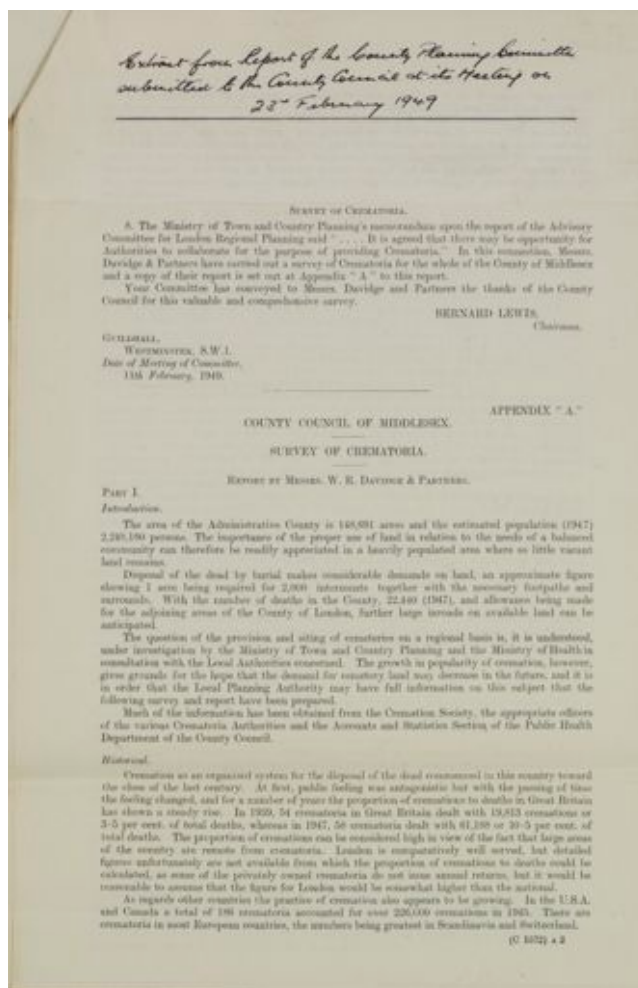


Fig. 95 – 23rd February, 1949. County Planning Committee Report submitted to the Middlesex County Council. Source: Cremation Society of Great Britain archives at Durham University.

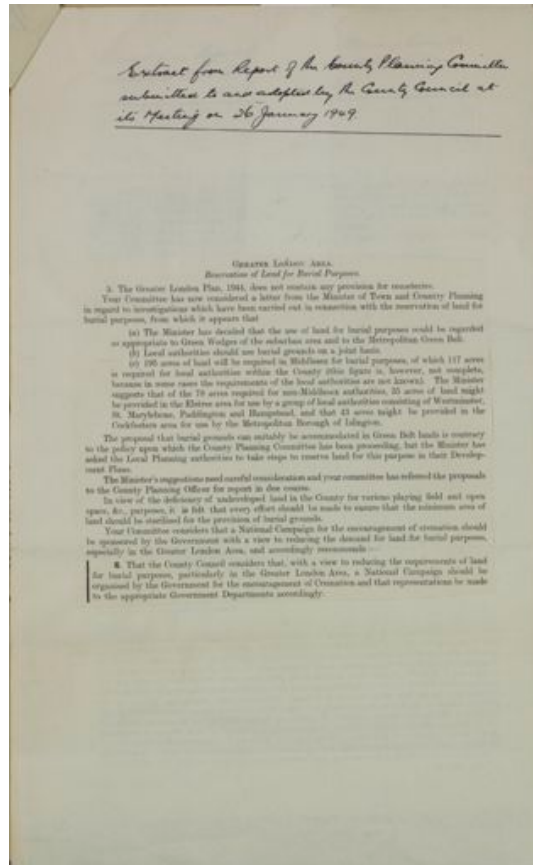


Fig. 96 – 23rd February, 1949. County Planning Committee Report submitted to the Middlesex County Council. Source: Cremation Society of Great Britain archives at Durham University.

This becomes evident from the cremation statistics, such as those in a letter sent to the Church Information Board, requesting the data for their own archives. The letter was dated 25th October 1954, and contains statistics from 1920 to 1954 (see Fig. 97). This document is part of the Cremation Society of Great Britain archives at Durham University:

Cremation data:

- 1920 – 1,796
- 1925 – 2,701 (+905)
- 1930 – 4,533 (+1832)
- 1935 – 9,614 (+ 5081)
- 1940 – 25,199 (+ 15585)
- 1945 – 42,963 (+ 17764)
- 1950 – 89,557 (+ 46594)
- 1953 – 116,728 (+ 27171 just 3 years)

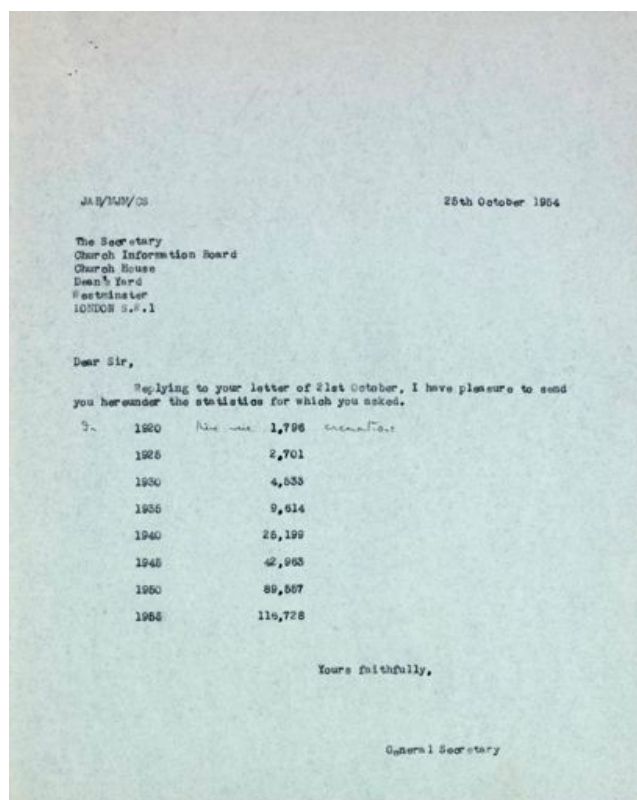


Fig. 97 – 25th October, 1954. Letter from the General Secretary of the Cremation Society of Great Britain.
Source: Cremation Society of Great Britain archives at Durham University.

Although these figures show that the biggest increase in cremation occurred between 1945 and 1950, they also illustrate a steady growth in cremations from the 1920s. It appears that cremation was already popular. But how did this happen? This extract from the report on the Conference of Cremation Authorities held at the Guildhall in London, 26th October 1922, sheds some light on this shift (for integral text see Fig. 98):

The question of cremation had been occupying attention for a long time, and yet it had made but slow progress; it had made progress among the most learned and thoughtful in the land, who agreed that their bodies should be cremated; but the method had not commended itself to the great mass of the people and until it did that, from a sanitary point of view, it was a failure. The cremation of a few people was not what they wanted. They must cremate a large number so as to save the living. Then there was another point, which would be a very important one in a few years, possibly within fifteen or twenty years, namely: if we went on with the present system of burying, how were they going to find the land for cemeteries to carry it out? Was it possible to go on extending them much further than present? There were some cities so dotted round with cemeteries that in a little while it would be impossible to get out of them without going through a burial ground. It

was a terrible thing to go on using land in this tiny island for large cemeteries, with huge gravestones and all sorts of monuments to the departed, which after a few years became obsolete, forgotten, and allowed to go to rack and ruin. It was probably a question of economics in connection with cremation that we should not occupy any more – or very little more – land in this way, but should concentrate to destroy rapidly, in a very reverent manner, the dead body, and then sprinkle the ashes on the surface of the land without any risk for the living.¹⁹¹

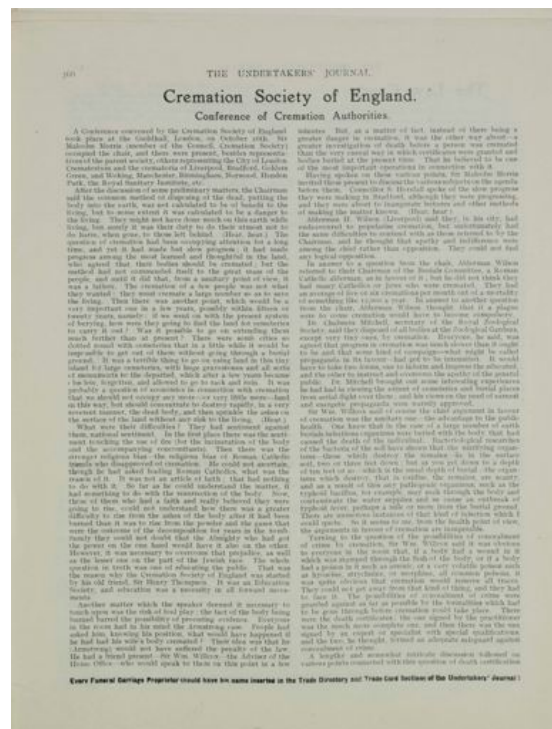


Fig. 98 – 1922ca. *The Undertakers' Journal*. Report on the Conference of Cremation Authorities held at the Guildhall in London, 26th October, 1922. Source: Cremation Society of Great Britain archives at Durham University

In a report (see Fig. 99) by the Council of The Cremation Society of England for the year 1925, printed in the British Undertakers Association (B.U.A.) Monthly for April 1926 there is a reference to the 1922 Conference of Cremation Authorities that reads:

During the year the Council has directed propaganda, as was suggested by many speakers at the Conference of Cremation Authorities held in 1922, rather from the aesthetic point of view and by an appeal to sentiment. For it was found that

¹⁹¹ The report was published on the *Undertaker's Journal* on page 366 (this is part of the collection of documents held at the Library of the University of Durham).

the general public as a rule do not like to be reminded of what happens to the body after death. They naturally shun a distasteful subject, which is absolutely repugnant to many. People, however, are quite willing to listen to and discuss the ideals of the Gardens of Rest or Remembrance, which are now materialising as an adjunct to the Modern Crematorium. These open spaces, decorated and adorned with flowers, shrubs and trees, free from gravestones and emblems of man's futile desire for perpetuity and pre-eminence all being alike in death – are reserved for the earthly remains of those who have passed from us to remain in peaceful and undisturbed repose. The Council has tried to disseminate these principles, mainly by lectures and by urging that opportunities should be given for the inspection of the buildings and grounds of the Crematorium whenever Cremation is not actually proceeding. During the early part of the year arrangements were made to provide capable lectures to the various Guilds, Institutes, and other organisations holding regular meetings, who cared to avail themselves of this offer without charge. The new departure has met with gratifying response. The Council, to give concrete expression to its conviction that the movement is best served by making everything associated with Cremation as beautiful as possible, has carried during the past year extensive alterations at St John's Woking, its own freehold property, and the first established Crematorium in Great Britain.

From this passage, we can deduce that two key aspects defined the process of acceptance (and establishment) of cremation as a preferred way of disposal during the first part of the twentieth century. The first is that since the early 1920s the Cremation Society understood that to make cremation appealing to people, they had to re-formulate the way in which it was communicated to the public. The second is that nature was believed to help in delivering that message of beauty in cremation. These ideas, however, were not innovative, but possibly inspired by precedents such as Victorian cemeteries, Robinson's design for Golders Green Crematorium and the design of the War Cemeteries.

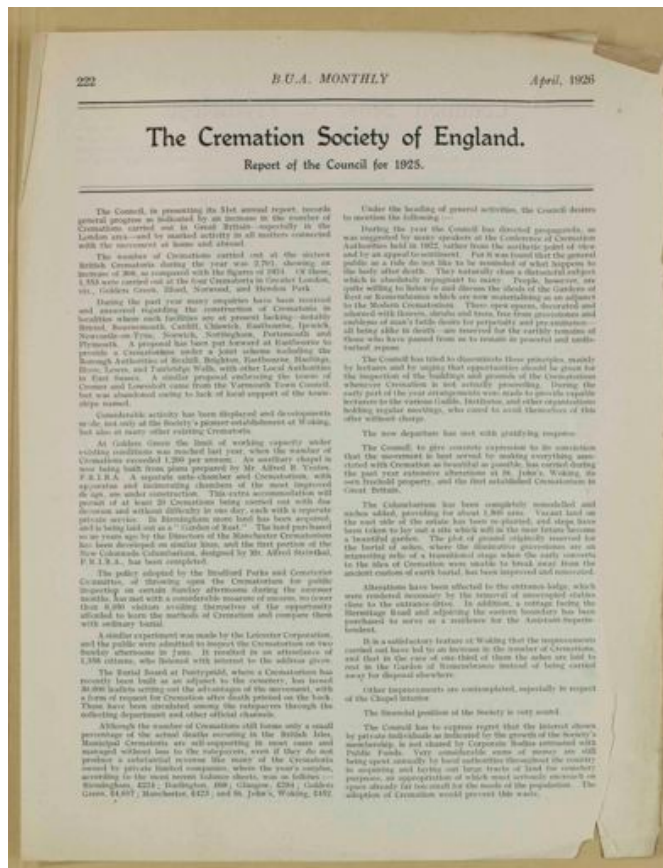


Fig. 99 – April, 1926. Report of the Council of The Cremation Society of England for the year 1925.

Source: Cremation Society of Great Britain archives at Durham University.

Nature and beauty, together with architecture, formed the romantic public image of the Victorian cemeteries. For Ariès, beauty was in fact used as a mask to hide death. He explained that this was not a modern event but a process that had been happening since the Renaissance era. Ariès affirms that:

In spite of the apparent publicity that surrounds it in and mourning, at the cemetery, in life as well as in art and literature, death is concealing itself under the mask of beauty.¹⁹²

Ariès also explains that especially “in America and England, nature retains emotional power, and its connections with death are real and profound.” Nature had already played an important part in the process of transition from the medieval graveyard to the suburban cemetery. Now, more than a century later, nature retained its role in the process of beautification of death by contributing to the transition from earth burial to

¹⁹² Ariès, p. 473

cremation. Again, the same paradigm was revived in the cremation to disguise death's true face – the disposal of human remains – and still leave space for a romantic interpretation of death.

To conclude we can assume that in the process of the transition from earth burial to cremation nature retained its role in making loss and grief more acceptable to human kind, whether in the context of a Victorian cemetery, a crematorium or a war cemetery. Particularly in the context of the garden of remembrance, nature acted as a mediator for society, to come to terms with such a pragmatic approach to disposal. In this respect nature not only acts as a universal pacifier beyond religious and spiritual beliefs, but amplifies the message that death is a collective experience that singles out each individual, yet is shared by the whole of humanity. Therefore nature, in the context of contemporary attitude towards death, could be interpreted as the ultimate leveller for society at large.

Carrying on with reviewing contemporary death culture, in the next section we will see how, just as the beauty of nature is helping society to come to terms death, contemporary medical research is in a constant battle to defeat death. This condition has been the subject of theoretical debate by contemporary scholars who have described it as the 'medicalisation' of death and criticised as a way of depriving society of a more direct and empowering experience of death.

5.3. The 'medicalisation' of death in contemporary culture

This section studies the notion of 'medicalisation' of death as identified and debated in contemporary scholarly research. This aim of this section is to clarify what are the implications of this condition and how it has affected contemporary death culture.

Among others, the French philosopher Ariès elaborates on this issue and states that the beginning of the twentieth century marked the completion of the psychological mechanism that removed death from society, eliminating its character as a public ceremony and transforming it into a private act. At first this was reserved for intimate family and friends, but eventually even the family was excluded as the hospitalisation of the terminally ill became widespread.¹⁹³ Theories around the hospitalisation of death also interest Giddens, as expounded in his book, *Modernity and Self Identity* where he raises the notion of the 'sequestration' of death. Giddens explains that the process of sequestration of sickness and death from everyday lives coincided with the advent of the Enlightenment, in the late eighteenth-century and the advances in scientific and medical research. Since this time, death and its assessment have gradually moved into the hands of the medical profession and, therefore, in Giddens' view, are sequestered from the individual as an experience originally connected to the biological human life-cycle.¹⁹⁴

Furthermore, Giddens elaborates on the idea of the hospital as an institution. In one extract he explains:

Like prisons and asylums, the hospital is also a place where those who are disqualified, from participating in orthodox social activities are sequestered from general view of certain crucial life experiences – sickness and death.¹⁹⁵

In this respect, the association of death with sickness and disease entrusts to medical and scientific knowledge the ability to provide a rational explanation for death, offer meaning, and also give finitude to the question of death itself. For Giddens, the sequestration of experiences is not just the result of the formation of institutions, but also the repression of "existential questions" (death being one of them):

¹⁹³ Ariès, p. 575

¹⁹⁴ Giddens, p. 144

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 161

Death remains the great extrinsic [not part of the essential nature of someone or something], factor of human existence. Death becomes a point zero: it is nothing more or less than the moment at which human control over existence finds an outer limit.¹⁹⁶

This act of disposition implies what Giddens calls “a leap of faith” in the authority that takes over the process of dealing with death and burial. Trust and risk play a key role in the process, therefore, as the individual needs to trust the professional and rely on their expertise, whether a doctor, a lawyer, or a funeral director. The observations advanced by Ariès and Giddens make one reflect on the intrinsic relationship the medical profession has with death. Through this thesis we saw how doctors first entered the space of the overcrowded graveyards in the late eighteenth century, advocated their removal from the city centres and instigated their reformation. They then researched into new methods of disposals, and now in the contemporary context are, according to Ariès and Giddens, taking away at once the experience of death from society.

It is worth noticing that in connection with medicine, also technological progress had a crucial role in the process of the elimination of death. On this point, Ariès identifies that by the late nineteenth century positivist thinkers sensed a relationship between the advance of technology, the rise of prosperity, and the virtual elimination of death from daily life.¹⁹⁷ With the growing influence of technology over public and private life in general, as well as industry and production, this relationship became more real after the first third of the twentieth century. People began to believe that there was no limit to the power of technology, either in man or in nature. Technology erodes the domain of death until there is the illusion that death has been abolished. Ariès explains thus:

Our modern model of death was born and developed in places that gave birth to two beliefs: first, the belief in a nature that seemed to eliminate death; next the belief in a technology that would replace nature and eliminate death the more surely.¹⁹⁸

If we accept this theory, what are the consequences of this “illusion of eliminating death” in the physical space of the city? In his book, *Liquid Modernity* (2000), sociologist

¹⁹⁶ Giddens, p. 162

¹⁹⁷ Ariès, p. 595

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 595

Zygmunt Bauman (1925-) argues that civil space in modernity has been “simplified,” emptied of meanings and therefore transformed into a commodity for consumers (shopping centres or squares are leading examples). Bauman’s polemic asserts that these spaces are designed for mere “action” but not “interaction” in a civic and social sense. In these places people gather together to carry out a task (shopping, tourism) but not as a congregation.¹⁹⁹ Giddens too theorises on the subject and observes that “the modern city is by far the most extensively and intensively artificial series of settings for human activity that has ever existed.”²⁰⁰ Furthermore:

In conditions of modernity, people live in artificial environments in a double sense. First, because of the spread of the built environment, in which the vast majority of the population dwell, human habitats become separate from nature, now represented on the form of ‘countryside’ or ‘wilderness’. Second, in a profound sense, nature literally ceases to exist as naturally occurring events become more and more pulled into systems determined by socialised influences.²⁰¹

Combining Bauman’s theory on the “simplification of civic space” (space emptied of civic and social meanings), and Giddens’ theory on the decline of the existential questions in modernity (death being one of them), it is possible to speculate that the cemetery is one of the few spaces, or even the only space that is loaded with “complex” meanings and can be considered a less “artificial” environment than the rest of the civic space in the city. With this in mind, the fact that the cemetery has been progressively neglected speaks to how society may have chosen not to look at the more “complex” and “existential” questions, which are otherwise embodied in the cemetery in favour of those “artificial” and “simplified” civic spaces. Giddens also points out how in the process of the sequestration of experience the external agent of the media (literature, television and art) reconstructs the sequestered experience by editing. This could be also said of death. By making it invisible – through institutionalisation and sequestration – each and any medium is able to reinvent anew the experience of death. This raises questions about the authenticity of the experience of death and adds complexity to the discussion about the invisibility of death. For Giddens, “modernity is a post-traditional order, but not one in which the sureties of tradition and habit have been replaced by the certitude of rational

¹⁹⁹ Bauman, pp. 96-7

²⁰⁰ Giddens, p. 166

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6

knowledge."²⁰² As previously seen, the funeral industry had a deep impact on the pre-modern experience of death by instructing people in the right way to deal with death and burial rituals. This process was crucial in shaping people's perception of death, as it distanced and, in some ways, deprived them of the experience and the knowledge to be gained by that experience. However, for those people that perceived the experience of death as an emotional issue too complex and profound to deal with, the institutionalisation of death and its rituals can be seen as a problem-solving service available via a commercial transaction.

To conclude this section we can say that certainly, the rationalisation of burial space in London aimed to remove death from sight, limiting the emotional and social involvement for the sake of privacy and decorum. This pursuit of perfection, desire for precision, for quality and equality in burial was not different from the principles that drove the rationalisation of mass production and industrial manufacturing in the post-war years. Furthermore, we saw that the invisibility of death in modernity is the result of a combined action of the institutionalisation of modernity (control over society); the sequestration of death; the rewriting of death rituals and traditions by the funerary industry (also seen as a new set of rules that shaped social and civic life), and social mobility (a result of the accumulation of wealth). Although contemporary scholarly research denounces that death is less visible, or indeed 'sequestered', to borrow Giddens' term, as an experience from contemporary culture, it is also true that society has a desire to understand death and loss in new ways, starting from exploring its more recent history.

By contrast to what we saw in this section, in the next and last part of this chapter, we will see how Victorian cemeteries are now appreciated as receptacles of collective history and culture, and how through programmes and initiatives are engaging with local communities and the wider context of London.

²⁰² Giddens, p. 3

5.4. Victorian cemeteries: a new sense of civic pride

In the previous section, we saw how death has been going through an irreversible process of rationalisation in the early twentieth century, which could be argued also made it progressively less visible since the inception of the Victorian cemeteries. Whether more technically “sequestered” (Giddens) or “medicalised,” death is less present in our everyday life than it was in Victorian London. In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (first published in 1975), Foucault observes that in the past:

The periodic massacres of the epidemics, the formidable child mortality rate, the precariousness of the bio-economic balances – all this made death familiar and gave rise to rituals intended to integrate it, to make it acceptable and to give a meaning to its permanent aggression.²⁰³

From Foucault’s statement we gather that, at one time, the familiarity of death gave rise to rituals that were intended to “integrate” death, rather than exclude it from life. This was done to make it acceptable and meaningful. In Western society, death tends to be associated with what can be defined as the ultimate “technical failure” of the human body. Death in modernity is therefore primarily associated with something that is not supposed to happen, a fault to be fixed, a problem to be resolved, but not a natural part of the cycle of life.

Although Foucault talks about the familiarity of death and its acceptance, we have seen in this thesis that society experienced death differently depending on people’s status. For example working-class Londoners’ death rituals in the nineteenth century extended to local communities rather than just to close members of the family. By contrast, however, for the middle classes, death rituals were more ambivalent as they combined a degree of privacy (mourning and grieving process) and publicity (elaborate funeral service and funerary architecture). Since the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the growth of social mobility of Londoners saw the burgeoning of the middle classes. With this shift, people’s choices changed as they favoured more private means of celebrating death, and since the 1920s cremation had become the primary method of disposing of the dead. In combination, these elements contributed to the reduction of the visibility of death in the

²⁰³ Foucault, 1991, p. 55

public space of the city. But how has this change in death culture affected the existing Victorian cemeteries? Are they still used as burial spaces? Are they still considered as spaces of socio-cultural interest? Are they still regarded as precious open spaces for the city?

French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) and Foucault both theorised on the cemetery and reinstated its role as a social space. In his book, *The Production of Space*, first published in 1974, Lefebvre defines the cemetery as an “absolute space [...] a highly activated space, a receptacle for, and stimulant to, both social energies and natural forces.”²⁰⁴ By contrast, Foucault theorises on the unique quality of the cemetery, being an interconnecting tissue between each part of the city. Outlining his view about the cemetery he explains:

This is certainly an ‘other’ place with respect to ordinary cultural spaces, and yet it is connected with all the locations of the city, the society, the village and so on, since every family has some relative there.²⁰⁵

Both theories see the cemetery as still deeply rooted in the fabric of society, but does this mirror the current reality? During most of my visits to and guided walks through my case study necropolises, I learned that very few people used the cemetery, even simply as an open public space. In the case of Kensal Green Cemetery, for example, the reality is far different from what one can see in the early engravings depicting this necropolis. Most of the monuments are in disrepair, and the poor maintenance of the green areas makes it difficult to read or comprehend the original design of the landscape. Kensal Green Cemetery, however, is still open for burials and cremations, and the conservation and maintenance of the monuments and buildings in the cemetery is under the care of the charitable organisation, the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery. Alongside this responsibility, the Friends run a programme of visits, lectures and other cultural events to promote the rich history of the Victorian necropolis, including the Intervention Gallery (see Fig.100), located in the cemetery’s Anglican Chapel, designed by Griffith.

²⁰⁴ Lefebvre, p. 236

²⁰⁵ Foucault, 2006, p. 353



Fig. 100 – 2010. Leaflet advertising The Intervention Gallery. Source: Author.

The gallery's curator Kate Keara Pelen, has been programming the gallery since its opening in 2010, organising and commissioning, exhibitions, talks and other related cultural events when funding becomes available. In 2011, the gallery also initiated a programme of artist residences and the commissioning of new artworks.

On my visits to Highgate Cemetery I recorded a similar set-up, whereby the conservation of monuments and building is cared for by the Friends of Highgate Cemetery. In 2012, the Friends completed the restoration of the cemetery's Anglican Chapel, now used for cultural events such as lectures and concerts. One of the most outstanding cultural events was the celebration that marked Highgate's East Cemetery 150th anniversary. For the occasion, a live performance took place inside the cemetery on 28th May 2010. The unusual event titled 'Voices from Far Away' marked the anniversary of the first burial in this part of Highgate Cemetery and was the result of a unique collaboration between the Friends and the National Theatre (see Fig. 101). On that occasion the whole cemetery became the stage for a public performance. Sound or music would begin by a grave or a monument and the guided audience party would gather there to watch a performance of a song, poem or short reading from a play. New music would start to call the audience forward as soon as the previous performance finished and those gathered by the tombs would applaud. The whole event eventually unfolded into a gentle promenade, a moving

theatre amongst nature, skewed tombstones and decrepit monuments.²⁰⁶ But what is the significance of these two unrelated events? What does this tell us about the changing role of the cemetery in contemporary London?

A good starting point for this discussion is the cultural context being developed by both the Intervention Gallery at Kensal Green and the Highgate East Cemetery performances. Therefore, I suggest that both events provoke the cultural status quo and make a statement about the untapped possibilities for culture to manifest itself in the urban context.



Fig. 101 – 2010. A photograph taken during the promenade performance: ‘Voices from Far Away’ at Highgate East Cemetery. Source: Author.

Pop-up cultural events (such as the Punchdrunk theatre company) often occupy unexpected locations in a city, including former industrial buildings, disused stations, underground chambers and even deconsecrated churches, but rarely have these been staged in Victorian cemeteries. These spaces are different as they are a place of rest for

²⁰⁶ The experience was also enhanced by the special qualities of this Victorian cemetery, and by the unique combination of culture and intellectual work that was produced by the people buried in that part of the Highgate Cemetery. One could say that the organisers of the event have performed a task similar to the one of an archeologist, discovering the dormant cultural and intellectual work otherwise unexpressed by the physicality of the tombstones.

human remains and for that reason acquire a special quality that is sacred, from a religious, secular or even anthropological, and, indeed, a cultural point of view.

In recent years, since Curl, Brooks, Rugg, Richardson and Hurren, among others, have rekindled intrigue in Victorian death culture, London's Victorian cemeteries have attracted a range of interest (see Fig. 102). Although most cemeteries have completed their initial assigned function as "burial space," they are now entering a new phase of discussion about their future role in the context of the city. A body of research has started to emerge in a spontaneous and uncoordinated fashion, which stimulated many London cemeteries to respond in a variety of ways, such as those I have mentioned above. So what are we supposed to make of these reinterpretations of burial spaces? Is there something that we could learn from them, and that could inform the design of future burial spaces?



Fig. 102 – 2005. Photograph taken during a guided tour of Brookwood Cemetery. Source: Author.

In light of this contemporary context, one wonders how spaces such as the Victorian necropolises should now be considered? Should they be treated as archaeological relics of another time in which humanity celebrated death in a different way? Are they stone libraries of stories from past lives that are only open to us through a guide, or book or piece of theatre? Are they still evolving and, if so, how? As they have exhausted their role as burial spaces, they are free from their primary function and can enter a new phase in

which they become platforms open to new interpretations and meanings, set within the contemporary socio-cultural context of London.

To conclude we can say that the significance of Victorian cemeteries shouldn't be underestimated; they hold extreme value as testaments to our past, and not just for the dead, architectural motifs, or idyllic garden cemeteries inspired by Arcadian ideals. For all of the problematic historical traits Victorian cemeteries represent – social division, unmarked graves for the poor, mausoleums for the rich, capitalist exploitation – they also serve as reminders that these are traits we do not wish for our future. They serve as physical reminder of burial culture in modern history moved from overcrowded church to cemetery to cremation, and now can be reframed, re-imagined or transcended, if we, as their stewards, are open to such possibilities. These precious open spaces are to be enjoyed respectfully: when once their access was limited, now they are open for all.

It is also worth mentioning that, as seen in the literature review in the opening section of this thesis, the neglect of cemeteries, as denounced by Brooks, Worpole and Rugg is undergoing a significant change, as cemeteries are now considered as part of the nation's historical heritage. Furthermore the cultural initiatives described in the section demonstrate that beyond personal connections with the Victorian cemeteries society wants to engage with their shared historical and cultural content. This demonstrates that Victorian cemeteries are actively contributing in raising the awareness of the history of death culture in the urban context of London.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that, in the course of the twentieth century death culture underwent unprecedented changes, which were partially influenced by the two world conflicts that scarred society and affected the perception of death.

We saw how the institution of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and programming of war cemeteries to commemorate the losses suffered in the conflict acted as a new paradigm for memorialisation and collective grief. We saw how the London Necropolis Company was involved in the commission's programme, through Messer, in the formation of Brookwood War Cemetery, which is the largest of its kind in Britain. The carefully tailored aesthetic language devised by the commission for the war cemeteries had a dramatic influence on the wider society and particularly on the perception of death. This emphasised the notion that death is a shared experience beyond social, cultural, political, gender and religious differences.

The reconstruction of London limited the availability of space for burial in the post-World War II years. We saw that in 1949, the Middlesex County Council Planning Committee deliberated that cremation was indicated as a solution to the issue of burial space allocation for the city. It was through the combination of two factors that cremation rose to popularity. One reason was because it was cheaper than earth burial. The other aspect was the way in which cremation was communicated to wide audiences, through new ideas such as the garden of remembrance (first seen in Golders Green Crematorium). This new type of landscaped garden broke away from the individualist approach promulgated by the Victorian cemetery companies (individual tombstones and monuments), and promulgated instead the idea of a memorial landscape as a shared space in which there were no signs of individual memorialisation. This was a dramatic departure from the Victorian period, and the culture of expensive funerary rituals. This change had a deep impact on the scale and quality of funerary architecture. The overly decorated tombstones seen in Victorian cemeteries were replaced by more simplistic and subdued funerary architecture, in style and content. It is possible to argue that this was partly influenced by the new aesthetic language developed for the military cemeteries by the Imperial War Graves Commission.

In this chapter I have also questioned the idea of the invisibility of death in modernity, particularly in relation to the theoretical work of Giddens and Bauman. Giddens in

particular identifies that the sequestration of death is strictly connected to the rise of the medical profession and their influential role in the everyday life of society at large. Death in this context is treated as a disease, and medicalised, rather than being understood as part of the human condition and part of the cycle of life.

Giddens' experiential "sequestration" of death from society however finds its roots in the nineteenth-century death culture, and that has been gradually building up since. We saw earlier on, for example how medicine had an influential role particularly in the reformation of burial spaces into new cemeteries and later affected further changes in the and burial culture.

In the last section I revealed how Victorian cemeteries are still actively contributing to the socio-cultural life of the city, and preserve their history for future generations. As we saw in this other chapters in this thesis, these had a key role in the context London's urban growth since the early nineteenth century, promoting civic pride and contributing to the reformation of other institutions. Yet, in the contemporary context, and as a consequence of the rise of cremation, the role of cemeteries in the urban development of a city, has been undermined and only partially integrated in the contemporary planning strategies for new urban areas.

Conclusions to 'The Evolving Paradigm of Victorian Cemeteries'

This research was triggered by a set of initial questions, which aimed to clarify how Victorian cemeteries advocated a process of rationalisation of burial spaces, and by extension, contributed to the formation of the city's suburbs. The answers that have emerged help to explain how Victorian cemeteries functioned within their local context and which relation they had to the broader context of London. It has been shown that, in nineteenth-century London commercial private enterprises were extensively free to act and shape the city along commercial principles, demonstrating the success of capitalism.²⁰⁷ Within this space – which we could call a space of representation – each aspect had to make its contribution to capitalist success. As the space of the city came under review, in the early part of the nineteenth century, each aspect was scrutinised and assessed for its contribution to the new city and was either kept as a visible feature within the city, or expelled – displaced and segregated – in an attempt to disguise it and make it less visible. Inner-city burial spaces were one of the first aspects of the city to come under review as considered unfit for a modern city.

The reason for this review, as we saw, was driven by concerns not just about the poor health conditions of London's working classes, but also about their productivity as a work force. If we accept this position, then it follows that the overcrowding of London's graveyards endangered the health of the population, a condition that would have had a direct repercussion on their productivity. It would, therefore, also have had a direct impact and damaging effect on commerce and the economy at large. Any obstacle to the health of the economy was considered a threat, and should therefore be eradicated. The economic success of London not only had an impact on a national scale – linked with national identity – it was also important on an international level, affecting foreign relations and the British Empire (this connection became more evident with the implementation of the war cemeteries after World War I). The issue of overcrowded inner-city churchyards can therefore be seen as having far wider implications than just the disposal of dead bodies.

The findings, which have emerged from each individual chapter of this thesis have revealed three unifying themes: governance, order and visibility – all of which have the ultimate ambition to achieve a system of security over territory and population. It is when we observe them individually, however, that the history of their own evolution

²⁰⁷ Harvey, p. 229

starts to emerge. This is of particular value for this thesis as it highlights the trajectories of their changes in relation to the history of London's burials, from the early nineteenth century to modernity. For example, if we start by considering the evolution of governance, it is possible to identify a trajectory of development that evolved from a fragmented, non-cohesive and complex administrative system for the city (which mirrored the diverse geographical arrangement of the different districts of the city), to a unified and coherent government structure. One of the factors that activated this process was driven by health concerns fuelled by the poor condition of the graveyards, which affected all the districts of the city and had consequences for the health of London's population. This provides the evidence that demonstrates how health became a common ground on which local authorities were stimulated to gradually centralise their actions to address and resolve the issue. Thus, we can state that burials had an impact on the establishment of the mechanics of governance in nineteenth-century London.

As seen in Chapter Three, Foucault theorised about these aspects, which stemmed from the idea of improving the hygienic conditions of the city and population and identified them as systems of security.²⁰⁸ As a consequence, the legislative power materialised in a new physical and socio-cultural order in the space of the city. Therefore, just like governance, the idea of order evolved from a medieval model of formation of the city (centred around religion) to a more programmatic structuring of space and functions, which were secularised and rationalised to fit the means of production and facilitate the circulation of goods and therefore stimulate the growth of commerce. Thus, eventually in the late nineteenth century this process of gradual consciousness culminated in a more critical approach to how space was organised in an attempt to combine governance, social order and productivity by improving public health and hygiene.

The combined action of governance and order had consequences for the visibility of certain aspects of society and commerce (for example, by hiding poverty, the body trade and death). This was made possible as legislation had the power to modulate visibility according to specific needs. For example, in the case of death we saw how up until the early nineteenth century, it coexisted with other aspects of life in the space of the city. This changed dramatically with the implementation of the suburban cemeteries as the process of eradication of death from the urban realm had already been initiated. In addition, death was edited, processed and reconfigured into an industry. This allowed for a new control over death including the manufacturing of a new etiquette of death, which

²⁰⁸ Foucault, 2009, pp. 11-8

regulated the behaviour of people affected by it (bereavement, mourning). This new control over the visibility of death can also be seen in conjunction with the aftermath of World War I, in which death and sacrifice were utilised by the organs of control – government and specifically constituted institutions such as the Imperial War Graves Commission – as a tool to promote nationalism and activate social cohesion, pride and dignity in the post-war years.

Following this brief overview on the three identified themes of governance, order and visibility, in the next section I will reconfigure the conclusions from each chapter along these three trajectories. These three axes intersect through time from the early nineteenth century to the present day.

1. Governance

In Chapter One, we saw how the introduction of the Anatomy Act in 1832 was the first in a string of laws that started to regulate death, and establish a degree of governance over the dead bodies and control over their movements and locations (prisons, workhouses, anatomy theatres, graveyards). This initiated a process of conversion and integration of burial spaces from places of remembrance to systems of control, ordering and arranging the dead in spaces. In this respect, death was no longer experienced merely on an emotional level based on sentiments, traditions and beliefs, but rearranged within a new rationalised framework, regulated by laws, restrictions and administrative procedures. This was then studied further in Chapter Two, which revealed that the general administrative structure devised for cemetery companies was adapted to suit the specificity of the new cemeteries. Due to the size of the new cemeteries, registers were introduced to keep detailed burial listings, which included the co-ordinates of each burial plot and corpse.²⁰⁹ Maintenance books were kept (in the case of Kensal Green Cemetery), in which communications with the individual burial plot owners were recorded and kept by the superintendent of cemetery. This system of administrative mechanisms also highlighted the desire to seek functionality along the lines of efficiency, which suited the principles of commercial enterprises. This aligned death with the other commodities increasingly available at the time, and, as a consequence, turned burial into an economic relationship and an impersonal transaction.

²⁰⁹ These were also kept in many churches for burials in pre-Victorian churchyards.

In Chapter Three we saw how in the early part of the nineteenth century central government just partially intervened in the expansion and growth of London, favouring instead private commercial entrepreneurs to take charge of building initiatives (this however was not completely new as a similar approach is to be seen in the seventeenth and eighteenth century). Projects such as new housing or new transport connections initiated by private commercial enterprises, lacked the supervising eye of an authority able to provide how the new additions would fit the overall framework of the city.

In Chapter Four we saw how in the second part of the nineteenth century, new concerns over the quality of the built environment and cemeteries started to question the organic expansion of London. With this acquired consciousness, new research and ideas explored the possibility of new systems of governance over the urban space of the city, as in the case of Ward Richardson. Similarly other ideas looked at the future of cemeteries, as seen with Robinson, within the context of the future expansion of the city.

With the need for land in the reconstruction years following World War II, we saw in Chapter Five, how London's local authorities reduced the requirements of land allocated for burial purposes. This allowed for an historical transition to take place from earth burial to cremation. With the rise of cremation, death entered another phase of administrative procedures, as doctors must certify a death to authorise the cremation.

To sum up these observations on the relationship between death and governance, we witness that in the last two hundred years, death became fully regulated by legislations and administrative procedures. These comprised the burial records, kept by Victorian cemetery companies, which also included the spatial location of a buried corpse within the actual cemetery. With the introduction of cremation the control in place was not on the actual final destination of the ashes, but at the point of death, when a doctor had to ascertain that an individual was medically dead, to then authorise the cremation of the body. This process increased the level of bureaucracy and administrative documentation that had to be compiled, recorded and retained, in relation to each individual burial.

2. Order

In Chapter One, I presented evidence to show how the relocation of burials in the suburbs initiated a process of reordering of the urban space, which ultimately served the reconstruction and expansion of London. In this context ordering the dead in a spatially

organised space was also crucial to communicate a sense of civilised order and decency in the space of the cemetery. This innovation also encapsulated a desire to reform burial and make it more suitable to the growing city, but also it was used to reinforce the establishment of a new secular order set on values such as trade and commerce.

Chapter Two elaborates on how funerary architecture was embraced by the middle classes to show their social status and legacy, a process that exacerbated the social divisions in Victorian London. Paradoxically, as the middle classes became more visible in the space of the Victorian cemeteries, the graves of the working classes and poor became less visible – unmarked graves, poor segregated in institutions, the destitute and the anatomy trade (as seen in Richardson and Hurren). This reformatting of death became even more defined in the second half of the century, with the further establishment of the funeral industry by private cemetery companies and other undertakers.

One of the key findings from Chapter Three is that the suburban cemetery in the first half of the nineteenth century was acclaimed as a new landmark that helped to redefine civic pride and urban order. This notion was new, and contributed towards the development of a more critical understanding of the urban space as a whole, and of the implications that unplanned and unregulated growth of the city would have in the medium and long term. This new consciousness also started to permeate private commercial companies. One of these was the London Necropolis Company that owned Brookwood Cemetery, which, as shown in Chapter Four, started to experiment with speculative spatial ordering to transform Woking into a new town. This was ultimately the intuition and vision of Tubbs and Messer, the directors of the London Necropolis Company, that allowed them to test new planning ideas. With the development of Woking as a new town, they provided an example of how to integrate an existing cemetery into a new residential development. This was also done with the creation of spaces such as golf courses which acted as buffer zones or soft barriers formed by vegetation between the existing cemetery and the new residential development. Strategically the choice of a golf course, rather than a park or other, acted as a device to attract potential buyers and new residents to the area. This was an isolated case of this kind in which a cemetery company adapted its commercial model to accommodate the cohesive development of one area, away from any centre of legislative and administrative control.

In Chapter Five we saw how the implementation of war cemeteries by the Imperial War Graves Commission demonstrated how it was possible to control design, planning and maintenance for cemeteries, and to create a homogeneous language of order and solemnity using a template based on funerary architecture and landscaped vegetation. It is possible that the paradigm of war cemeteries influenced the perception of death in the first part of the twentieth century, as they promoted the idea of equality beyond any socio-cultural, religious or ethnical differentiation – for the first time in the history of cemeteries. This typology of the cemetery acted as a great leveller, and was a departure from the individualistic approach promoted by the Victorian cemeteries, in which only the rich and wealthy could afford burial plots, funerals and memorials. These also showed the way to new aesthetics and maintenance principles that hark back to Loudon's utilitarian thinking on cemetery design, as they had to be both harmonious and economical.

Thus, we can say that this thesis highlights an evolution from the disorder stemming from the poor conditions of London's graveyards, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to the reordering of burial spaces. This process of transformation was gradual and developed in conjunction with the reconstruction of London into a modern city, in which the place of death was reassessed and reassigned out of the city centre, yet within the metropolitan area. This was a new system along which urban space and society were ordered and planned, to suit the rational processes of production and consumption which emerged as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the eighteenth-century. These new planning methods were different from those of the medieval towns and cities, which were established along religious principles, and designed around churches and cathedrals. These were the centres that attracted new followers and the places where the community gathered together to pray and meet. The new ordering system however, which emerged in the first part of the nineteenth century was one of transition from a religious to a secular society. Victorian cemeteries are one of those institutions that embody this particular transformation being both a sacred space, yet based upon scientific and medical ideas and ordered on the model of private commercial enterprise.

3. Visibility

In Chapter One we saw how the medical profession and the government was interested in reducing the visibility of death for hygienic and public health related concerns. Death,

however, was still visible in the space of the city's graveyards. Although the doctors and the government initiated this process, the solution of veiling death came from the entrepreneurial middle classes. They provided a solution by opening new private cemeteries in the suburbs of London and turning the operation of concealing death from the public eye into a business opportunity.

Chapter Two explains how the issue of visibility of death was addressed in the context of the paradigm of the Victorian cemeteries. This analysis has brought to light the functions of each one of the paradigm's components and reveals the dualistic nature of the Victorian cemeteries. Consequently, this study helps to deduce that both the architecture and landscape shaped the public image and romantic perception of the Victorian cemeteries. The introduction of machines in burial rituals and the capitalist mechanics of the Victorian cemeteries – as private businesses – formed a less public and less visible side of the paradigm. This chapter also reveals how the visible aspects of the cemetery, such as its landscape and architecture, formed a public façade for these cemeteries, which disguised the mechanics of these large burial spaces. The aim of these cemeteries was not to resolve the issues related to the lack of burial spaces in London, but instead intended to give the middle classes an opportunity to establish their future memory by purchasing burial plots and commissioning funerary architecture to celebrate their social status. This middle-class obsession with their own visibility in the space of the Victorian cemeteries eclipsed the real issue of burial for the poor and destitute, further forcing them into invisibility within living society and in death. Indeed, we can say that the issue of visibility of death was interwoven with the interests of the ruling classes at the time. This opens up ethical questions about the relationship between visibility and the value of a corpse. The remains of a destitute, for example, would have most likely ended up in an anatomy theatre; its contribution to the medical field would have had more impact on humanity than that of the average middle-class Victorian, who celebrated his own status by erecting a monument on a privately owned burial plot.

This was an attempt to erase poverty from public view by making it physically less visible – through the dissection of the destitute population – and by targeting those who could not afford a decent burial and funeral and thus could not leave a trace or legacy with a tombstone or monument. We can conclude, therefore, that the new suburban cemeteries were serving the middle classes in two ways: firstly by providing a decent burial space for themselves, and secondly by hiding the traces of the body parts traded for medical training, a profession which was seen to embody the essence of the middle

classes at the time. One could also say that there was a further meaning embedded in this, as the burgeoning middle classes were naturally thinking of their preservation, in terms of social class and medicine, and of what would allow them to preserve themselves, multiply and establish a legacy, based on capitalist principles of production and consumption.

Chapter Three suggests that the suburban Victorian cemeteries provided a more secluded setting for the dead. Along the new cemeteries also other institutions found space in London's suburbs. Following this line of thinking one could argue that the suburbs became the receptacle of those less "presentable" aspects of human nature, including mental illness and poverty. These aspects were identified, studied and institutionalised in the Victorian period in secluded locations away from the city centre. The question at stake at the time was not just about the visibility of death, but that of other aspects of the human condition which were pathologised to be researched and understood.

In Chapter Four we saw how death culture, in the late nineteenth century underwent major changes that affected its visibility. These were prompted by criticism expressed on the established monopoly of cemetery companies and other undertakers. These organisations pressurised mourners in choosing funerals as opportunities of unnecessary displays of the wealth and social status, rather than understated grieving. Therefore the excessive visibility of funerals started to be dismissed and found inappropriate to the reflective and more private nature of death.

As illustrated in Chapter Five, the issue of the visibility of death was challenged again in the aftermath of World War I. The fallen soldiers who had sacrificed their lives for the nation had to be remembered as war heroes, offering a unique opportunity to celebrate death in a public way and on a national and international scale. In the war cemeteries the choreographic quality of war monuments was intended to impart a grand appearance and emphasise the celebration of all those who had fallen in the war, rather than a few or even one individual in particular. This was one of the few opportunities in modern history in which death became fully visible again in the public sphere, and utilised as a social leveller and equaliser. It also functioned as a tool to promote cohesion between citizens and to restore nationalism and hope for the future development of the country. Furthermore, Chapter Five demonstrates that the invisibility of death in modernity is the result of the institutionalisation of modernity (control over society), the sequestration of

death, the rewriting of death rituals and traditions by the funerary industry (also seen as a new set of rules that shaped social and civic life), and social mobility (the result of the accumulation of wealth).

To conclude, it is evident that the perception of the invisibility of death as we experience it in our contemporary society is the result of a long process that began in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, over time, there have been various attempts to hide death from sight. In recent years, the issue of space in relation to death has been affected by digital technologies and the phenomenon of online social networks. These private yet shared spaces have also been used as places of mourning.

Closing statement

Having studied how the evolving paradigm of Victorian cemeteries contributed to the urban growth of London, I conclude that the cemetery since Victorian times has had a role to play in its shaping of modern capital. This role has been underestimated partly because it has not been acknowledged by existing literature in the context of the London suburban expansion. Hopefully this thesis will stimulate a rethinking for the strategies for London, which will be more holistic and inclusive towards burial spaces.

To draw final conclusions I will address the following question: what does this history ultimately say about us?

History says that we are a society obsessed with health and hygiene – Victorian cemeteries arose out of such concerns, as did cremation. Modern society has found a way to turn the human body into a commodity for exploitation, when it is alive and even when dead. The living body, the healthy body, is connected with industry and productivity – a fundamental enabler of capitalist success. The corpse had a twofold value in a capitalist context (the anatomy trade) and also in securing the future of medicine and science. The burial of the body, its allocated space and its relationship with the space of the living, has been crucial to our understanding of history through archaeological findings, the majority of which are related to burial culture. The aim of this research was also to reiterate that burials are and always will be an important starting point to observe and study human history and social changes.

The more recent expansion of London is not directly connected with public health issues nor does it possess the impetus to push death and disease further out, but it is still driven by economic factors. These remain closely aligned with economic reasons, in particular capital gain generated by a constant redevelopment of the city. The effects of this are still to do with displacement and relocation, particularly affecting the lower classes and poor. As London grows, there remains a desire to draw a veil over poverty, to make the space of the city a representation, one that projects the idea of success, order, governance and visibility. In this project there is no space for the dead, as land is at a prime. The model of the Victorian cemetery as a commercial enterprise, which viewed the dead as a moneymaking venture has been and gone. This is evident in the premature closure of Highgate Cemetery, only to be rescued by the charitable Friends of Highgate Cemetery, while Brookwood Cemetery, as seen in Chapter Four, sold off or developed, part of its land. One could argue that death should be more visible in the city landscape, as there is no need for it to be hidden away. Robinson, landscape designer of Golders Green Crematorium, proposed that disused city buildings could be used to keep urns, and act as shrines within the city.²¹⁰ Why haven't we contemplated this idea? Spaces like the ones that Robinson suggests could generate new civic interest if organised and governed by local communities. This could be an opportunity for society to re-appropriate death as part of our universal human condition, rather than be absorbed by materialistic culture and capitalist exploitation.

It is unlikely that death will ever re-enter the space of the city beyond trophy memorials because the focus of the city project is self-referential and ordered by capitalist principles. However, this status quo could be challenged by society. Perhaps it will be in the form of a self-initiated social project, transforming a disused urban space into a repository for urns. Neither would there be an issue with sanitation (with which Walker would have been concerned). Indeed, there would also be no need to disguise death with landscaping. Whatever form they might take, perhaps cities are the perfect places to reintegrate death culture back into the cycle of life.

²¹⁰ Robinson, pp. 9, 10

Appendices

- i. Bibliography*
- ii. 1899, London Necropolis Company architectural drawings*
- iii. 1904 (ca.), London Necropolis Company pamphlet*
- iv. The Cemetery as Machine*

Appendix – i

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Appendix – ii

121 Westminster Bridge Road

The selections of architectural drawings in this appendix show the design of the London Necropolis Company premises at 121 Westminster Bridge Road in London. These included the main office of the cemetery company, the workshops for the funeral services, a chapel and a private railway station that connected directly the London headquarters directly to Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey. As seen in the thesis, the London Necropolis Company offered full funeral services (more details on these can be seen in Appendix 4) and owned Brookwood Cemetery and adjacent landholdings in Woking.

The new company premises were completed in 1904 and replaced its old offices that had to be demolished to make way to the expansion of Waterloo station in the late nineteenth century. The drawings, which are currently held at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, are dated 1899 and are signed by Tubbs, who at the time was also running his own architecture practice with offices at 6, The Broadway in Woking. In his design Tubbs reveal his skills in providing a fully functional spatial organisation that ranges from consultation and design offices to mortuaries and funerary chapels.

It is worth noticing that the drawings are not showing a site plan of the area and the shape of the actual site occupied by the offices and the necropolis station. In its original arrangement, the offices faced the street front and the railway station was located in proximity to the main railway lines getting into Waterloo. To better understand its shape and plan, I have included an aerial view of the site at present. The office block facing Westminster Bridge Road, which is still existing today, however the workshops and station (including platforms) were destroyed during the World War II Blitz between 16th and 17th April, 1941 (see also Chapter Five, section 5.2. for further details).



Fig.103 – Aerial view of the London Necropolis former site as shown in the original drawings which are part of this appendix. In details: a) Front façade of the offices at 121, Westminster Bridge Road; b) Main office building; c) Workshops; d) Third class funerals former entrance on Newnham Terrace; e) Necropolis Station, former site of station’s platforms. Source: Google Maps – Satellite.

Drawings captions:

Drawing 1 – Elevation drawings of the front façade at 121 Westminster Bridge Road and sections of the main office block.

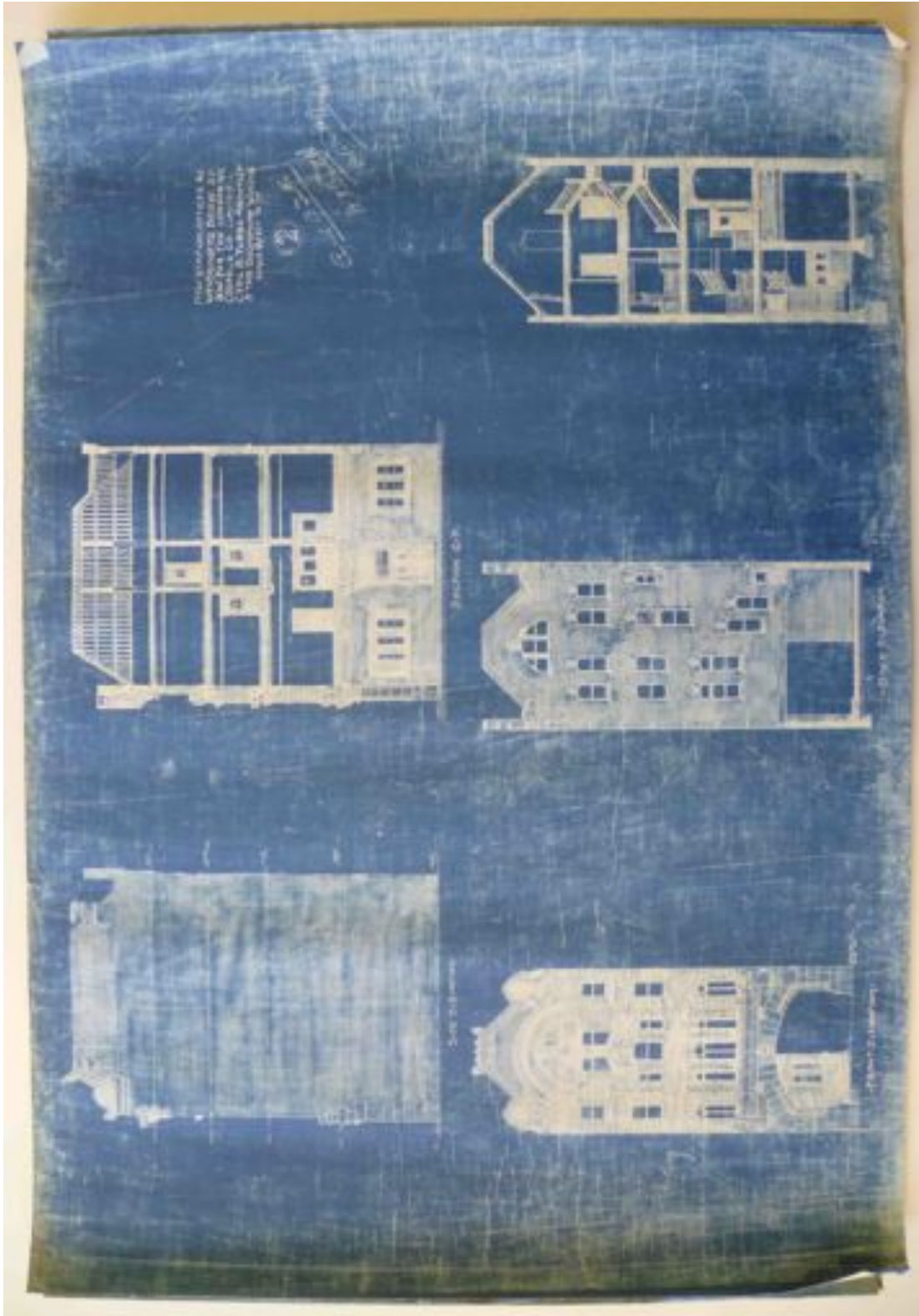
Drawing 2 – Plan drawings of the main office block at 121 Westminster Bridge Road, showing the spatial arrangements of each floor.

Drawing 3 – Plans drawings of the workshops buildings, including mortuaries and service lifts to move coffins from the street level to the station platforms. Also visible here is the separate entrance for third class funerals.

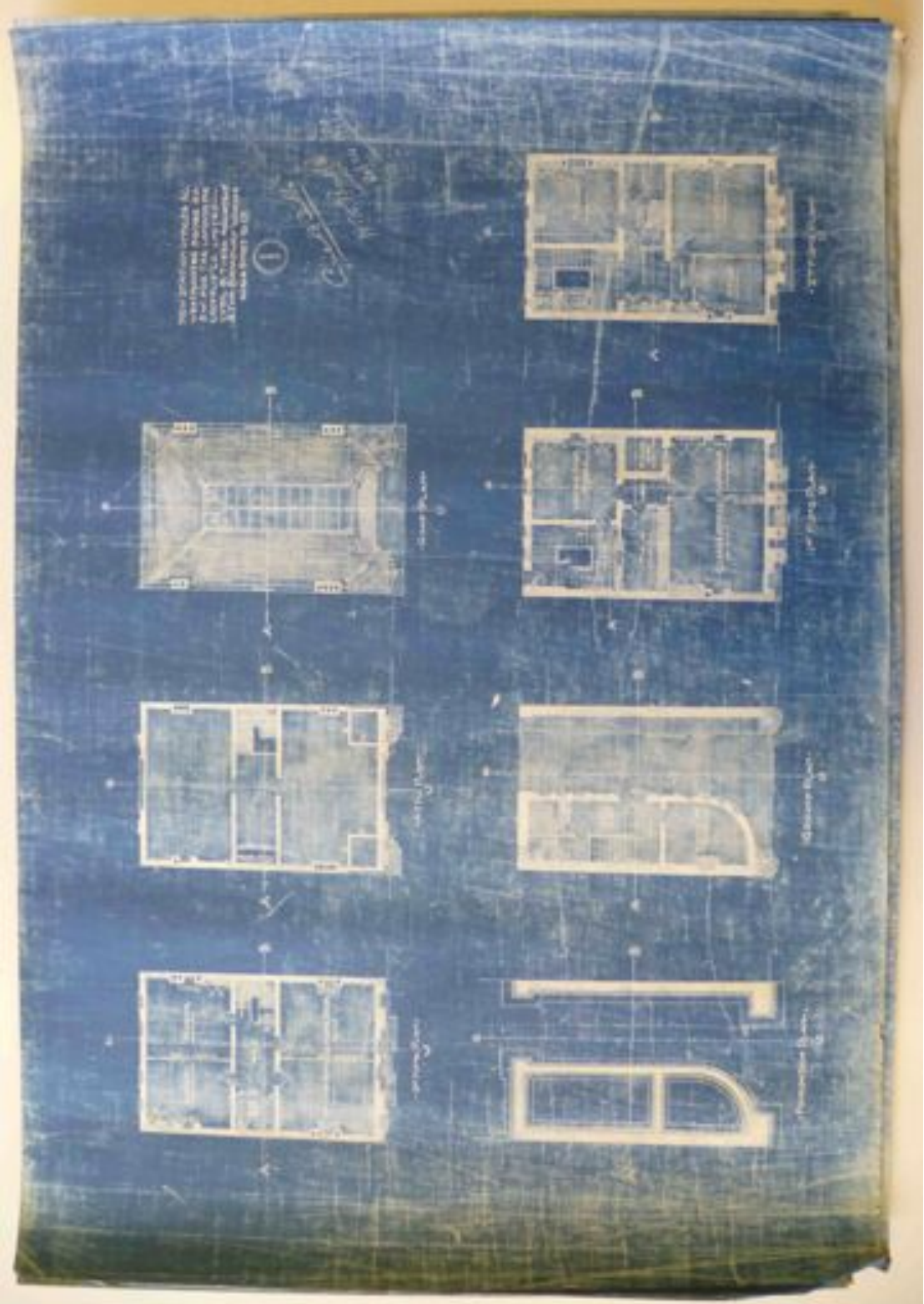
Drawing 4 – Plans drawings of the station platforms level, showing the funerary chapel, mourner’s individual waiting rooms for the first class funerals. It also shows the third class funerals access, services and waiting rooms, on the opposite platform.

Drawing 5 – Long elevation drawings featuring the details (windows arrangement and building features) of the walls along the workshops and station area.

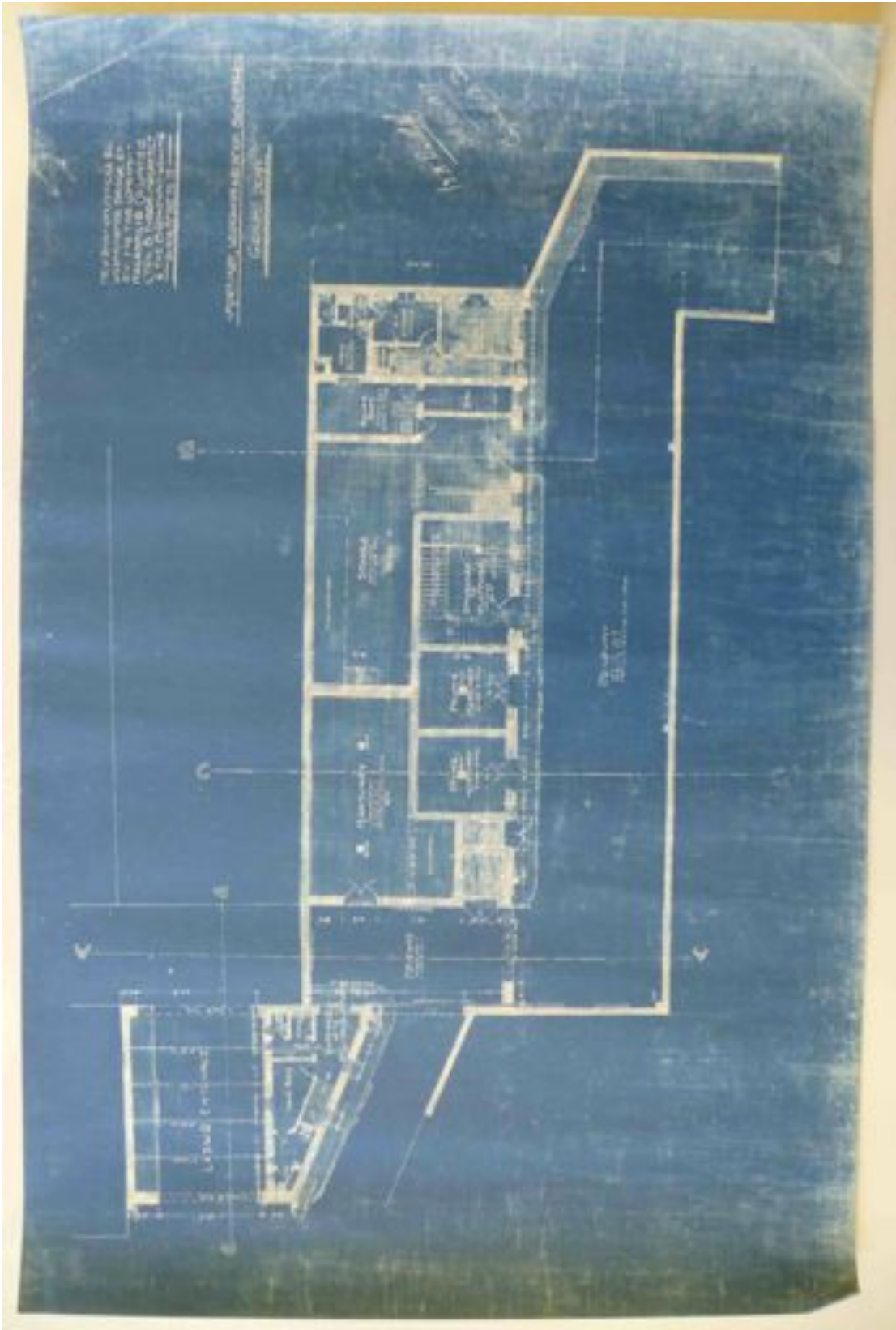
Drawing 1



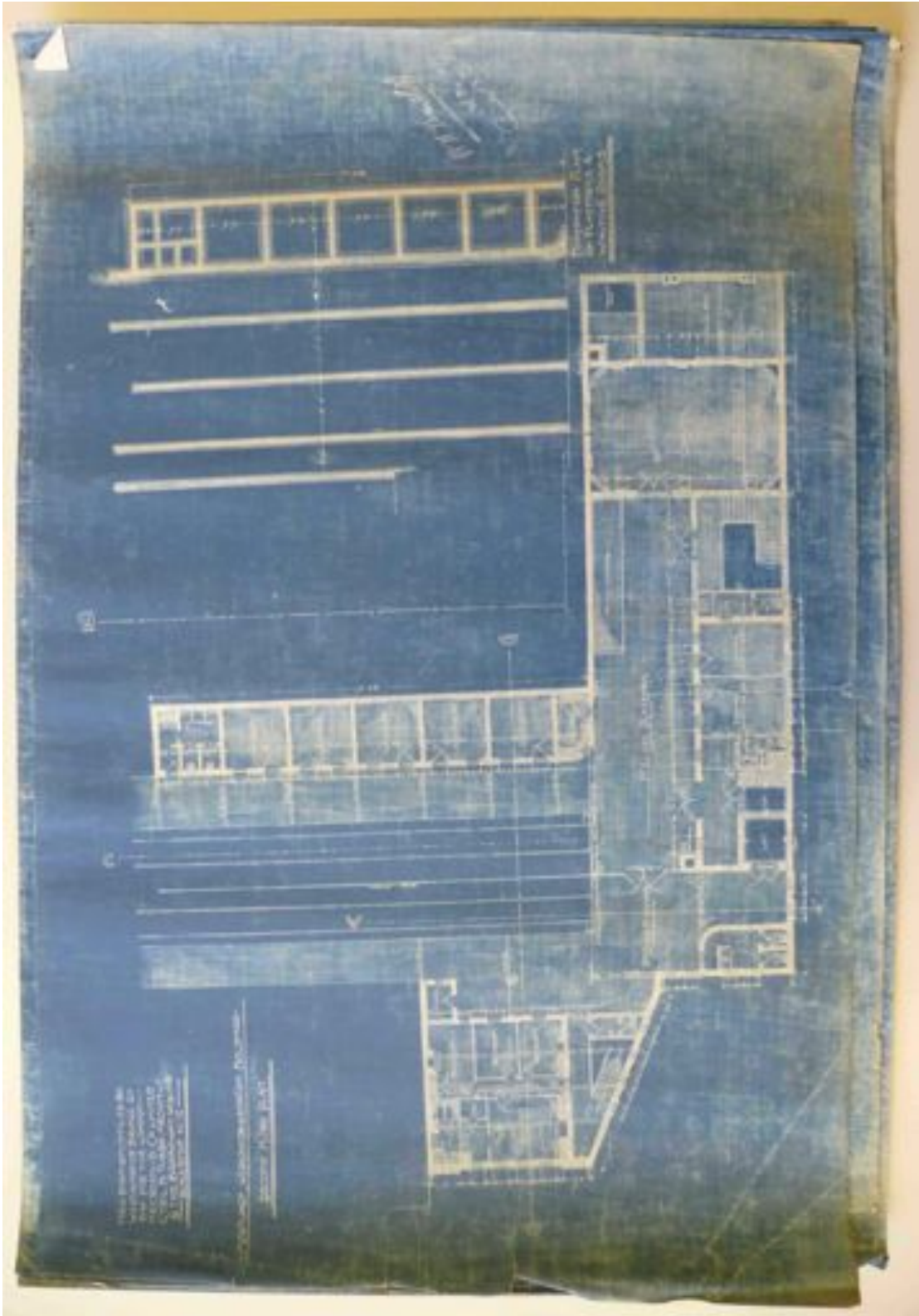
Drawing 2



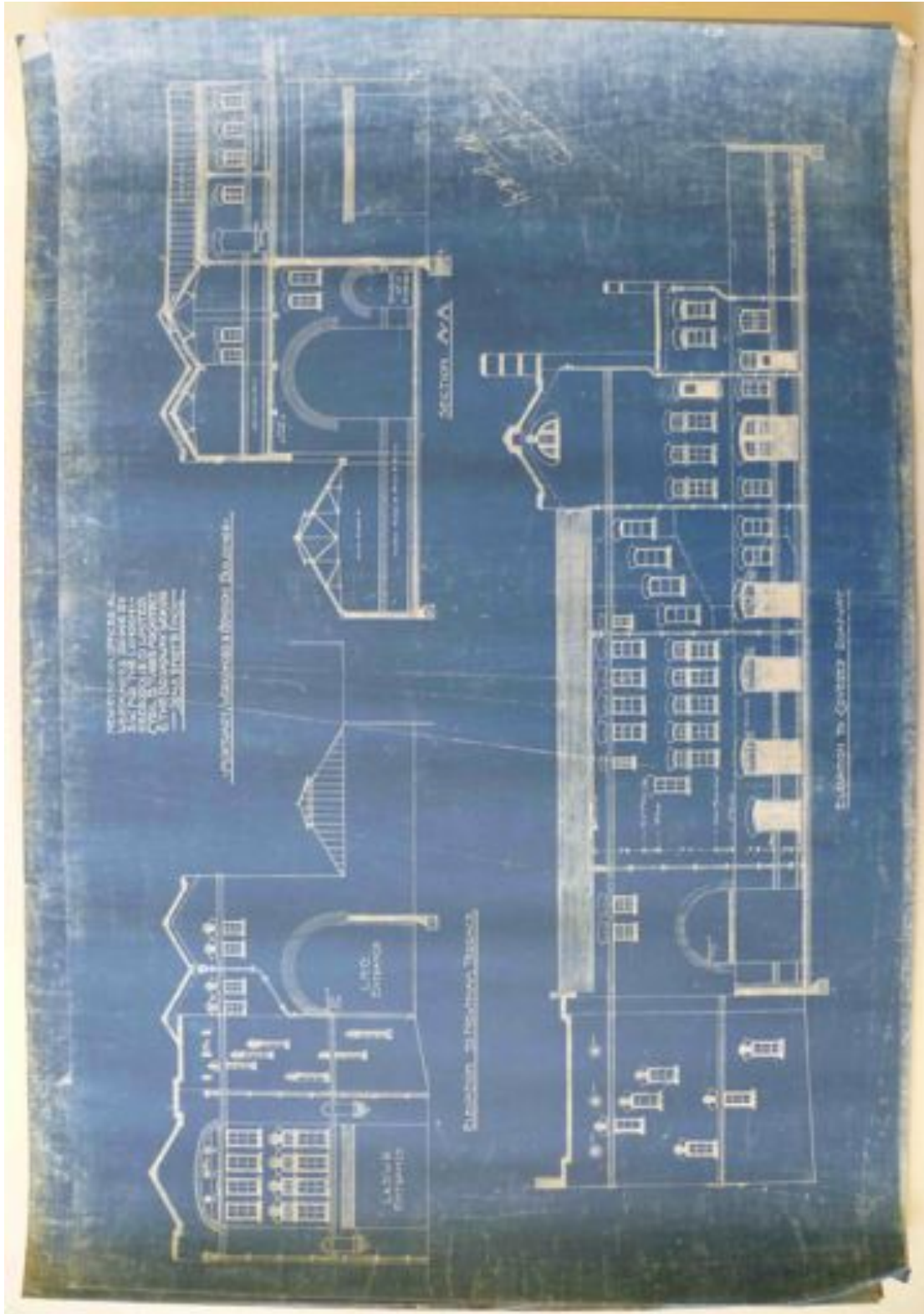
Drawing 3



Drawing 4



Drawing 5



Appendix – iii

London Necropolis Company pamphlet (1904 ca.)

This pamphlet was published by the London Necropolis Company to advertise its newly completed offices and station at 121, Westminster Bridge Road (see also drawings in Appendix – 2). The first part of the pamphlet introduces to the new premises in London and the actual cemetery in Brookwood (Surrey). The second part presents the Woking Residential Estates, a building development project that intended to grow and expand Woking into a new town. Two copies of this pamphlet still exist: one is held at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, and the other can be found at the Guildhall Library in London.

Although some extracts have been featured, where relevant, in the thesis, I felt that by including the whole pamphlet in this appendix would give the readers the opportunity to immerse themselves in the narrative constructed especially for this small yet unique publication. Here the spaces for the living and the dead are, not only side by side in the printed pages, but also in the physical space of the cemetery and Woking. The detailed descriptions of the interior spaces, its arrangement and furniture, is used by the writer (who is not credited anywhere in the pamphlet), to project the sense of care, trust and reliability the cemetery company had in all its undertaking whether a new coffin or a new home.

THE
London & Necropolis
COMPANY

ESTABLISHED 1851



NEW OFFICES AND HEADQUARTERS
121 WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD

*“ . . . all that is most beautiful imaged here
In happier beauty ; more pellucid streams,
In ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpleal gleams.”*

WORDSWORTH.

DAILY NEWS.—“Whether it was owing to the admirable management, or to the quiet charm of the moorland scenery, in the midst of which Brookwood Cemetery is situated, the effect was a feeling that here was the appropriate resting place for an eminent man, and this peaceful ceremony the right one for his funeral.”

THE
LONDON NECROPOLIS

Established
1851

The London Necropolis Co.

New Office and Station :

121 WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD

Cemetery :

BROOKWOOD, NEAR WOKING.

[c. 1904]



The Head Offices and the Railway Station

OF THE LONDON NECROPOLIS CO.

JUST over Westminster Bridge, a hundred yards or so from St. Thomas's Hospital on the same side of the road, there has lately been erected the handsome structure which forms the new home of the London Necropolis Co., and includes within its walls a Railway Station absolutely unique, inasmuch as it is

DAILY NEWS—"To the Necropolis Company, the railway is indispensable, and the New Station has been arranged with the view not only of rendering the process of entraining easy, but of providing suitable accommodation for Mourners. The Company certainly fills a unique position."

the only one of its kind in the world. Entering the new building by a handsome archway, and passing through the doorway, the visitor finds himself confronted with a noble staircase, which at once prepares him for the striking character of the various apartments on the upper floors. The stairs, balustrades, and panelling are of the finest English oak, and the effect here, as



The
Counting
House

throughout the building where the same beautiful wood is employed, is rich and pleasing to a degree. On the ground floor itself is an Enquiry Office and a charming little Waiting Room, where, if you are not an enthusiast in the matter of chairs

and tables and latticed windows of most quaint design, you can amuse yourself with "The Times" until you proceed to the department with which you have business. On the first floor is the General Office and Counting House, with the General Manager's Office opening out, a charming room furnished with the same sympathy that is conspicuous everywhere. Adjoining this room is another, which serves as an Order Office, and opens on to the stairway by a private door. A capacious Strong Room absorbs the remaining space on this floor, and we ascend by a further flight of stairs to the well-appointed Board Room. On the same landing is a splendid light apartment where

draughtsmen are at work on the various plans and maps in connection with the Estate.

This is not the place to describe in detail the routine of the office, but the arrangements are such that the various departments can work with the greatest economy of time and trouble. The CEMETERY DEPARTMENT, the MONUMENTAL MASONRY DEPARTMENT, the Stables and the FUNERAL FURNISHING DEPARTMENTS each find all the accommodation they require for their separate branches of this gigantic business, and, each being in telephonic communication with the other, no confusion can arise.

Having explored the Offices of the Company, the visitor will return again to the main entrance, and pass to the NECROPOLIS STATION, and he will at once appreciate how all the arrangements of the premises are so controlled as to ensure complete privacy for the funerals which take place from here. Directly the carriages pass through the archway they are beyond the public gaze, and the glass-roofed Station approach, with its white tiled walls and rows of palms and bay trees, produce anything but a morbid effect. The main entrance opens into a splendid hall, from which arises probably the handsomest wrought-iron staircase in London, leading to the platform above. Alongside the grand staircase, and approached by a separate entrance, is a fine passenger lift. After setting down Mourners the carriages pass out by an exit into Hercules Road, and EVERYTHING IS SO ARRANGED THAT HOWEVER LARGELY ATTENDED THE FUNERAL MAY BE THERE IS NO DELAY OR CROWDING. It should be said that several Private Mortuary Chambers are provided on the ground level, and these are already providing a long-felt want in a great City where deaths so often occur in hotels and lodgings, where it is impossible



Main
Entrance
to
Mortuary
Private
Chapel

for the body to remain. Severely plain, but light and scrupulously clean, these Mortuaries are a fitting resting place till the time of interment, and could have no horrors for the most sensitive.

On reaching the platform, either by the staircase or lifts, funeral parties are at once directed to the Waiting Rooms reserved for them, and ample provision is made in this respect, so that friends can assemble with as much comfort as in a private house. These

Waiting Rooms —
ONE OF WHICH IS
RESERVED FOR EACH
FUNERAL — are fur-

nished with light oak, and the floors laid with choice parqueterie, so that the whole effect is most artistic, and no additional gloom is imposed on a gathering necessarily sad. On the right-hand side of the platform is a most sumptuous PRIVATE CHAPEL, with a handsome oak Catafalque in the centre, and oak stalls

for the clergy and congregation. The Chapel is heavily carpeted, and the walls treated in bronze and green. In building this Chapel the Company were providing what experience taught them was frequently needed, viz., a place where those who were unable to attend the actual funeral could assist in the first part of the service at the London Station of the Necropolis. Beyond this the want has frequently been felt of a *Chapelle Ardente* of sufficiently imposing character, where a coffin might lie in state until the time of burial. Altogether the Chapel forms a very striking feature of the new Station, and there is little doubt that it will be much appreciated by



One of the Private Mortuaries

those who desire refined and beautiful surroundings for their beloved Dead.

Of the Platform itself little need be said beyond that it is light, free from disfiguring advertisements, and sheltered from both rain and wind. The funeral trains draw up alongside the Waiting Rooms and Mourners pass straight into the reserved carriages.



One
of the
Waiting
Rooms

No detail has been overlooked that could possibly assist in the

quiet and decorous conduct of the funeral from the London Necropolis Station, and the arrangements are such that two or three funerals may travel by the same train without one party being conscious of the presence of the other.

It will be found that in our account of the Cemetery we have said that certain Parish Guilds have secured reserved burial spaces for their communities, and it sometimes happens that these include the very poor, to whom funeral charges are a serious outlay. For such as these there is an Annex at the Necropolis Station, where there is a large Waiting Room and other accommodation of the most comfortable kind. Their platform is absolutely private and their feelings are studied in every way, although, of course, they cannot afford all the accommodation provided for their more fortunate brethren.





The Chapelle Ardente

GLOBE—"The structure is probably unique, comprising within its walls a Railway Station, a Private Chapel, Mortuary Chambers, Waiting Rooms, Offices, &c. The whole of the panelling of the various apartments for the use of Mourners together with the stairs is of English oak, while the furniture and the decorations are of special design. The Chapel is sumptuously and artistically furnished, and has an oak catafalque in the centre, and oak stalls for the Clergy and congregation."

Having inspected the Station, the visitor may like to go behind the scenes and see for himself the various arrangements that secure the smooth working of this large establishment. In the roof he will find the great motors that work the various lifts; in the basement are the boilers which work the dynamos and supply hot water to the Lavatories, and the heating apparatus that warms the whole building. In addition, he will see carpenters, engravers, and upholsterers at work on the various details in connection with funeral furnishing, and in the store room are piled up boxes of costly satins and plushes for use in the same connection. Indeed, passing through the workroom one gains a bird's-eye view of the whole routine of the trade, from the timber in the rough to the finished casket ready for delivery, while in an adjoining room one can select an urn for the Ashes after Cremation, or a model for a monumental stone. These pages, however, are not intended for the more technical details in connection with funerals, and THOSE WHO DESIRE FURTHER INFORMATION ON SUCH POINTS SHOULD WRITE TO THE COMPANY FOR A PRICE LIST. Our intention has rather been to make known the beauty of the Brookwood Cemetery, and its easiness of access; and the public has already shown its appreciation of the dignified and reverent character of the arrangements made by the London Necropolis Company. All this the new Station will assist, and few would wish to lie in the overcrowded Cemeteries of the suburbs when the calm and quiet of Brookwood is reached with such ease and comfort.



Entrance
to
Office
121 Westminster
Bridge Road



Platform
of
Private
Railway
Station
showing some
of the
Waiting Room
and
Entrance to
Coach

DAILY NEWS—"It need only be said that the New Necropolis Station is designed and furnished with the same sympathy that is conspicuous in every place which comes under the control of the Company."



*The Cemetery Station
at Brookwood*

THE TIMES.—“No more beautiful spot could be selected. The Cemetery itself is of immense extent, in the centre of a lovely country, and produces a sense of peace, quietude, and freedom which is sadly lacking in the congested appearance of the Cemeteries in and around the Metropolis.”



Gate
at Brookwood
Cemetery

Brookwood *Cemetery* (LONDON NECROPOLIS)

It was in 1850 that Parliament ordered the more crowded churchyards of London to be closed against further burials, and it was as a result of this that the great Cemeteries which surround London were first made necessary. But 50 years is a long time in the history of the Metropolis, and probably three million interments is a modest estimate of the number that have been received by these new burial grounds. The result we all know, and have seen for ourselves, in the crowded and unsightly

Cemeteries of the suburbs. To such an extent have these filled up that in many it is almost impossible to reach a grave or vault without walking on the curbs of others; and the battalions of gravestones produce such a morbid and disagreeable effect that it is common to hear dread expressed at the idea of burial in a London Cemetery.

At the time these Suburban Cemeteries came into existence, there were those who foresaw the overcrowding that must soon be their fate, and realised that ever-growing London, stretching out its tentacles, would eventually enclose with buildings these new burying grounds, and thus expose them to the same

objections as the old churchyards. A number of gentlemen, therefore, in 1850, formed the London Necropolis Company, and with admirable foresight set about to find some stretch of country that should be sufficiently spacious, that should be near enough to London to be easily accessible, and yet far enough removed to be safe from the irresistible advance of the great City; a site, moreover, that should be a beautiful resting place for the Dead, and with a soil that would satisfy sanitarian requirements. Such





THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS.—"A visit to
Woking will introduce it to the settings of the most
beautiful."

Lists of fees and inclusive charges for
Funerals sent post free upon application

an estate was found at Brookwood, 3½ miles from Woking and 28 from London, and this they purchased from the then Earl of Onslow, at once enclosing 500 acres thereof as a place of Burial. The spot was an ideal one for its purpose even then, and now, WHEN NATURAL CHARM HAS BEEN ASSISTED BY THE ART OF THE LANDSCAPE GARDENER, THERE IS NO MORE BEAUTIFUL CEMETERY IN THE WORLD. "Suum laes celare artem," and though trees have been planted in profusion, no mere turfing has been allowed to blot out the rich purple of the native heather, and the gorgeous masses of rhododendrons that make such a brave show in the early summer are in perfect harmony with the surrounding scene. Here indeed it seems impossible to realise that London is within 40 minutes by train, where only the glorious stretch of the Surrey Hills lies before our eyes. There is no crowding here; in many parts one comes on a grave with

View
in
Camera





almost the same surprise as if it were in some private park, and there are quiet spots, shaded by trees and undergrowth, where none have yet been buried. Truly, it is just such a spot as mourners seek to lay to rest the one most dear to them; a place beautiful, "far from the madding crowd," where, undisturbed, friends may rest awhile near those who rest for ever. The huge masses of masonry that make some Cemeteries so hideous are here conspicuous by their absence, and the memorials, varied and even costly as they are, are distinguished by a good taste and artistic sense that is too often regrettably absent in such places.

Trees of every kind flourish here; silver birches and copper beeches add beauty with their contrasting foliage, cypress trees and shrubs galore give warm shelter when the winds are cold, and stately wellingtonias stand like giant sentries keeping vigil

over the sleepers till the great awakening. In addition the visitor will not fail to note the splendid show of flowers on every side, many of the graves indeed being a mass of glowing blooms. In this respect it is safe to say that Brookwood Cemetery is unapproached, so that the whole effect produced is veritably a "Garden of Sleep." Apart from its scenic beauties, there is much to interest visitors to Brookwood, even if they do not belong to that class who take a morbid delight in Cemeteries.

In the first place, it is probably the most Catholic burial ground in the Empire—Catholic in the sense that it embraces almost every creed at present extant. The whole Cemetery, as we have stated, covers an area of some 500 acres, surrounded by a fence nearly five miles long; but a public roadway which passes through forms a natural division between the portion Consecrated by the Established Church and the portion allotted to other denominations. In each there are handsome Chapels, where the service is held, and thence the body is borne to the Grave. In many cases a relative of the deceased attends to take the service,



One
of the
Chapels

but there are resident Chaplains who officiate when no clerical friend accompanies the Funeral.

The Necropolis Company was quick to realize how largely sentiment must be considered in the conduct of its Cemetery, and the natural wish of members of Church congregations and confraternities to be buried among their fellow worshippers has been fully respected. Thus we find enclosures reserved for many Parishes, notably Kensington; St. Saviour's, Southwark; St. Margaret's, Westminster; Christ Church; and many of the City Churches. THE PRIVATE GROUND OF ST. ALBAN'S, HOLBORN, IS PARTICULARLY PICTURESQUE, and is entered under a Lych Gate that will be a thing of beauty for centuries to come. St. Alban's ground will always have interest to many as the resting place of several who took part in the Ritualistic Revival which followed on the Oxford



Movement, and the monument to Father Maconochie alone recalls a host of memories. Adjoining is the burying place of the Order of the Reparation, with its own beautiful little Chapel and the memorial to Father Goulden, the devoted "Costers' Parson of Southwark."

Wandering about the Cemetery one is constantly met with names that in their time were familiar as household words. Here lies Lord Sherbrooke, one time "Bob Lowe," Chancellor of the Exchequer; there a Chitty, formerly Lord Justice, and not the least famous of a great legal family; here a most potent Peer of the Realm, there a famous Soldier, a Doctor, or a Divine. This,



however, is not the place to use too freely the names of the great Dead; the privacy of Brookwood has often influenced its choice as a place of burial, and there is no intention of committing an indiscretion that might give unintentional pain.

In the Nonconformists' portion of the Cemetery another handsome Chapel is most prettily situated upon an eminence. Further on is the space reserved for Roman Catholics, and for these a new Chapel with a striking elevation has lately been built.

The Actors' Acre holds many who were once the public's favourites; and among others who lie together in death as they lived together in life are the fine old Chelsea pensioners, heroes of a hundred fights;

the Oddfellows; the Corps of Commissionaires; the Foresters; and the Employés of the various Railway Companies. Members of the Swedish Church have their own separate burying place, and in pathetic seclusion, far from their native land, lie many Parsees and Mohammedans. Their Cemeteries are distinct, of course, and the Parsees in particular have done much to make their graveyard an imposing resting-place. In the centre is the Temple, opened in 1901 by Sir George Birdwood, of the India Office, and close by is a Mausoleum of splendid



Consecration
of the
Roman
Catholic
Chapel



THE MORNING ADVERTISER declares that "the 'London Necropolis' not only serves a great and important social purpose, but is a spot attractive alike by its picturesque beauties and the fondly cherished associations connected with it."

workmanship. A gate of effective design has been erected at one entrance already, and two others will follow shortly, so that this, the only Parsi Cemetery out of India, will be worthy of its purpose.

As can well be believed, the management of a Cemetery such as this requires no inconsiderable amount of judgment and tact, and the writer of

these pages has been much impressed with the excellence of the arrangements which cause everything to work so smoothly and with such perfect decorum. In the early days of Cemetery Companies there



Lord
Cairnes's
Mausoleum

was an uneasy feeling among the public that commercialism would enter, and that Funerals would lose the reverential character associated with the Parish Churchyard. If there ever were such a danger it certainly does not exist at Brookwood to-day, and ANYTHING MORE DIGNIFIED OR IN BETTER TASTE THAN THE CONDUCT OF FUNERALS THERE IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONCEIVE. Everything is done as quietly and reverently as the most fastidious could desire, and the Company's servants have nothing to learn that good taste could suggest. This is particularly noticeable at the graveside, where, in place of the old and often rather distressing method of lowering the coffin





The London Necropolis Co.

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Eleventh Flr. 2nd Ave.

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of every description in stone
ready for shipping

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on application

Monuments found in any part
of the Kingdom or including
sharps or packed for export,
and forwarded to any part of
the World



Monumental Masonry & Statuary Department

BOOKWORKS CEMETERY
upon application

Special Designs
prepared and
illustrated sub-
mitted here at
charge



For
more
information
write to
London
Necropolis
Co.

All Memorials supplied by the London Necropolis Co. are guaranteed to be of best material and workmanship

By open a device called "The National Social Theory" is
 in use, which, controlled by the Social Science, will auto-
 matically select the best for scientific service. At the station
 in both parts of the following the maximum rate would be subject
 to a policy primary in the Working Hours allotted to them, and
 for their convenience the Company has established Bellows
 Rooms, where individuals can be obtained when required.

It is hoped that every man who uses the Company will
 find their workers satisfied by the Management. The frequent
 difficulty in other places of finding a particular trade is here
 remedied by the working of every branch, and of nearly every
 man a day and one is provided so that friends can get water
 nearly all time at hand when playing flowers upon the grass.
 In this connection we may refer to a most successful arrangement
 by which the Company, substituted, by a final payment, to keep
 the grasses perpetually alive, so that no loss of night and trouble
 from other lines of a distance. For this purpose, quite a large
 survey ground and many plantations are kept, receiving a constant
 supply of cut flowers and stems for bedding.



View of Government

The Government has been very successful in its
 result by the National Management, the complete plan
 here, and the arrangement with which the whole process
 is accomplished. It is the only one of its kind in the
 Government history and the entire structure of which has
 never been seen.

Splice

The London Municipal Council has accepted itself with commendable liberality the suggestion of the Municipal Council of the City of London and with commendable liberality has accepted of the Municipal Council of the City of London the suggestion of the Municipal Council of the City of London.

Church Bill

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

South London Chronicle

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

Daily News

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

Local Government Journal

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

City Press

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

The Public Health Engineers

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

Survey Advertiser

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

Moving The

The Bill is a very general one and of the provisions in connection with it.

ROUND ABOUT
WOKING

*Woking
Residential
Estates*

Proprietors:
THE LONDON NECROPOLIS CO.

Woking Residential Estates.

A PART from the Brentford Company, the London Metropolitan Company owns a large property at Woking, which it is gradually and very carefully developing as a high-class Residential Estate. If you ask an average Londoner whether he knows Woking, he will probably reply "Yes, name the place where they bury people!" at no words to that effect, just as in "Charley's Aunt" Mr. Pender jokes, by the way, that a charming residence in this neighbourhood always takes its French name "the place where the new ones come." That Woking has become associated in the public mind with the famous Cemetery and Crematorium is perhaps natural, though it is difficult to understand when on the spot, in view of the considerable distance between the town and Brentwood. Trafalgar Square, for instance, is tolerably familiar to visitors to the Metropolis, but it is doubtful even if half of the inhabitants of the great City have ever seen Chatham Common, which is the same distance from Nelson's Column as the Cemetery is from Woking. It is unnecessary, however, to enlarge on this point, as those who are making a home can visit Woking for themselves, and if they expect a wilderness of greenhouses they will be agreeably surprised.

The pattern of this little book, as the reader will probably have guessed, is to advertise the properties of the London Metropolitan Company, and it is hoped that, supported by the beautiful views that adorn its pages, many to whom Woking has been



Half Day with Lane

very common and number 2 is a play of numbers. It is said that the camera cannot fix and appears on the in the photographs that appear here, we are prepared to credit by the camera. That if the camera cannot fix, it can, and then in the present case, prove suitable for the expression of the whole truth, and in order to reach the many premises of Woking, which are available to any plan in the present, it is necessary to call to the attention of a writer.

In the first place it may be said that Woking has just been in the hands of the South Western Railway, and in fact it is just because to those who have to go back to the town of Woking, we will at once discuss the main services. The reader may not be familiar with the whole of the town, but the present is so far as it extends, there are during the day in many of the up and it shows signs that point the town to its various and sides, a service that, bearing in mind the fact however of the Woking neighbourhood and its distance from London, offers comparison with that of any station in the Home Counties. The young and busy man who writes the City was seen by an office at Lambeth Street by 10.15, another, whose business is not so pressing, was seen Woking at 1.15 and yet much the City by 10.15 which, while City companies, whose houses are unshaded, may perhaps have departs (if the City) and he at the Municipal House accordingly before it is which. There is the same abundance of water to rivers by at night, and by those who usually go up to the Municipal House, which is a million miles from Woking, with the very few, men to Woking, go to the play, stop at the house of Collins, and he home at Woking to see in districts in

Harmond which have shared the same kind of pleasure. If we have appeared to believe this point of railway facilities it is only because we believe it of government importance to a residential



Harmond in the East

neighbourhood, and because it also supports some Woking stands that are exceptionally famous in some days of numerous occasions to both business and pleasure.

thing and so much that about the means of getting to and from Woking and every subject meant to be described the various parts of the family study system and to print out their possibilities and attention to their possessions. The system of these papers was first taken to Black Heath, which represents the system of the property and which, getting into all ideas of business practice, is an example of the creation of a house as never could be. Approached by a grade hill from Woking Station, the Heath stands high and dry, covered with a glorious carpet of white and purple heather, and abounded with picturesque clusters of pines, surrounding such a row of tall and dark as only Surrey can present. Eight lakes in the distance, Mag's Heath and Little Hill, forming a panorama of beautiful scenes, while on every side an ocean of green grass, heath, and heathens which made delightful views of Surrey.

We have said that the London Zoological Company is developing in Surrey very rapidly, and from what evidence we can bring we be themselves in what action these words are meant. Quite possibly they have seen other English natural London that have been developed "very carefully," and they will have powerful measures of some of pelagic trees out doors, paths beautifully laid, and possibly a river along at every corner. People who are looking for the class of houses near at once dismiss the idea of Black Heath, but though roads have been made, they have never seen a lady from the house; we are that they possibly be used for other jobs, and shops and public houses, standing scenes and various halls are always unknown to the neighborhood. The most given work, in fact, has been expected to promote the



House at Blackheath

named one of his lively spots, and the land has only been sold
 by the Company on conditions that make any building entirely
 absolutely impossible. The Spirit of the Great Law had done
 what had been asked, which making Black Hawk's own equally
 desirable purchase for the sake of people of moderate means,
 will prevent it for many years to a thing for those whose
 substance needs of the land's needs of modern building
 schemes. So far the law has been rigidly done as that scheme
 demonstrates the substance talks, and there are many who will be
 thankful to hear that they can come and build either a mansion
 or a cottage as their circumstances require, with no fear of their
 neighbors surrounding them with walls of petty built dwellings.
 The development of the Black Hawk property has been some
 years in progress, and the structure has gone slowly rather than
 with the common means of the scheme. Some of the more
 favored spots are already appropriated, with several numbers of
 striking appearance are shown about the House. Lacking at
 times, standing in their own grounds and surroundings with well
 appointed views, it is difficult to realize they are only fancy built,
 for there are many spots still would that see a very temporary
 to secure one looks forward to building a house in pleasant sur-
 roundings. It may not be thought that only mansions are
 possible on Black Hawk, on the contrary, the writer was
 shown here one of the most delightful cottages that could be
 imagined. Although still in the builder's hands, it was possible
 to see what a charming home such a cottage would afford, with
 its sloping roof and, beneath windows, strongly seen above
 bushes and very white walls, the whole, not to a delightfully
 make garden, having an ideal which for a newly married couple.



Residence of
 Black Hawk

from the sporting point of view. Close by is the country owned by the West Harty Footballs, and those who prefer flowers can get this days a walk with the High and Knapall park. The excellent ground of the local Hockey Club is on the Heath, as also are the Links of the Woking Golf Club, and he here the Green Island course in the country. The study and is especially favourable from the Guller's point of view, and the it home at Woking, with their splendid putting greens and varied hazards, are a truly fascinating to the unhappy man who is harrying off to the City. The unavailability of the Club is full up and every season about election, but the Company, in having the Links, stipulated for the retention of houses within the Estate, so Gullers need have no fear of the event when considering the attractions of Woking. Of these the Golf House is not the least important, with a fine billiard room and all the other



The Golf House

To such as mean Black Heath's stands prove themselves, and the independent who like to go to sport, and horses, see, Parnell's the London Insurance Company, and in a few years had himself



House at Merton

The elegant rooms of his house and garden is a magnificent and highly interesting to visit. The business man and the man of letters will also appreciate the advantages of Black Heath.

vicinity of a station that, while on the neighboring grade, often for its private, the residents indulge in smoking Cockey Maltine.

It is to be noted that Little is Fisher's Hill, which affords one of the grandest views hereabouts, and it is here that the Right Hon. General Nathan Padesley of the House of Lords, has built himself a home. Alas! it is difficult to speak of this beautiful property without appearing to do so in exaggerated terms, so that just an allusion to its excellence of the Water height, and the presence of Electric Light, Telephone and other modern conveniences, we will pass on now to another part of the town.

The town of the Haverings Woods, is reached by ascending the hill and crossing the Buckingham Canal, which forms a picturesque feature as it winds through the valley. The Company has a good deal of land in this part, well suited to the purpose of Paddy Farming, and there is now at least already in full working order, which can be seen while driving along the road towards the Haverings. Working of course is sufficiently near to Alford and Blakeney to perhaps some at least of the military measures of the district, and there is some idea of converting the Haverings Wood into a private Park, embracing timberlands for 100000 and five acres. The Wood is, however, admirably suited for such a purpose, as however small will be built without seriously interfering with the landscape, and with a very small number of the splendid trees that abound. The latter knowledge is as beneficial to any in business, and there are many who will prefer the view of this corner of the Haverings to the more frequent and wild beauties of Mount Merris.



Little Waters
Haverings Woods

from over the field across along the broad streets of Deeds and Lane in New Haven, a plantation of pine trees covering some 100 acres, and having a great natural water highway, Winding and Beautiful Country. It is certainly the finest plantation of pine in the county and the long value of woods here is well and permanent alike. One by the Scripps Company has lately built some twenty-five cottages, which are so comfortable and well as they are partly within. One cannot help thinking that if such cottages were more often situated in rural districts as about here, the of the country would be the better.

In this part of the town, there are some and more off to the Scripps Estate, which is being developed on such different lines to the Hill House and throughout the property. Scripps is situated in another form of the same or had type, and has already proved great popularity, largely on account of the excellent air, as that of Scripps, some 50' has become a local saying. Scripps has been to Winding, as had, close to the Scripps Estate, the best part of the Scripps Scripps Company property as which we shall refer to. This is known as the Scripps Estate, and consists of building sites suitable for the erection of houses of a good class, a number of which are already occupied. The Scripps Estate is especially popular with those who are obliged to live near the business and every one has been taken to notice by numerous in a good residential neighborhood.

It only remains to be noted that the Scripps Scripps Company is prepared to make the arrangements of pine houses in every way, that the property is well finished in Cambridge, as usual, and that other a very pleasant of to get into the purchase price may be paid off by instalments, which is various ways



Residence of
Frank Scripps

advertisers will be made to avoid buildings, secured by mortgages
of the land and houses. Arrangements will be made that those
Working Classes shall enjoy attractions and no support, when no
have already existed, that requires when in seeking a new place
of residence cannot do better than just to purchase land in the
neighbourhood as has been described.



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Appendix – iv

The cemetery as machine

The following appendix studies how mechanical devices were introduced as part of London's burial rituals between the nineteenth and twentieth century, and aims to understand how they enhanced the ideas of solemnity and dignity in funeral traditions. Inevitably, the subject throws open a series of questions starting with how and why these mechanical devices arrived to be used in these new cemeteries in the first place? What were their purposes? How did people react to them? How could a machine find its place in and be reconciled with these otherwise romantic cemeteries? I will address these questions, among others, in the following section.

1. Coffin crane wanted!

The combination of architecture and landscape endowed the nineteenth century Victorian cemeteries with an image that was both romantic and solemn.²¹¹ However, the actual mechanics of the burial rituals didn't match the environs and was also in need of reform. One aspect in particular disturbed the public, which was the very last and most poignant moment in a funeral ceremony: the lowering of a coffin into the grave. On this matter, a curious letter was published in the *Mechanics' Magazine*²¹² in August 1824 (see Fig. 104) under the title 'Coffin Crane Wanted', in which the reader expressed concerns over the operation of removing a coffin from the bier:

While attending at the funeral of deceased friends or connexions, I have been much disgusted at the difficulty there appeared in removing heavy coffins from the bier and sinking it into the grave.

²¹¹ This was captured in written documents at the time, such as the *Guide to Highgate Cemetery* by William Justyne (1812-1883) published in 1865, he was also the author of the *Guide to Kensal Green Cemetery*. Particularly in the introduction, the author managed to capture these aspects of Highgate Cemetery: "the irregularity of the ground, rising in terraces, the winding paths leading through long avenues of cool shrubbery and marble monuments, and the groups of majestic tree casting broad shadows below, contribute many natural charms to this solemn region." (Justyne, 1865, p. 7) British writer and magazine editor Edward Walford (1823-1897) also captured this quality of Highgate, particularly in relation to the Egyptian Avenue, which he thought gave "a solemn grandeur" to the cemetery. Walford, E. (1878). *Old and New London: Volume 5: Highgate Part 2 of 2*. Retrieved February 7, 2012 from British History Online: <http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45246>

²¹² Full title: *The Mechanics' Magazine and Journal of Science, Arts, and Manufactures*. Published in London by W.A. Robertson.

To solve this problem, the reader suggested the invention of a machine that would make the lowering process smooth: “this operation might be adopted by the invention of a machine to raise the coffin, project it over the grave and lower it slowly and gradually to the last abode of mortality.” It is interesting to note that although the reader raises an issue concerned with deep sentiments of loss and dignity, in relation to burial rituals, he foresaw the solution to this condition with the invention of a mechanical device, which in his view would carry out the task better than a human being. Although this letter is not representative of society at large, it gives a glimpse into how public opinion felt the need for a reform of the burial procedure. It is important to notice that this issue was raised in 1824, a long time before the opening of the first Victorian necropolis in London (1833), and before Walker’s public revelation on the overcrowding conditions of London’s churchyards (1839). The letter foresees the solution, which in itself can tell us about the society and cultural context of the time.

COFFIN CRANE WANTED.

Ipswich.

GENTLEMEN;—While attending at the funeral of deceased friends or connexions, I have been much disgusted at the difficulty there appeared in removing heavy coffins from the bier, and sinking it into the grave. It appears to me that a much more convenient and less painful mode of conducting this operation might be adopted by the invention of a machine to raise the coffin, project it over the grave, and lower it slowly and gradually to the last abode of mortality. Some of your correspondents or readers will probably improve on this hint.—Yours,

W. R.

Fig. 104 – 28th August, 1824. Mechanics’ Magazine No. 53 - Page 396. Source: books.google.co.uk.

In the first part of the nineteenth century, British culture was driven by a strong desire for emancipation, which resulted in freedom of speech, religious worship, freedom of trade, and competition. We have also argued how these political and commercial principles eventually expanded into a philosophy of life. Innovations and new technologies were publicly well received as they were intended to improve people’s lives, as in the case of the steam railway, which revolutionised mobility and communications as well as trade. This responsive attitude to mechanical application allowed for innovations to permeate any aspect of life, even possibly funeral rituals and burial traditions. This cultural context was retrospectively observed by British poet and

cultural critic Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), and articulated by him in a series of periodical essays published in the *Cornhill Magazine* between 1867 and 1868 (eventually published as a collection in 1869). There, Arnold expresses his views on the relationship between culture and politics. Specifically, in one essay titled 'Culture and Machinery'²¹³ Arnold discusses a “mechanical character” that British material civilisation was developing at the time as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. In Arnold’s view, this mechanisation encapsulated the aspiration to perfection and individualism that was typical of British culture in the nineteenth-century. In the same essay, Arnold also addresses how “modern culture” became more “mechanical and external” (meaning more involved in the material culture). Although Arnold recognises that the mechanical character of culture was affecting civilisation everywhere in the Western world, he felt that, particularly in Britain, this shift was becoming more prominent in defining the culture of the country (especially seen in conjunction with the strong individualism that characterised Britain generally). Arnold sees this as a consequence of the wealth upon which Britain was built in the nineteenth-century, primarily from its coal supplies.²¹⁴

Arnold’s comments shed light on how the effects of the Industrial Revolution fully permeated Britain in a socio-cultural context by the second half of the nineteenth-century. He envisages danger in what he calls “faith in machinery”²¹⁵ implicitly addressing how secular material culture replaced religious belief. By addressing the ambiguity of the word machinery, Arnold also discusses the origins of the word, both in a metaphorical and practical sense. The pursuit of perfection that Arnold identifies in his writings suggests to me the emergence of a new order in which the perfection and precision of the machine supersedes that of nature. To contrast Arnold’s position, it can be speculated that the growth of mechanisation is telling of a fundamental lack of trust and acceptance of man’s own nature. As Arnold outlines, this new era of machines strove for progress in the name of individualism, material wealth and perfection, with the intention to improve the quality of material life and, indeed, death.

2. Coffin crane, royal remains and the pursuit of perfection

It was probably with the pursuit of perfection in mind (as identified by Arnold) that, in 1832, the *Mechanics’ Magazine* published the proposal for a Coffin Crane (see Fig. 105).

²¹³This essay is an extract from *Culture and Anarchy* published in 1869 (pp. 9-13).

²¹⁴ Arnold M. , p. 32

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16

Designed by William Baddeley, a London-based inventor and manufacturer,²¹⁶ the Coffin Crane seems to have an inexplicable connection (it is curious to see that the name for this mechanical apparatus was the same) with the letter published back in 1824 in the same magazine, suggesting that such an invention should be considered.

In the article that complemented the diagrammatic drawing of his Coffin Crane, Baddeley explains that:

Few persons who have witnessed the impressive solemnities of funeral rites, can have failed to observe with regret, the interruption frequently occasioned by the awkward bungling manner in which the corpse is lowered into its narrow bed.²¹⁷

As part of his research into solemnity in burial rituals, Baddeley looked for inspiration – perhaps a model – in royal funerals. In an extract from his article, Baddeley states that:

Considerable improvements has been effected in these matters, when royal remains are the subject of the undertakers care; machine being employed in St George Chapel, Windsor, to effect the lowering of the coffin to its resting place.²¹⁸

Baddeley also takes the opportunity to polemically lament that “commoners are still deposited in their mother earth by means of two rotten cords, and twice that number of clowns, in the ancient manner.” Along with his fervent display for democratisation and solemn dignity in burial, Baddeley also alludes to the National Cemetery Company to take up use of his innovative machine:

In places where burials are so numerous...the adoption of a machine of this kind would be productive of great convenience, and the frequent occasion for its use would soon repay the expense of its construction. Perhaps this hint may be worth the consideration of the National Cemetery Company, which is shortly to commence operations.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Baddeley also exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851. (Grace's Guide, 2008).

²¹⁷ Baddeley, p. 434

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 434

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 434

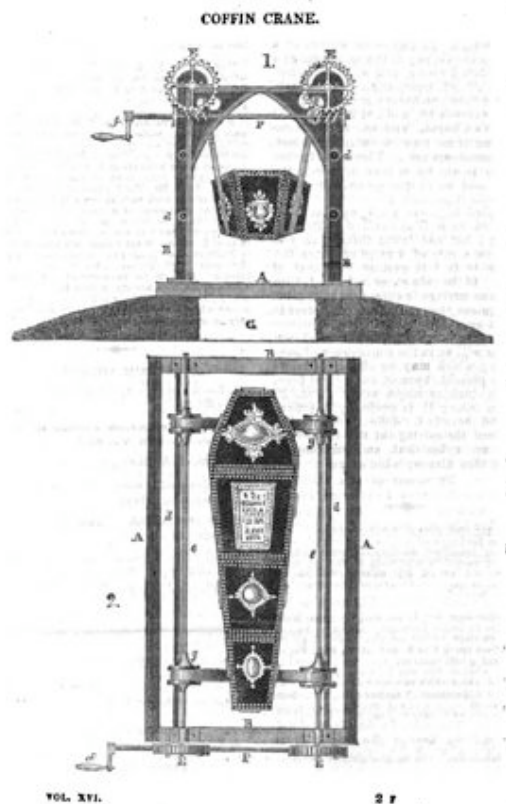


Fig. 105 – Sunday March 24, 1832. Coffin Crane, as it appeared on the cover of the *Mechanics' Magazine* No. 450. Source: <http://www.books.google.co.uk>.

In his conclusion, Baddeley refers to the opening of Kensal Green Cemetery (1833), the first of the Victorian suburban cemeteries to serve London. If the royal funeral was an inspiration for Baddeley, it was also an aspiration for the Victorian middle classes and certainly the General Cemetery Company (in his article, Baddeley mistakenly refers to this as the National Cemetery Company). The Company didn't implement Baddeley's Coffin Crane, possibly because it was too humble in its aesthetics. Instead, they introduced the catafalque,²²⁰ another kind of machine that, despite its close connection to royal funerals, not even the royals had.

Aside from revolutionising the more mundane everyday operations such as lifting heavy weights and moving goods, in the context of the Victorian necropolis the ingenuity of the

²²⁰ Curl also considered the relevance of Royal funerals in Victorian culture in his book *Victorian Celebration of Death*. Although Stevens Curl goes into detail, he chooses to discuss the look of the funerals, rather than directly explain their relevance and their relation to the Victorian necropolis; the idea of aspiration of the middle classes, and how the idea of being treated like royalty inspired the cemetery companies.

hydraulic press also powered the catafalque.²²¹ The catafalque was one aspect of a burial innovation fashionable at the time: the columbarium. This consisted of underground brick vaults where coffins were stored safely behind locked doors, so as to prevent their theft. The function of the catafalque was to ultimately connect two otherwise separate spaces: the chapel (above) and the columbarium (below).

Previous to this use, the catafalque was exclusively associated with the lying-in-state of monarchs, public personalities or religious leaders. However, in its new mechanised incarnation, as part of the Victorian necropolis, this object was adapted and made available to the middle classes. This process must have turned the catafalque into an aspirational object, associated with the elevated social status and prestige that the Victorian middle class aspired to: to move to a higher social level, and be remembered in this way for eternity. To this effect, the catafalque celebrated dignity and solemnity, which was to be found in the aristocratic families and their family tombs in the rural landscapes of their country estates, and the catafalque brought something to the middle classes to aspire to, even once dead. Everyone could have had a dignified service by catafalque, as long as they had the money to pay for the service, and, for the time of a funeral function be just as important as a deceased Royal or Pope.

Substantially, the catafalque and the columbarium mimicked earth burial, but instead of being lowered in the earth, coffins were mechanically lowered in the catacombs to be stored on shelves. The sanitised and hygienic nature of a catacomb burial by use of the catafalque was an innovation compared to the more traditional earth burial. For this reason, it is possible to say that the combination of the catafalque and catacombs could be seen as an intermediate step towards cremation, which was an even more sanitised method for disposing of the dead. Positioned at the centre of the chapel and used in funeral ceremonies, this mechanical lifting device allowed for coffins to be smoothly moved from one space to another with minimal physical effort. The first catafalque installed in Kensal Green Cemetery in 1837 was a success. Soon after that, other cemetery companies invested in this funeral apparatus, including Highgate Cemetery and West Norwood Cemetery (see Fig. 106). The introduction of the mechanical catafalque

²²¹ The word catafalque originates from the Italian *catafalco*, meaning scaffold, a temporary structure for the laying in state and public display of a coffin or corpse of an important person. The decorations of the catafalque are known as *Castrum Doloris* (Castle of Grief). The most notable Italian catafalque was the one designed and constructed by Michelangelo's (1475-1564) fellow artists for his 1564 funeral at Florence's Santa Croce.

added a pathos and solemnity to the Victorian funeral ceremony that was most likely emphasised by the emotionless precision in which the mechanism operated.



Fig. 106 – 2011. The catafalque in West Norwood Cemetery, South East London, similar to the one installed in Kensal Green Cemetery in 1837. Source: Author.

The visible part of the catafalque is made from cast iron, its decorations harmonised with the architectural features of the chapel in which it takes centre stage. By contrast, the operating levers, the pump, and other industrial details were hidden from sight and relegated into the space of the columbarium, below ground.

The introduction of the catafalque facilitated a smooth burial process and saved on workforce costs. It also improved the quality of the service by reducing the risks of human error in the manual lowering process. This precision would have allowed for a maximal number of funerals and, therefore, earnings. The Kensal Green catafalque was

used exclusively for those clients who chose to be buried in the catacombs. The mechanical device contributed to the privacy of these burial rituals, as the function and transfer to the catacombs effectively took place indoors, and was invisible to the rest of the cemetery. The Victorian middle classes desired such privacy and discretion, and the private funeral companies knew what their customers wanted, or aspired to, for their funerals and burials.

If the catafalque was synonymous with grandeur in Kensal Green Cemetery, in Highgate Cemetery it had a yet more practical function: that of linking the west part of the cemetery to the eastern extension. Owing to the separation of the two sections by a road (Swain's Lane), a connecting tunnel was excavated between the disparate cemetery grounds. In this way, it was possible to use the chapel in the West Cemetery and then after the funeral, lower the coffin into the tunnel using the hydraulic device. From here, the coffin was then moved onto a cart and wheeled to the east end of the cemetery for the burial.²²² Although the chapel has recently been restored to its original beauty (completed in 2012), the hatch used to connect the catafalque to the tunnel below has been sealed. The introduction of the catafalque must have affected the experience of death. The process of lowering the coffin into the catacombs by a machine could be said to have contributed to a degree of detachment from the corpse, the coffin, and the burial rituals themselves. In this respect, an invisible hand physically moves the coffin, albeit mechanical. The lowering of the coffin without direct human assistance could embody the symbolic meaning of the mechanisation of time, death and the divine, which are beyond human control and somehow irrational. The mechanical catafalque, in this respect, rationalises what would otherwise be irrational to explain. If the hydraulic pump could be said to embody the Industrial Revolution, the catafalque itself had a direct and coherent connection with Enlightenment thinking, which allowed for modern machines to become a reality in the first place. The catafalque could be seen to be a monument to the Enlightenment, even more so as its shape seems to echo that of the operating and dissecting tables; this being the locus of where medical and scientific research and knowledge were gained and formed.

The arrangement of the catafalque and columbarium is similar to that of a playhouse, in which a division exists between the front of house where the performance takes place (the chapel) and the back stage (the catacombs), where the fly system of ropes, pulleys and counter weights are kept. The decorations on the visible part of the catafalque acted

²²² Walford

as a camouflage to disguise its real mechanical nature, and its purpose. To this effect, the disguised machine was romanticised just as the architecture and the landscape were – as discussed in the opening section. These three elements contributed to the construction of a coherent and controlled public image of the Victorian necropolis. This could be said to embody what Arnold calls “the pursuit of perfection”: a new cosmological order constituted of nature, man, and machine. Paradoxically, the catafalque could be seen as a step forward in the process of the democratisation of funerals, as it led, in the early part of the twentieth century to the National Burial Devices, which were less exclusive, more affordable and simpler. This mechanism didn’t need to be hidden away from sight; by this time, people had moved further away from the mysticism of traditional burial rituals.

The idea of the catafalque, however, didn’t fully disappear from the cemetery chapel. The National Burial Device Company, as will be explored in more detail later, studied a variation for mortuary chapels where devices, similar to the catafalque, were operated from a lower level. A more traditional counter tone to the innovative private enterprises was represented by G.T.A. Middleton’s six-volume series, *Modern Buildings Their Planning, Construction and Equipment*, first published in 1903. In volume five, Middleton, who was at the time Vice President of the Society of Architects dedicates a chapter (VI) to ‘Mortuary Chapels and Crematoria.’ Middleton discusses the positioning of the catafalque (see Fig. 107) in relation to the cremation chamber.²²³

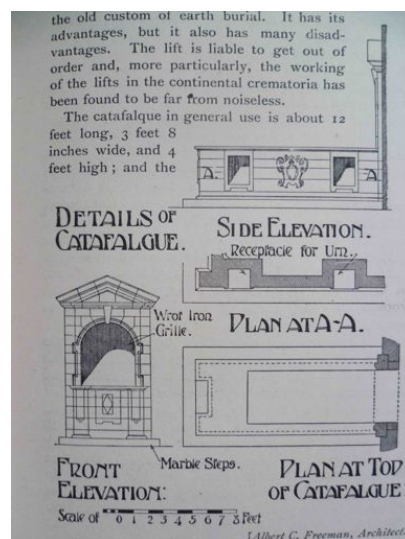


Fig. 107 – 1910. The catafalque for crematoria, from G.A.T. Middleton’s *Modern Buildings Their Planning, Construction and Equipment*. Source: Author.

²²³ Middleton, p. 18

To conclude we say how the new mechanical devices utilised for burial in some of the Victorian cemeteries, were inspired by the ones used for the burial of monarchs. This highlights how royals were taken as benchmark and example for taste and style, by the Victorian middle classes even when it comes to death rituals. Another aspect encountered is that of the aesthetics of the new burial devices such as the catafalque, which just as the architecture of the Victorian cemeteries themselves, it was a composite of references of pre existing styles. The catafalque also embodies the duality and tension between the pragmatism and simplicity in terms of design of the actual mechanical components (that are hidden from sight) and the heavily decorated catafalque (sitting in the middle of the chapel). The juxtaposition between these two aspects of the catafalque could be interpreted as a sign in the socio-cultural changes taking place at the time, through the use of ornamentation in funerary design and architecture. In the next section we will see how, particularly in the case of mechanical burial devices, this juxtaposition evolved by re-addressing the relationship between decorative features and mechanical components.

3. The National Burial Devices and lightweight solemnity

As the Victorian funeral industry grew extensively, it started to receive heavy criticism for its power, as did state funerals, such as the Duke of Wellington's in 1852; considered unnecessarily pompous.²²⁴ Although the excesses of the Victorian funeral industry were lamented until the turn of the century as an "extravagant imposition",²²⁵ organisations were formed to encourage moderation and simplicity since the 1850s.²²⁶ This was the case with the Mourning Reform Association that aimed to abolish outside show, parade, ostentation and unnecessary expense (these being, no index to the degree of inward feeling of grief), and substituting simpler and less conventional practices. It also states that:

Scarves, hat-bands, plummet hearses and mourning coaches, palls and all other unnecessary and ostentatious adjuncts of funeral ceremonial be dispensed with, and that walking funerals be arranged where practicable."²²⁷

²²⁴ Jalland, p. 199

²²⁵ Holmes, p. 257

²²⁶ Jalland, p. 199

²²⁷ This one and the above are extracts from a leaflet (no date printed on it, but according to the chronological order of the documents, it could be from the 1870s) that can be found in the archives of the Cremation Society of Great Britain. Archive reference: CRE/H4 p. 57. Special Collections at Palace Green Library, which is part of Durham University.

Eventually, by the 1870s, the articulated and expensive funeral rituals became less popular as people began to ask for more private and modest funerals, and consequently less expensive affairs. By the turn of the century, even major ceremonial funerals showed a shift in the idea of dignity; when it came to burials, this was embodied in simplicity rather than to the pomp of the early Victorians.²²⁸

As burial rituals lost their elaborate aesthetics and impressive mechanical devices, such as the nineteenth century catafalque, the more purist and subdued idea of solemnity of the early twentieth century was still expressed by a machine. Although slender, lightweight and foldable, this mechanical apparatus, again re-addressed the solemnity and the pursuit of perfection in the final moment when the coffin was lowered into the grave (just as the catafalque did, and the Coffin Crane before it). The National Burial Devices were patented inventions registered by The National Burial Device Company based in Coldwater, Michigan, United States of America. The president of the company, Alfred Milnes (1844-1916),²²⁹ was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, and had left England with his family to settle in the United States in 1854.²³⁰ The National Burial Devices consisted of a metal frame with straps that was positioned on a grave. The frame concealed a mechanism operated by a metal chain (see Fig. 108) that allowed the slow and safe lowering of coffins into a grave.

In a guide commissioned by the London Necropolis Company and published in the early years of the twentieth century, we read that in Brookwood:

Everything is done as quietly and reverentially as the most fastidious could desire [...]. This is particularly noticeable at the graveside, where, in place of the old and often rather distressing method of lowering coffin by ropes, a device called 'The National Burial Device' is in use, which, controlled by the funeral director, acts automatically when the time for committal arrives.²³¹

²²⁸ Jalland, pp. 199, 203

²²⁹ Randall Hazelbaker, *Images of America. Coldwater*. (Charleston, Chicago, Portsmouth, San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2004). pp. 116-117.

²³⁰ This information is taken from the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=M000783>

²³¹ Extract (pp. 25 and 28) from the booklet *The London Necropolis Company*, describing the company's premises at 121 Westminster Bridge Road, opened in 1901 and designed by Cyril B. Tubbs. Also interesting to observe is how the word committal is used to indicate the action of sending a person to an institution, especially prison or a psychiatric hospital, as well as for the burial of a corpse.

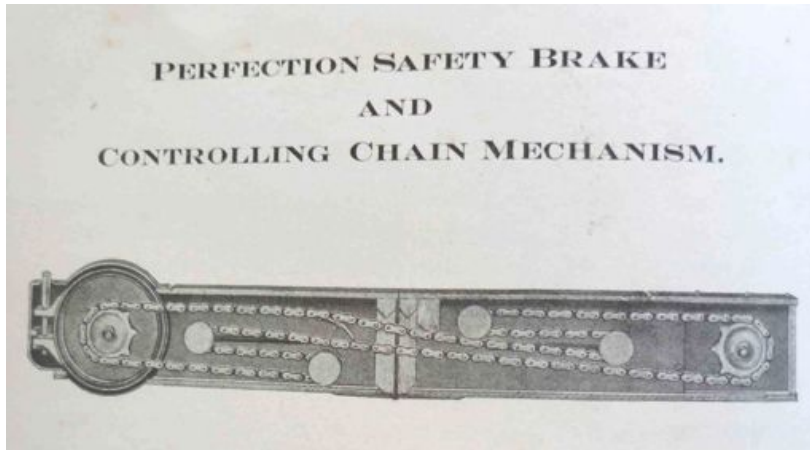


Fig. 108 – Undated. Frame section of one of the National Burial Devices, showing the transmission belt (metal chain) that allows the slow lowering of a coffin into the grave. Source: Surrey History Centre.

It is not apparent how Tubbs and Messer, architects and directors of the London Necropolis Company at the time, came across the National Burial Devices. It is possible that the devices were advertised in the British press, but it is more probable that Messer was introduced to it during his stay in the United States of America for 10 years (1888-1898). Messer worked in New York from 1888 (for Withers & Dickson architects)²³² and then started his own practice in Texas before returning to England in 1898. Back in London, he formed a new practice with Tubbs working on the London Necropolis Company's new premises in Westminster Bridge Road, opened in 1903.²³³ The interest of the London Necropolis Company in the National Burial Devices was primarily to do with their services as undertakers.

If the mechanics of the catafalque were too raw to be seen by the human eye and had to be concealed from sight in the basement of the chapel, the National Burial Devices were a more subdued machine that also freed the burial ritual from the constraints of architecture, and it could be used at graveside because of its portability and lightness. Beyond the main patent for the National Burial Devices, the company also developed a series of other variations and products based on the same mechanical invention patent, which were especially designed for undertakers and were featured in a pamphlet (see Fig. 109) produced by the National Burial Device Company.²³⁴

²³² *The Architecture of Frederick Clarke Withers and the Progress of the Gothic Revival in America After 1850* by Francis R. Kowsky (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

²³³ http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=2020123 and also the *Directory of British Architects 1834-1914: L-Z* by Antonia Brodie (London: RIBA, 2001), p. 170.

²³⁴ A copy is held at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, Surrey.

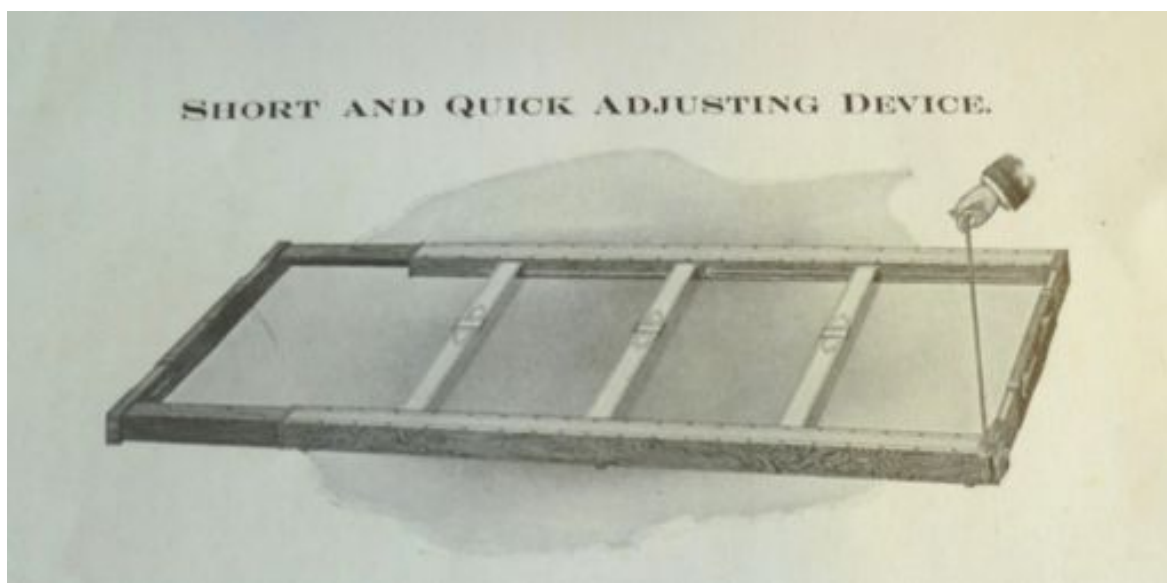


Fig. 109 – Undated. The short and quick adjusting lowering device that can be adapted to any grave as seen in the company booklet (National Burial Device Company), published in the early years of twentieth-century. Source: Surrey History Centre.

Machines symbolise perfection and the success of man, who, although not perfect, can design and construct such complicated and perfect mechanisms. Commenting on this notion, Mumford states that:

In creating the machine, we have set before ourselves a positively inhuman standard of perfection. No matter what the occasion, the criterion of successful mechanical form is that it should look as if no human hand had touched it.²³⁵

It is particularly interesting to reflect on how the anonymity of the design is used to disguise the function of the object/device, and, by association, even make one think of a large framed canvas (see Fig. 110). If the catafalque could be considered as a metaphor of the pompous style of Victorian funerals, the National Burial Devices (despite its purist and less showy appearance) was still about artificiality, formality and control. A range of the Company's accessories and devices were designed to completely hide the earth from sight during a burial with devices such as 'grave linings' and 'earth covers', that lined the grave pit with patterns that were curiously reminiscent of domestic interiors (see Figs. 111-2).

²³⁵ Mumford, 1947, pp. 358-9

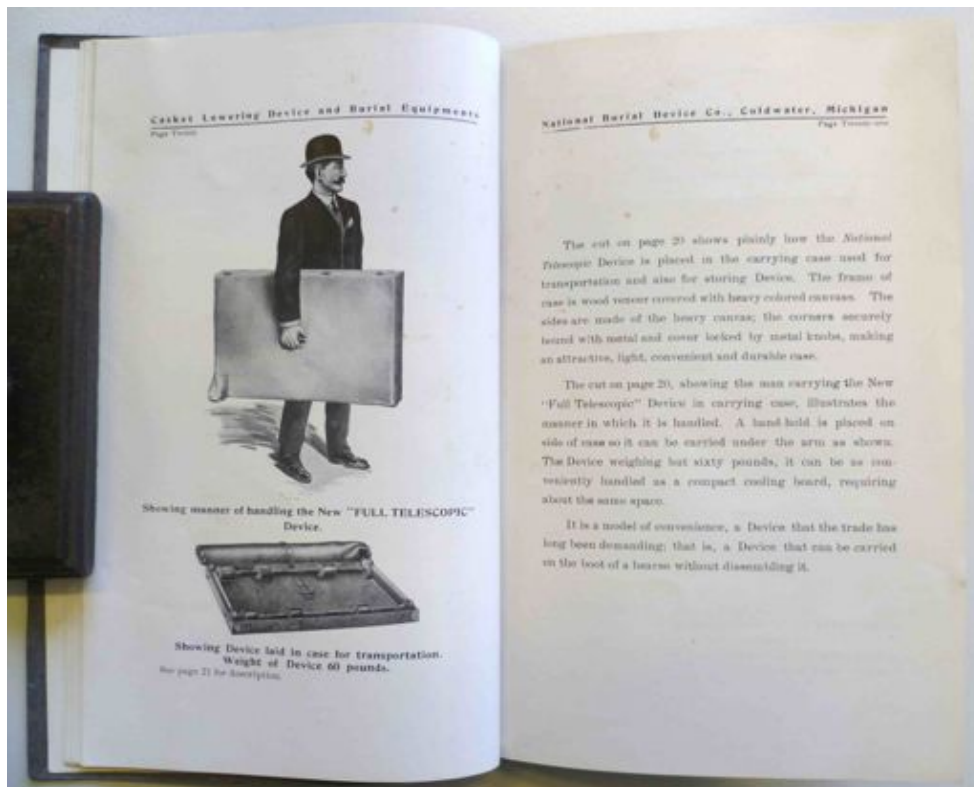


Fig. 110 – Undated. The Full Telescopic portable version of the National Burial Devices for undertakers.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

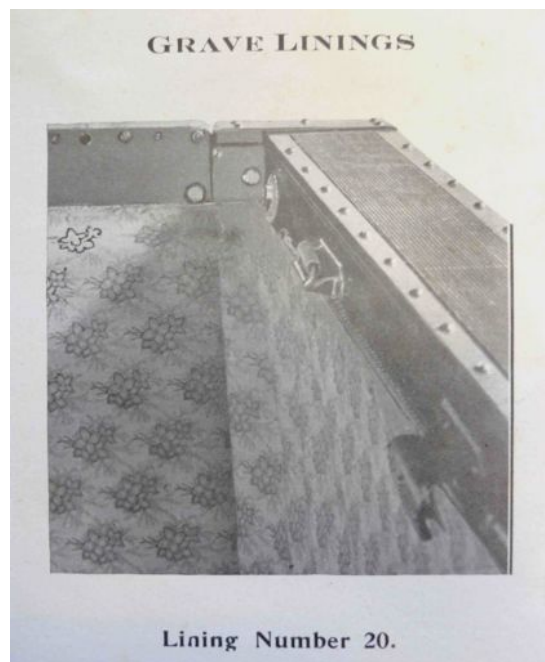


Fig. 111 – Undated. National Burial Devices. Grave Lining, showing pattern options.
Source: Surrey History Centre.

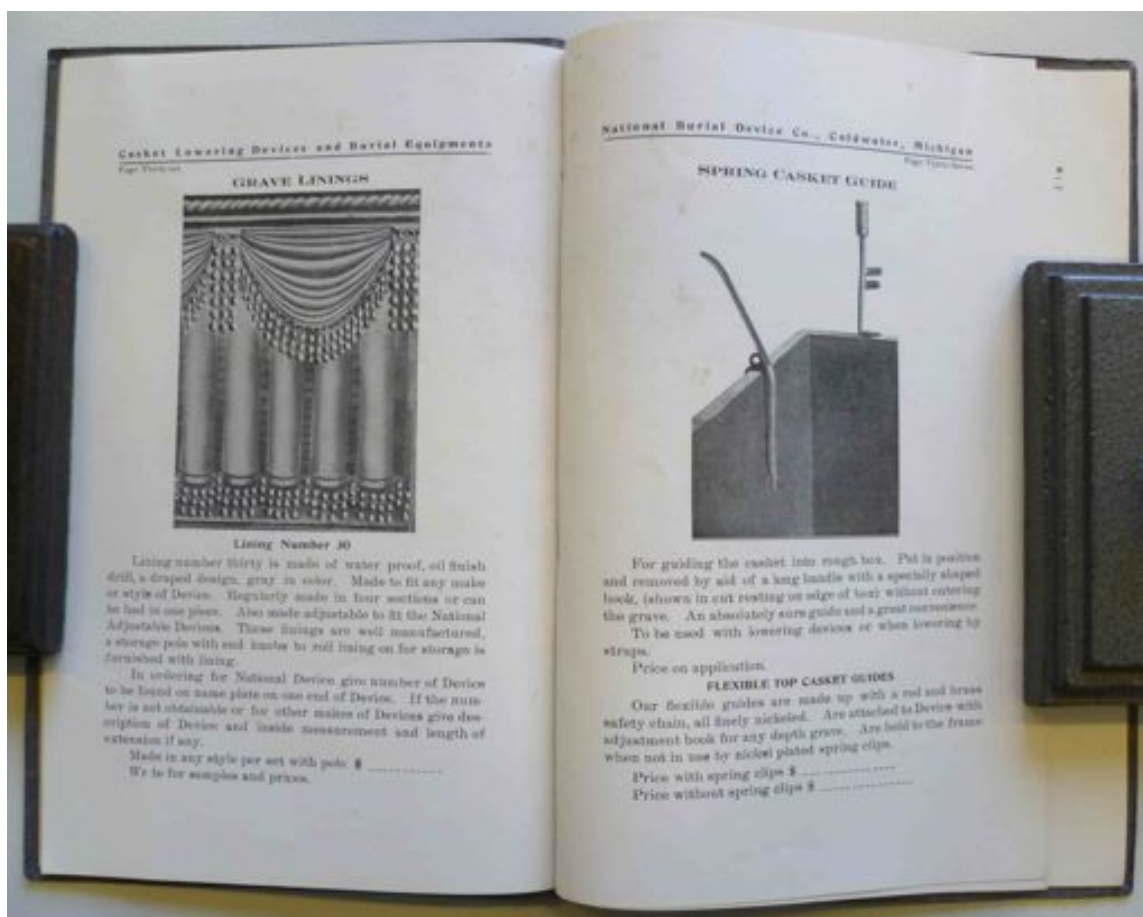


Fig. 112 – Undated. Various Grave Lining models. Source: Surrey History Centre.

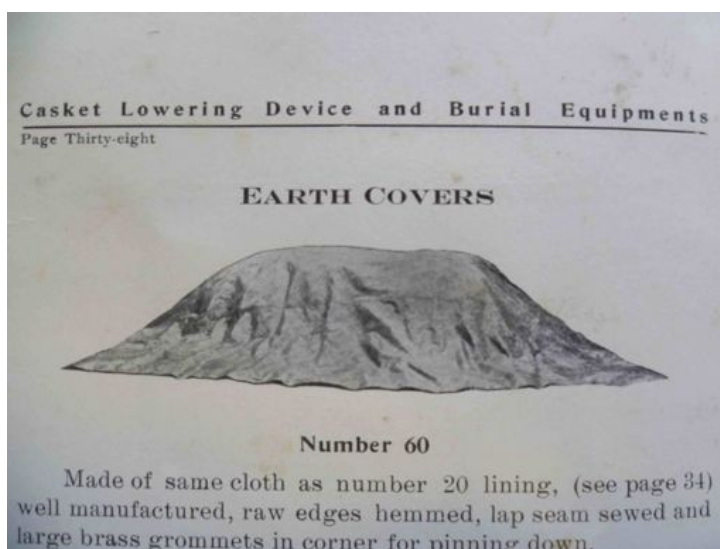


Fig. 113 – Undated. Earth Covers, matching the grave lining. Source: Surrey History Centre.

Although there were no catacombs in Brookwood Cemetery – and supposedly – no need to use a mechanical instrument, the London Necropolis Company introduced the

National Burial Devices and a range of complementary items that would include a lining for the grave and a cover for the dug earth (see Fig. 113).

The development of these devices and their accompanying accessories raises some intriguing questions. Why was there an obsession with removing the earth from sight during a burial? Was this to ensure that people didn't think about the actual burial itself, or about decomposition? Was the sight of the soil not dignifying? Was the soil associated with dirt? It is also interesting to observe how dramatic the gap was between the catafalque and the National Burial Devices, and their expression of the fast development of technologies. Based on the formal appearances of these two devices, it is possible to speculate on two aspects: scale and aesthetics. In terms of scale: the transition from the catafalque to the National Burial Devices followed the path of miniaturisation that other everyday mechanical devices encountered, such as typewriters or telephones. In terms of aesthetics: although at first the design aesthetics of the hydraulic press (catafalque) felt rational and functional, it could be considered too raw when compared with the level of refined rationality of the National Burial Devices (see Fig. 114). In other Victorian necropolises, we saw how the catafalque had to be aesthetically dressed with decorations and even architectural elements, to make it familiar to the users. By contrast, the design of the National Burial Devices was pragmatic and functional. It could be said that the aesthetics of the National Burial Devices initiated a dramatic change from the more pompous burial procedures established by Victorian private cemetery companies and undertakers to a more sober and minimal event.

To conclude, it is possible to deduce that the shift in perception about solemnity and dignity in burial rituals went through a dramatic transformation in the nineteenth century. This preceded the introduction of Victorian cemeteries (for example, the Coffin Crane suggestion in 1824 and its proposal in 1832), and indicates that society's changing attitude towards death stimulated the creative minds of inventors and private entrepreneurs even before physicians. This probably happened as a consequence of a particular cultural attitude towards mechanical innovation in nineteenth-century Britain. The positive reception towards innovation – new mechanical inventions to improve everyday life – also permeated burial rituals with the introduction of mechanical devices initially inspired by Royal and state funerals. These funerals represented an aspiration at all levels of society: from the aristocracy to the working classes.

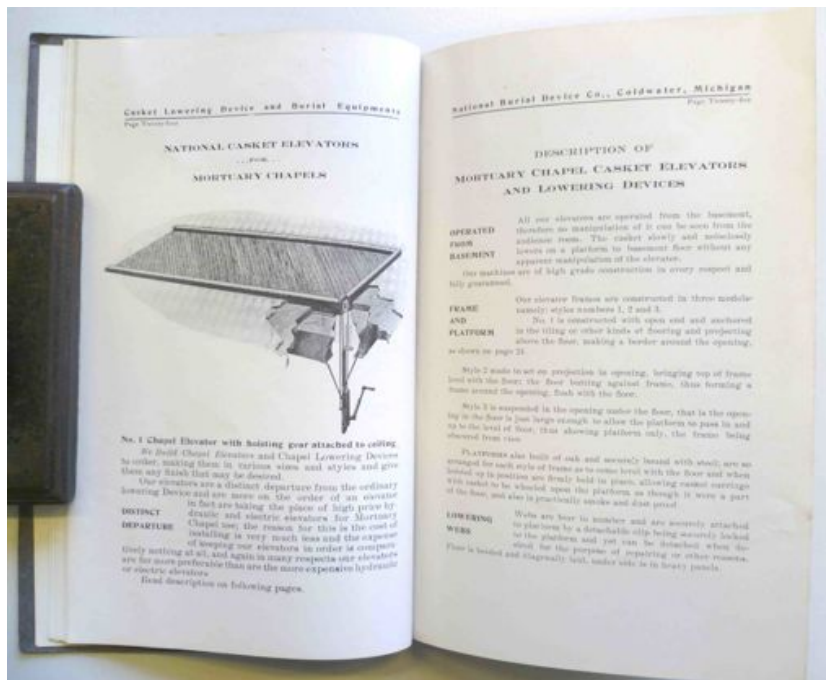


Fig. 114 – Undated. National Casket Elevators for Mortuary Chapels. Source: Surrey History Centre.

In this cultural and social context, the process of the democratisation of solemnity and dignity in funerals and burial rituals was obtained by means of mechanisation. This happened in an evolutionary process that could be compared to that of the natural selection of species, as identified by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) in 1859. Machines for burial were, at first, inspired by Royal funerals, such as the catafalque, which encapsulated the essence of the Victorian fascination with death and funeral rituals, as well as their scale and pomp. In a second stage of this evolutionary process, funerals were simplified, aesthetically and formally, and death rituals became more discreet, private and ultimately invisible, which partially explains the perception of death in modernity. This process was aimed at standardising solemnity and giving dignity to burial rituals. It could be said that the rationalisation of the burial space aimed to remove death from sight, and deflect emotional involvement for the sake of privacy and also possibly segregation. This pursuit of perfection, desire for precision, for quality and equality in burial was not entirely different from the principles that drove the rationalisation of mass production and industrial production.

To conclude we can say that desire for rational standardisation and perfection, (also addressed by Arnold,) anticipated and laid the foundations for modernist thinking in the twentieth century. For Swiss architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965):

Standardisation is imposed by the law of selection and is an economic and social necessity [...]. But we first of all aim at the setting up of standards in order to face the problem of perfection.²³⁶

Furthermore, elaborating on the role of the machine in the evolution of mankind, Le Corbusier also comments, “The creations of machine technology are organisms tending towards purity, and subject to the same evolutionary rules as are natural objects that arouse our admiration.”²³⁷

To conclude we can say that by connecting Le Corbusier, Arnold and Darwin, we could speculate that the destiny of nature, man and the machine are interwoven and influence one another’s evolutionary processes. Together with the idea of evolution, there is also the concept of sanitisation and cleanliness (in fact a clinical procedure, mechanised, rationalised); an artificial precision that is not true to death or the nature of decomposition. These points on the redefinition of solemnity, cleanliness, “perfection” (as addressed by Arnold and Le Corbusier) and efficiency, all help to put into perspective the role of death in nineteenth-century Britain and the role of Victorian cemeteries. One cannot help but wonder though, if the use of machines was the only way to achieve a democratic dignity in burial rituals.

²³⁶ Le Corbusier, p. 138

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96