

GEOLOGY AND **LONDON'S VICTORIAN** **CEMETERIES**



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Geology and London's Victorian Cemeteries

Part 1: Introduction

London is a huge modern city - with congested roads, crowded shopping areas and bleak industrial estates. However, it is also a city well-served by open spaces. There are numerous small parks which provide relief retreat from city life, while areas such as Richmond Park and Riverside, Hyde Park, Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest and Wimbledon Common are real recreational treasures. Although not so obviously popular, many of our cemeteries and churchyards provide a much overlooked such amenity. Many of those established in Victorian times were designed to be used as places of recreation by the public as well as places of burial. Many are still in use and remain beautiful and interesting places for quiet walks. Some, on ceasing active use for burials, have been developed as wildlife sanctuaries and community parks. As is the case with parklands, there are some especially splendid cemeteries in the capital which stand out from the rest. I would personally recommend the City of London, Islington and St. Pancras, Highgate, Kensal Green, West Norwood, Nunhead and Brompton as outstanding for size, quality of monuments, general interest and/or natural beauty. This guide includes these cemeteries and also others which are well-known and/or have some interest, charm or character all of their own.



Why geology? Well, building stones have been used extensively for the teaching of geology and for 'geological walks' for the interested amateur. London is very well placed as it has a wide variety of buildings with stones imported from around the world; these have been and continue to be visited by students of geology. Thus although London sits in an area of largely limited and unexciting geology, it

has these large, mostly clean and sometimes polished specimens available to view at street level or inside our public buildings. Cemeteries may not have used quite the full variety of stones that London's architects have, but there is an extensive range and they are in immensely interesting, movingly personal and tranquil places. Moreover the variety of stone displayed at one easily accessible location can be second to none.

In summary, cemeteries provide a variety of features, these being:-

- Attractive, interesting and unusual places to walk, each of its own unique character, in a range of settings from formal gardens to wildlife reserves.
- Repositories of magnificent monuments and buildings, from churches and chapels to elaborate mausoleums to individual graves, traditional or quirkily different.
- Treasure-troves of rock specimens covering many types and geological settings; some of which are polished to reveal details not apparent in the rough rock.
- Reminders of the lives of real people, the famous and the not so famous (i.e. most of us).
- Collections of touching, poetic and fascinating epitaphs as well as interesting and exotic names of people and places.

Over the past few years I have had occasion to look around some of London's cemeteries; sometimes with a view to planning a 'geological tour' of a cemetery, sometimes reflecting on past lives and their legacy in terms of monuments or words chosen for them on their passing or sometimes just out for a walk. Here is a collection of observations from those walks. Cemeteries can be seen as places to bury the dead and many modern cemeteries are quite sparse affairs plainly for that purpose; however they have also been built as places not only to remember and honour people's lives but for the general public to appreciate. All the cemeteries included here were founded between 1833 and 1890 and represent a particular age which produced a style of cemetery of which we may not see the like again. The Victorians attitude to death was characterised by a culture combining of the wealth and power of an empire at its height with an attitude towards mortality tempered by high death rate little improved by the scientific advances and technology of the time.

Part 2: Victorian Cemeteries - The Magnificent Seven and More

Under intense governmental and public pressure concerning the literally over-spilling church graveyards, the first half of the nineteenth century saw the construction of seven new cemeteries to accommodate the dead from the overcrowded centre of London. These were Highgate (37 acres, founded 1839), Abney Park (32 acres, 1840), Tower Hamlets (33 acres, 1841), Nunhead (52 acres, 1840), West Norwood (40 acres, 1836), Brompton (39 acres, 1840) and Kensal Green (72 acres, 1833). The two largest cemeteries in London were opened a little later, these being the City of London (200 acres, 1856) and St. Pancras and Islington (185 acres, 1854). A number of others followed including those mentioned in the Appendix. Although not in London, Brookwood (c.450 acres, 1852) is a huge cemetery near Guildford, founded as a London overspill. These cemeteries often had crematoriums added at a later date as cremation became more popular.

Many of the larger cemeteries were designed not just for the utilitarian purpose of burying the dead or even as places to mark their passing with elaborate memorial but also as attractive areas in which to walk away from the busy city life. The City of London Cemetery, for example has been described as “the ultimate flowering of a funerary golden age” (*l’ultime efflorescence d’un age d’or funeraire* – Guy Vraes). Certainly modern cemeteries just do not match these older ones for grandeur nor appear to be designed for the passing visitor in mind.

The specific cemeteries presented each have a general introduction followed by sections on People, Buildings and Monuments and Geological Interest.

- Under “People” I have listed a selection of those interred or commemorated in the cemetery; the lists are quite short and roughly reflect fame of the individual or those catching my eye.
- Under “Buildings and Monuments” I have tried to include the most outstanding features such as chapels, catacombs and large or unusual monuments; I hasten to add that I have no personal expertise in this field.
- Under “Geological Interest” I have tried to point out features which are particularly fine or unusual examples of rocks used in monumental stonework. I have not dwelt upon many of the rocks such as granites, gabbros, marbles and sandstones which are common to most cemeteries in the London area. I suggest that the reader might like to perhaps follow the guide “Spot the Rock” (see website in Further Information) and visit a convenient cemetery or better still visit the City of London Cemetery and follow the geological walk (see website).

People

Unsurprisingly, in such a large capital city a number of famous names are associated with many of the cemeteries including politicians, industrialists, church dignitaries, artists and military personnel.

However away from the large monuments of the rich and powerful or those associated with politics or the Church are also found many fascinating, touchingly human and unusual stories of people's histories.

A short and selective list of notables is included in every entry; for more details I recommend the excellent book by Meller and Parsons (which also contains lots more on the histories of and the monuments in the cemeteries) and the information published by the management and local groups associated with individual cemeteries.

Monuments

The monuments range from small headstones to grand mausoleums and from simple headstones to elaborate shapes and figures. Modern stone masons have introduced an exciting range of stones from around the world into cemeteries, especially gneisses and migmatites hitherto not usually found in cemeteries, and a wide range of new types of granites, gabbros and associated rocks. The buildings found in these churches are often works of art in their own right and worthy of note; a number of buildings and memorials have been classified as 'listed buildings' by English Heritage.

Geology

All the cemeteries have a range of traditional stone such as white Italian marble, sandstone, grey to black gabbro, pink, red and grey granites (often from Scotland and Cornwall, some porphyritic), limestone and larvikite, with the occasional Welsh slate or Borrowdale volcanic rock, used in monuments or buildings. Any cemeteries which are still being used for memorials will contain a number of more 'modern' stones (see below).

Some of the cemeteries are still being used for modern burials and cremations, which puts the onus on visitors to be more considerate than with those no longer used. The City of London, East Finchley, New Southgate and Islington and St. Pancras have large areas devoted to modern burials and cremations with Norwood, Kensal Green, Brompton, Highgate, Hampstead and Nunhead also still active. Abney Park and Tower Hamlets are now open mostly as community parkland, with a burial the rare exception.

Part 3: About the rocks

Granites, Gabbros and Intermediate Rocks

All these rocks are hard, very resistant to weathering and take a good polish. Collectively known as plutonic igneous rocks, these are formed when a large body of magma (molten rock), often many kilometres in size, stops during its ascent through the crust; it then slowly cools and solidifies. These great bodies cool very slowly (many thousands of years) and on solidification, gives rise to large crystals which can be seen as an interlocking mosaic in polished sections. Granitic magma is lower melting and is emplaced at about 800-900°C while gabbroic magma is at about 1100-1200°C.

The granites are the most common in older, larger memorials and are light to mid grey or light to deep pink in colour. They are mostly made of the minerals quartz and alkali feldspar with smaller amounts of mica. The quartz



Figure 1: Peterhead Granite, Scotland



Figure 2: Gabbro, Rustenberg, S. Africa

appears as glassy grey crystals and the feldspar as off-white or pink. Occasionally some of the feldspar appears as larger, often rectangular crystals called *phenocrysts*. The mica forms shiny flat crystals and is black (biotite) or white (muscovite); the biotite is easily seen against the light quartz or feldspar. These micas speckle in sunlight and can be used to distinguish a rough-cut, non-polished granite from a sandstone or limestone.

Often dark patches which seem out of place can be found in granites. Referred to poetically by quarrymen as “heathens” and

prosaically by geologists as xenoliths, these are pieces of surrounding rock which have broken off and fallen into the magma.

Such xenoliths can be quite large but only relatively small (a few centimetres) are usually found in commercial quality stone.

Many of the older granites in London cemeteries are from around Aberdeenshire and Cornwall. Aberdeen (“The Granite City”) became famous for its granites and the skill of its granite workers. Modern granites available commercially come from around the world e.g. India, Brazil, South Africa, France and Scandinavia.

Gabbros are darker rocks containing the iron- and magnesium-rich mineral pyroxene and some plagioclase feldspar (which is calcium- and sodium-rich compared to alkali feldspar which is potassium- and sodium-rich). Gabbros appear grey to dark grey and when polished can give an almost black finish which has been more popular recently.

There are a number of rock types of compositions between the silica-rich granites and the magnesium/iron-rich gabbros as magmas generally evolve from the latter composition towards granites. These intermediate rocks require specialist classification but one characteristic and hugely popular intermediate rock is larvikite. Often called pubstone, because of its use as a facing stone in public houses, it shimmers in sunlight to give iridescent blues, greens and yellows (called *schiller*). This effect is caused by a closely-spaced parallel alignment in the crystal similar to the parallel alignment of structures in butterfly wings.



Figure 3: Larvikite, 'Emerald Pearl'

Granites are very resistant to weathering because the minerals are hard and little affected by water, and because there is virtually no pore space for water or air to enter. The minerals in gabbros are somewhat less resistant to water but still weather well. Stone workers tend to call all such hard, crystalline rocks 'granites'.

Volcanic Ash

Magma of the composition of gabbro is quite fluid and, if it reaches the surface, produces relatively well-behaved lava flows to form basalt. However magma of granitic composition is very viscous and usually contains a lot of superheated water under pressure. If this reaches the surface it erupts explosively sending clouds of fine dust and rock fragments high into the air. These pyroclastic particles can then settle into layers. Lavas and pyroclastics are extrusive igneous rocks. The only stone formed from pyroclastics which can commonly be found in monuments around



Figure 4: Volcanic Ash from Borrowdale

London is that from Borrowdale in the Lake District. In this case the material has settled in water in successive layers, been compacted into a rock and subjected to some degree of metamorphism to give quite a hard rock.

Borrowdale slate is grey in colour and shows layers of fine material with some larger fragments; however weathering produces a characteristic grey-green colour which is easily spotted from a distance and distinguished from algae or lichen with a practised eye. It is a popular decorative stone for ornaments as well as monuments, unlike basalt which is mostly used local to deposits for building and is rarely used in monuments.

Sandstones

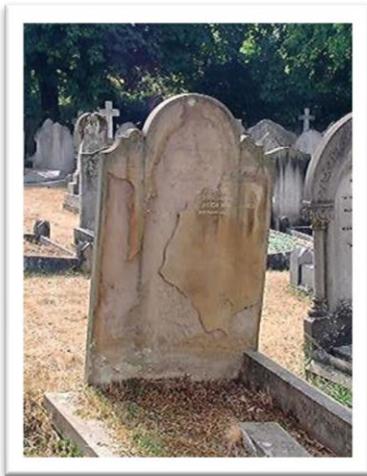


Figure 5: Weathered Sandstone

Sandstones form a part of the sedimentary clastic rocks. They are usually silica or silicate based and are formed by the erosion of rocks then transport, deposition and burial of the sediments produced. They are often banded as the sand is deposited in layers; parallel, discrete layers are separated by junctions called *bedding planes*. Depending on the particle size the rocks produced are mudstones, siltstones, sandstones or conglomerates. Generally the smaller the particle size, the further the sediment has been transported. Sandstones are usually the only such clastic rock with a balance of strength, workability and appearance suitable for monuments. They are very popular as headstones as they are relatively cheap, being common rocks and worked cut into slabs as they cleave along bedding planes.

Sandstones often contain a lot of silica which is resistant to weathering but the grains are only held together by deposited minerals in the spaces between which leaves varying amounts of pore space in the rock. This allows water to penetrate and slowly erode the stone but more damaging is when the water freezes, expands on freezing and cracks the stone. Typically this results in loosening of the outer part of the rock which flakes off. This “onion-skin weathering” causes severe damage to older stones, removing inscriptions and more, but can leave interesting shapes behind.

Most sandstones are grey or light brown and have been transported by flowing water then deposited in seas, rivers or lakes. Some however are quite red and have been formed in hot deserts; in these conditions, any iron present has been oxidised to a rust-colour.

Slates and Gneisses

Slates and gneisses are examples of metamorphic rocks; these have been formed by deeper burial than that which turns sediments into rock. In the latter case the sedimentary grains are compressed and cemented by minerals from percolating fluids. With metamorphism the pressures and temperatures involved are sufficient to actually change some or all of the minerals present. With increasing temperatures and pressures, the metamorphic grade increases giving larger crystals. As an example a mud (sediment) might be compacted and lithified forming mudstone (sedimentary rock). This, in turn, on being



Figure 6: Gneiss with red garnet porphyroblasts

compressed further (up to a few kilometres) could turn into a slate (low-grade metamorphic rock). With increasing grade schists and gneisses (medium and high grade, up to a maximum of ca. 30 km burial) are formed. If temperatures reach ca. 800-900° partial melting can occur giving a metamorphic rock with some igneous-looking parts to

them; such rock is called a migmatite.



Figure 7: Slate block

Many metamorphic rocks have a fabric defined by the alignment of flat, platy minerals such as micas (giving slates their characteristic cleavage) or of elongate crystals such as feldspar (giving gneisses their characteristic banded appearance). Another feature in some metamorphic rocks is where certain crystals, such as garnets, grow more readily and larger than others forming porphyroblasts, analogously to phenocrysts in igneous rocks.

Limestones and Marbles

Both limestones and marbles are essentially composed of calcium carbonate but limestone is sedimentary and marble is metamorphic. Limestones are produced in warm, shallow seas from shells or shell fragments and/or from chemically precipitated calcium carbonate (usually as the mineral calcite). The former can be in the form of fine sludge or as small rounded grains called oolites. Limestone can range in purity from the pure, white chalk to light to dark grey or



Figure 8: Portland Stone

brown limestone containing various amounts of silicate or organic impurities.

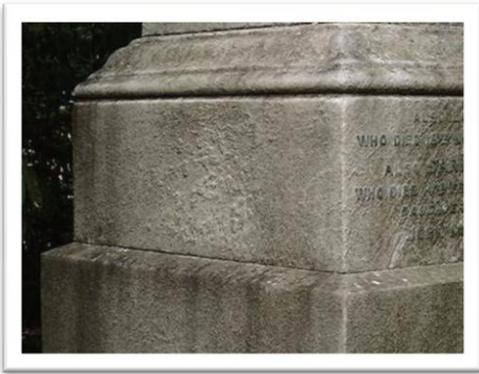


Figure 9: Weathered marble monument

Marble is the rock most used in London for headstones. Although white limestone and marble can be difficult to distinguish superficially by eye, seen under the microscope they are very different; limestones typically show small shell pieces in a calcite mud or rounded ooliths whereas marble shows large, interlocking crystals of calcite. Although the tight, mosaic structure of

marble similar to that of granite makes it hard wearing, it still weathers at a significantly faster rate than that of granite

because calcite itself is softer and more soluble than quartz or feldspar. Such weathering can be measured by the difference between the surface and that of any lead lettering which undergoes much less erosion. This dissolution is caused by dissolved carbon dioxide in rainwater and is speeded up in areas subject to acid rain.

Limestones are mainly found in buildings or mausoleums and can be distinguished by the presence of fossils or ooliths (seen with a hand lens).

Part 4: The Cemeteries

Abney Park Cemetery (1840, 32 acres)

Stoke Newington High Street, N16

Abney Park is a green oasis in busy Hackney. It has been left to grow semi-wild as a nature reserve. Consequently many of the monuments which are set back from the path are obscured by plant growth. However a good many memorials are close to the many small paths and still easily viewed. Organised walks tend to feature wildlife studies. Most of the memorials date from before the First World War. A number of exotic trees were originally planted by George Loddiges a well-known nurseryman of the time.



People

William Booth (1829-1912) - founder of the Salvation Army and his son William Bramwell Booth (1856-1929) – second General of the Salvation Army; George Leybourne (1842-1884) - music hall artist known as “Champagne Charlie”; Dr. Nathaniel Rogers (1808-1884) – medic who donated stained glass windows to St. Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and others; Dr. Isaac Watts (1674-1748) – pastor, poet, hymn writer and moral philosopher, interred in Bunhill Fields but commemorated here after public subscription.

Buildings and Monuments

Located in the middle of the cemetery is a somewhat run-down but essentially intact, brick-built chapel. To the south of the chapel is a War Memorial cross and a large statue of Isaac Watts. A distinctive feature of Abney Park is the entrance in an Egyptian style complete with hieroglyphics. Otherwise there are few other elaborate memorials, reflecting the large number of nonconformists interred here.

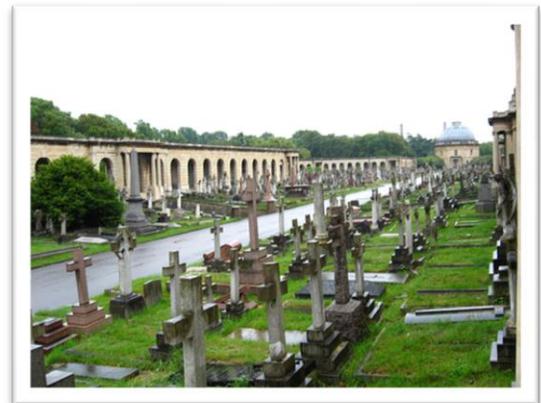
Geological Interest

Abney Park does not have particularly wide selection of stones but some good granites, marbles, larvikite and sandstones are to be found. Look out for a particularly interesting porphyritic pink granite with especially large phenocrysts of alkali feldspar; as well as two contrasting limestones, a light Portland Stone and a darker grey stone, comprising the Rogers mausoleum.

Brompton Cemetery (1840, 39 acres)

Old Brompton Road, SW10

Brompton Cemetery is quite a compact and well-filled, almost rectangular space with little in the way of wooded areas. However it is worth walking around for the number of fine monuments especially those within a colonnaded area to the north of the chapel.



People

Antony, Metropolitan of Sourozh (1914-2003) – founded the diocese of the Russian Orthodox church in Britain; Sir Samuel Cunard (1787-1865) – founder of Cunard shipping company; Percy Lambert (1881-1913) – first man to drive over 100mph; Bernard Levin (1928-2004) – writer and critic; Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) – suffragette leader; Samuel Sotheby (1805-1861) – auctioneer; Richard Tauber (1891-1948) – singer, John Wisden (1826-1884) – cricketer and founder of eponymous almanac.

Buildings and Monuments

From the North Lodge the central tree-lined road down Central Avenue passes between colonnades either side which arc outwards in semicircles to form a circle just before meeting the Byzantine-style domed chapel, reminiscent of St. Peters in Rome. The colonnades are built over catacombs which are accessed by a number of descending entrance steps.

Geological Interest

The colonnades and Chapel are of a pale brown limestone (possibly Bath stone). The entrance lodge is built of an interesting looking sandstone showing, in parts, cross bedding of various scales and ripple marks (right). It has some areas with blotches of iron-staining.

There is a recent memorial to Metropolitan Anthony of a grey fossiliferous limestone (probably Carboniferous in age) showing fragments of crinoids and corals, as well as

distinct calcite

crystals (best seen in sunlight). About 100 yd East of the chapel is a nice slate chest. The South-West corner contains some

newer graves with examples of a lightly fossiliferous, pale

limestone and some slates showing occasional distinct bedding. A most unusual stone is to be found in the North-East of the

central circle – a fissured and stained rock resembling timber,

with fine layering – possibly a tufa (left). Look out also for what

appears to be a serpentinite breccia forming two pillars in the

Fitch family mausoleum about 200 yds from the main gateway.

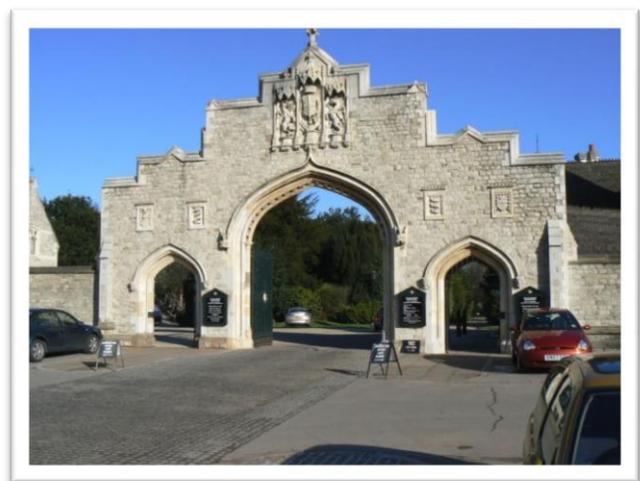


City of London Cemetery and Crematorium

(1856, 200 acres)

Aldersbrook Road, E12

The City of London is the largest cemetery in London, just larger than Islington and St. Pancras. Whereas the latter is more 'rural' and overgrown in nature making a pleasant green walk, the City of London is still a very active cemetery and is well-maintained with good literature available including an excellent 'Tree Trail'; it even boasts a good cafe. It resembles an attractive, formal park with the addition of interesting buildings and monuments.

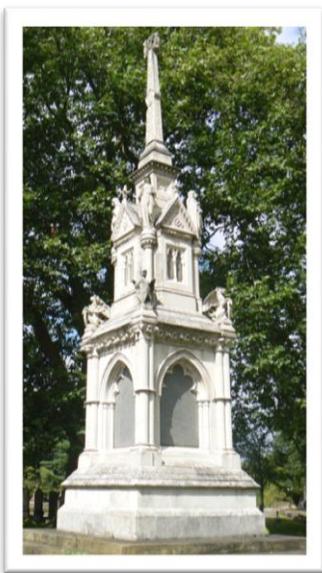


People

George Binks (1793-1872) – inventor of wire ropes; William Haywood (1821-1894) – surveyor and engineer, especially connected with London’s sewage system, who founded the cemetery; Robert Hooke (1635-1703) – natural philosopher and scientist; George Micklewright (1817-1876) - conservationist responsible for saving Epping Forest from developers; Sir Bobby Moore (1941-1991) – footballer; Dame Anna Neagle (1904-1986) – actress and singer.

Buildings and Monuments

The original Church and Chapel are well-preserved, despite the former suffering bomb damage in WWII. They are mostly built of Portland Stone and Kentish Rag, as are the gates, the catacombs, the old crematorium and sundry lodges. Among the memorials of interest, there is a magnificent marble memorial to the young seaman David Vigilant, a fine mausoleum for the cemetery’s designer William Haywood and a small temple covering a statue of Shiva. Of special interest in this cemetery are a number of monuments, of various size and design, marking the re-internment of whole graveyards from City of London churches, many of which are now wholly or partly demolished. Particularly notable monuments include a recently restored large limestone memorial to St. Andrews, Holborn designed by Haywood and others flanking Central Avenue.



Geology

This cemetery has a wide variety of rock types. Among the older stones are red, pink and grey granites, some Cornish porphyritic granites, gabbros ranging from black to a more intermediate grey, slate, sandstones (lightly to heavily weathered; light brown/grey and red), marbles, limestones (including one containing fossil crinoids), volcanic ash and larvikite. The more recent stones include a variety of gniesses, migmatites and granites; look out for an Indian black gabbro speckled with shiny bronzite called Black Galaxy.

East Finchley (formerly St. Marylebone) Cemetery and Crematorium (1854, 33 acres)

East End Road, N3

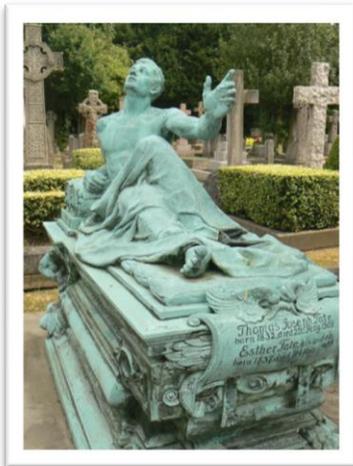
Formerly St. Marylebone Cemetery, this is a rather overlooked treasure, this cemetery has a pleasant, well-maintained aspect and a good range of rock types. The church has been recently cleaned as have the nearby lodges. Features of this cemetery are fine avenues of trees such as cedars of Lebanon, cypresses and redwoods and some beautifully maintained flowered areas.



People

Keith Blakelock (1945-1985) – policeman murdered in riots in Tottenham; Algernon Borthwick, Lord Glenesk (1830-1908) – proprietor of the *Morning Post*; Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe (1865-1922) – proprietor of the *Evening News*, *Daily Mail* and *The Times*; Thomas Huxley (1825-1895) – surgeon and zoologist, supporter of Darwin’s evolutionary theory; Vaslav Nijinsky (1888-1950) – ballet dancer (body relocated to Montmartre); William Heath Robinson (1872-1944) – artist and cartoonist of ‘inventions’; Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977) – conductor.

Buildings and monuments



The fine Decorated Gothic chapel near to the entrance has been recently cleaned. This, the dissenters chapel and the large lodge by the gate are of Kentish ragstone and Portland stone There is one large mausoleum for Algernon Borthwick in the style of a small chapel. An imposing pink granite sarcophagus on a mottled grey granite stand commemorates Thomas Skarratt Hall. Two noticeable memorials boast interesting bronze statues; these are those of Sir Peter Russell (1816-1905) and Thomas Tate (d. 1909). The former is a grand classical monument . whereas the latter displays a striking green-weathered, bronze figure theatrically posed on a chest.

Geological interest



There are two general areas having particularly interesting materials. Firstly in the vicinity of the small chapel (S.W. of the main church) are several small, rounded headstones of a striking gneissose rock with



white, red and dark grey bands. Nearby is superb migmatitic gneiss with curved dark streaks and pink granitic patches which appear to have undergone melting. The second area is between Cypress Avenue and the N.E. perimeter. Here can be found rough block of Borrowdale slate and a number of slates and gneisses. In general, the cemetery offers a good range of traditional granites and gabbros, larvikite, marbles and variously weathered sandstones.

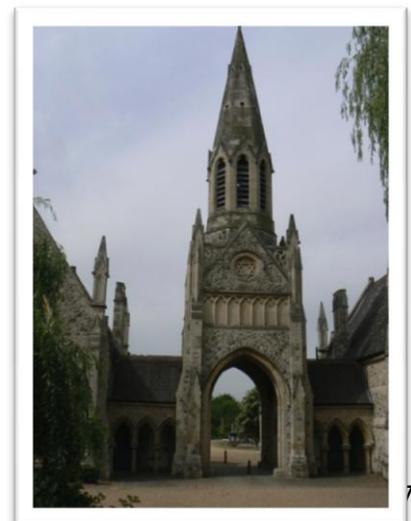
Hampstead Cemetery (1876, 37 acres)

Fortune Green Road, NW6

Hampstead Cemetery is attractive and comprises a good mixture of the new, well-maintained areas and the slightly scrubbier parts. It is not surprising to find memorials to a number of rich and famous people from the Hampstead area.

People

Martha Bianchi (d. 1936) – opera singer; Sebastian de Ferranti (1864-1930) – pioneer of high tension electricity transmission, the Forte family – hoteliers, Joseph Lister (1827-1912) – pioneer of antiseptic surgery, Marie Lloyd ((1870-1922) – music hall artist, Joseph Chicken College (d. 1900) – an Australian remembered simply for his name.



Buildings and Monuments

The main path down the centre of the cemetery passes through an arch above which is a tower with a spire. Attached to this by short colonnades are two twin chapels. The monument to Martha Bianchi is a 1930's style mausoleum with the deceased depicted as an angel with widely spread wings over the entrance. More unusual are two stone armchairs attached to a garden area marking the Kashni-Sepanji family.

Also to be found is a reproduction of a grand church organ, complete with seat, commemorating Charles Barritt (1929).

Geological Interest

The chapel complex is built of Kentish Rag and Bath Stone. Most of the newer and more interesting stones are in the area between the entrance and the Bianchi memorial. This area includes an impressive volcanic ash, probably from Borrowdale showing a great variation of textures in its layers. A bit further on is a large monument of Shap granite which is notable for its large phenocrysts of pink feldspar. A noteworthy stone (right) is a volcanic ash displaying finely layered strata towards the top and rougher, larger pieces deposited in a more massive layer in the middle area.



Highgate Cemetery (1839, 37 acres)

Swains Lane, NW3

Set on a slope below Highgate's Waterlow Park, the Cemetery is divided into two by Swains Lane. The East Cemetery is open to the public (entrance charge) while the West Cemetery is only accessible as part of conducted tours. The East Cemetery is the burial place of a number of famous people and is still in use for burials. The Western Cemetery is only open to parties via regular guided tours. It is famous for its overgrown 'gothic' aspect and old mausoleums and catacombs; much beloved by filmmakers of horror and mystery genres and by photographers wishing for a touch of Victorian melodrama.

People

The most famous grave in the Eastern Cemetery is that of the political philosopher and leader Karl Marx (1818-1883); others include George Elliot (1819-1880) – novelist, William Foyle (1885-1963) – bookseller, Sir Ralph Richardson (1902-1983) – actor, Douglas Adams (1952-2001) - author and Felix Topolski (1907-1989) – painter and illustrator.

Among those buried in the Western Cemetery are Jacob Bronowski (1908-1974) – scientist and broadcaster, Charles Chubb (1779-1845) – locksmith, Charles Cruft (1852-1938) – dog show founder, Catherine and Dora Dickens (1815-1870 and – wife and daughter of Charles, Michael Faraday (1791-1867) – chemist, Radclyffe Hall (1880-1943) – poet and novelist, Gabriele Rossetti (1783-1854) – poet, his daughter Christina (1830-1894) – poet and daughter-in-law Elizabeth Siddall (1829-1862) – wife of Dante, and Thomas Webster (1773-1844) – geologist.



Buildings and Monuments

The West Cemetery houses two brick built chapels, one C of E and one for Dissenters, which are not overly impressive. But it is the Egyptian Avenue, Circle of Lebanon and elaborate catacombs which characterises this part of the cemetery. Both sides of the cemetery contain impressive mausoleums but again it is the West side which contains the grandest in the form of the Beer mausoleum. Julius Beer was rich but not accepted by English society; his mausoleum is the largest in the cemetery and is reckoned to be an ‘up-yours’ to such people.

Geological Interest (East Cemetery)

Most of the larger monuments are near to the entrance and around this area can be seen a variety of granites, gabbros, larvikite and marbles. On the way to Marx’s tomb there is the odd limestone monument (discernible from marble by the fossil content).

Over the eastern part of the cemetery are some new graves which are of a diverse range of interesting new rock types, including gneisses and slates, and some inspired epitaphs.

Islington and St. Pancras Cemetery and Islington Crematorium (1854, 185 acres)

High Road, N2

A merger of two cemeteries, this large area has modern burials in a large open space to the north, on a slight rise meeting the A406 and on a hillside leading from the east gate to the crematorium. The southern part rises from a small brook and is much more overgrown with established trees and secluded paths, apart from the eastern area which contains newer graves. There is a great variety of trees and shrubs partitioned between formal parkland, open grassed areas and overgrown wooded parts. The 'informed indifference' policy in the wooded area has resulted in an area of rich wildlife. Throughout the cemetery are a variety of exotic trees planted purposefully plus many opportunist species.

People

Cora Crippen (1875-1910) – murdered wife of Dr. Crippen; Henry Croft (1862-1930) – the original pearly king; Ford Maddox-Brown (1821-1893) – Pre-Raphaelite painter; Ludwig Mond (1839-1909) – industrialist and philanthropist.



Buildings and Monuments

The St Pancras chapel is original and is Gothic in style with a 100ft spire. The largest mausoleum on site is that of Ludwig Mond, the German-born industrialist and chemist. It is an imposing, if a little ugly, Ionic edifice in grey granite and Portland Stone.

Geological Interest

As far as rocks go, there is the usual range of stones in the older memorials but the real splendour of this cemetery lies in the newer monuments. In particular the modern stones that have been used include a variety of gneisses (especially a grey, garnet-bearing one from India) and some migmatites showing clear differentiation into pink granitic

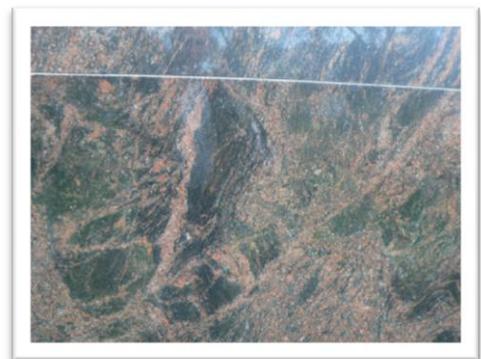


Figure 10: Migmatitic Gneiss

areas and

dark grey, metamorphic parts. At the bottom of the hill approaching the crematorium from the east are two rough monoliths of a rock (still to be identified).

Kensal Green Cemetery and West London Crematorium (1833, 72 acres)

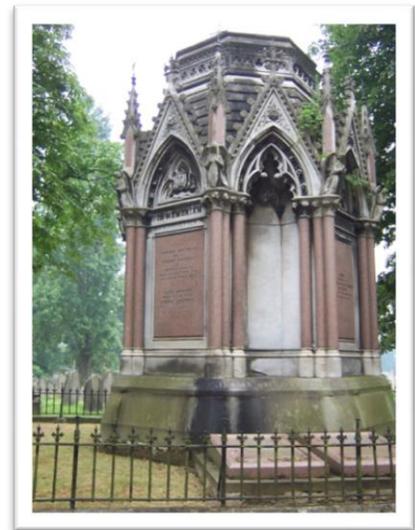
[adjacent to St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery (1838, 29 acres)]

Harrow Road, W10

Kensal Green is noted for being the first of the 'Magnificent Seven' and for having a number of rather grand memorials and mausoleums many of which were designed by distinguished architects of the time. Although not as overgrown as Abney Park or Tower Hamlets, Kensal Green is well covered in shrubs and trees giving a somewhat wild appearance a little like East Highgate but on quite flat ground.

People

Charles Babbage (1791-1871) – mathematician and computing pioneer; Emile Blondin (1824-1897) – tightrope walker (incl Niagara Falls); Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) – engineer; Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) – novelist; Freddie Mercury (1946-1991) – rock star; Baden Powell (1796-1860) – founder of scouting movement; Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914) – illustrator; and William Makepiece Thackeray (1811-1863) – novelist.



Buildings and Monuments

Kensal Green hosts a number of fine mausoleums and monuments, possibly the best selection in London. The buildings including an Anglican chapel, a Dissenters chapel, a Collonade (all with catacombs) and an Entrance Gateway in Greek Revival style; mostly built using Portland Stone and bricks.

Geological Interest

There is a good selection of both traditional stones (British granites, gabbros, sandstones and limestones and Italian marbles) and newer stones (gneisses and newer granites and marbles). There are a number of monuments displaying fine modern stones towards the west side of the grounds, especially among the Orthodox graves.

New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium (1861, 60 acres)

Brunswick Park Road, N11

Another relatively little-known cemetery, New Southgate has a charm of its own. It was developed from renovation and expansion of the Great Northern London Cemetery. The basic design is cartwheel-shaped (actually more like rotelini pasta), with a smaller inner circular road surrounding a fine, large church with radiating paths connecting an outer circular road. Within this area are a number of older memorials but most notably many for people of the Bahá'í faith including a large column with an eagle commemorating Shoghi Effendi (grandson of the faith's founder Bahá'u'lláh); this makes it the most sacred area of the faith in the West.



Much of the outer area is taken by, some very elaborate of orthodox Greek graves. These monuments include a variety of individual styles and interesting new stones.

People

Richard Bethell, Lord Westbury (1800-1873) – barrister, Lord Chancellor 1861-1865; Shoghi Effendi (1896-1957) – leader of the baha'i faith 1900-1957, wrote a history of the faith; Alan Ross McWhirter (1925-1975) – co-founder of the *Guinness Book of Records* with twin brother Norris; Alfred Baring Garrod (1819-1907) – physician, helped identify cause of gout; Alexander Spurr (-1873) – architect of cemetery chapel.



Buildings and Monuments

The monument to Shoghi Effendi is an impressive golden eagle on top of a white marble column on a plinth set in a small, attractive, walled garden. There is also a large obelisk put up by the Society of Friends set in unconsecrated ground, still impressive despite having had its bronze plaques removed. The chapel is has a number of attractive features including a 150ft spire. A small but unusual grave of note is that of a poet bearing the name Ttoffalli which has a floral, woodland design, in bronze behind a plate bearing a poem attributed to the deceased.

Geological Interest

The area to the west of the church is well maintained and includes the marble column memorial to Shoghi Effendi and a number of interesting stones. The newer headstones and Greek memorials contain a variety of the more recently introduced stones, especially a variety of gneisses and newer granites. The cemetery would make a good candidate for a geology-based walk, combining a variety of stones with a number of impressive and unusual monuments and people.



Nunhead Cemetery (1840, 52 acres)

Linden Grove, SE15



Nunhead Cemetery is built over approximately half of a local hillside. At the top of the hill (to the south-west) is a good view particularly one of St. Pauls Cathedral which can be spotted through a gap in the trees. In the middle is the old chapel (now derelict) with some adjacent larger monuments in traditional stones and a small area of modern graves. The bottom of the hill (the north-eastern part) is very overgrown and wooded.

Nunhead has few people buried there whose fame extends beyond the local area but its strength is its hilly, wooded nature. It can seem surprisingly distant from the surrounding built-up area of South London. In the decades after WWII, it was badly damaged by neglect and vandals but now has an active Friends group working to maintain and improve it. Friends of Nunhead Cemetery publish a number of guides about notable people buried there and wildlife found there.



People

Sir Frederick Abel (1827-1902) – co-inventor of cordite; Sir Charles Fox (1810-1874) - engineer, erected the Crystal Palace in nine months; Jenny Hill (1850-1896) – music-hall artist named ‘The Vital Spark’.

Buildings and Monuments



Near to the Linden Road entrance is a large obelisk serving as a memorial to the Scottish Political Martyrs, erected in 1837 by the radical MP Joseph Hume FRS. The larger gravestone memorials are mostly adjacent to the old chapel or at the top of the hill. The Anglican chapel has suffered with the rest of the cemetery and is now without a roof. However recent funding has allowed some renovation and it is now used for occasional activities.

Geological Interest

The best monuments tend to be at the highest part of the cemetery, including a restored Doulton terracotta mausoleum of the Sterne family and a number of fine granites, larvikite and others. The obelisk honouring Scottish martyrs who were deported to Australia is of sandstone

Tower Hamlets Cemetery (1841, 33 acres)

Southern Grove, E3

Now used as a leafy retreat from London's East End, the cemetery is primarily a public park and nature reserve. The wild, overgrowth was originally due simply to neglect but now has some merit in providing a mini-forest in the middle of Mile End. The buildings in the cemetery were damaged by bombs in WWII and all were demolished in 1972. One was an Anglican church, the other a Byzantine-style dissenters chapel.

People

Charlie Brown (d.1932, age 72) – landlord of eponymous pub, 'uncrowned king of Limehouse' and receiver of more than 10,000 mourners at his funeral; Thomas Mullins (18839-1899) – a 17th Lancer who survived the Charge of the Light Brigade; Joseph Westwood (-1883) – shipbuilder and wrought iron manufacturer, West Ham United ("The Irons") originated as his company's football team.



Buildings and Monuments

Unfortunately none of the original buildings remain but there are a number of larger monuments of interest.

Geological Interest

There are a few fine purple slate headstones scattered around the cemetery. These are arguably the best examples of slate for showing direction of cleavage and



generally slaty parting we have seen in London. They are also noticeably better preserved than the surrounding marbles and limestones, which seem to have weathered more than similar stones in other cemeteries. It is possible that this has had more than its fair share of acidic pollution from the closely packed houses that surrounded the cemetery.

West Norwood Cemetery and Crematorium (1836, 40 acres)

Norwood High Street, SE27

Another cemetery built on a high spot, West Norwood Cemetery has a number of features which make it worth a visit despite being one of the lesser-known locations. Friends of West Norwood Cemetery publish a number of leaflets and run monthly guided tours. The cemetery is still working and has a number of modern headstones.



People

Arthur Anderson (1792-1868) – founder P&O Shipping Line; Isabella Beeton (1836-1865) – author her book on household management; Sir Henry Bessemer (1813-1898) – engineer, inventor, pioneer of steelmaking; John Britton (1771-1857) – antiquary and author; Thomas Cubitt (1788-1855) – builder of large developments in London and worked on Osborne House and Buckingham Palace; Sir Henry Doulton (1820-1897) – developed Doultonware manufacture (+ his father John – founder of firm); Sir Hiram Maxim (1840-1916) – inventor, incl. Maxim gun; Baron Paul de Reuter (1816-1899) – founder of Reuters news agency; Sir Henry Tate (1919-1999) – sugar merchant, philanthropist, founder Tate Gallery.

Buildings and Monuments

There are many imposing mausoleums especially near to the entrance and around the top of the hill where the old chapels stood. Of particular interest is a special fenced-off area reserved for the Brotherhood of the Greek Community in London (set aside in 1842 for such use). This section includes elaborate mausoleums of Greek millionaires. Also of note are two fine terracotta mausoleums where Doulton and Tate are buried. Unfortunately the original chapels have been demolished but catacombs remain. There is a modern crematorium and a walled garden of remembrance.

Geological Interest

Terracotta which is used in the Tate and Doulton mausolea is prepared from fired clays whose colour varies mainly with iron content; becoming redder with high iron levels.



There is a rough cut monolith of millstone grit (a coarse-grained sandstone of Carboniferous age from Northern England) in memoriam to John Britton.



Part 5: Appendix: Notes on other cemeteries

Brockley and Ladywell Cemetery (1858, 21 acres)

Brockley Road, SE4

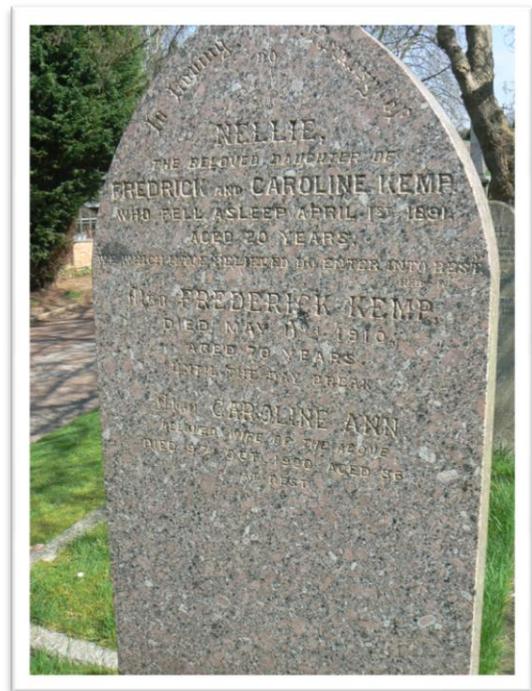
Brockley and Ladywell cemetery contains mostly older memorials of traditional materials. It is an attractively overgrown cemetery suitable for a secluded short walk. One feature is that it contains a higher than usual concentration of unusual and now unfashionable names.

Plumstead Cemetery (1890, 30 acres)

Wickham Lane, SE2

Situated on a hill, this medium-sized cemetery has a good variety of older and newer stones surrounding a rather ornate chapel set off nicely by being at the top of a road ascending from the gateway.

There is a fine, unusual granite with phenocrysts of alkali feldspar which are sometimes zoned pink and white; this is the memorial to Frederick Kemp (close to the entrance, diagonally to the left at the first junction). Worth a visit for the geology if you are in the area.



Charlton Cemetery (1855, 14 acres)

Cemetery Lane, SE7

Although not an especially notable or large cemetery, Charlton is quite densely covered with memorials of a good variety of older and modern stones. There are two chapels in traditional style which are well-maintained, as is the cemetery generally.

Further Information

I firstly must direct anyone who wishes more information about the history or the monuments in London's cemeteries, as well as fuller details of those interred in them, to the splendid book "London Cemeteries: An Illustrated Guide and Gazetteer" by Hugh Meller and Brian Parsons, The History Press, 2008.

Many of the cemeteries have management or 'friends of' groups which run guided tours or publish booklets. The following is a list of such information that I am aware of:

Abney Park

Abney Park Trust (<http://www.abney-park.org.uk/>) organises guided tours and events, usually related to its role as a wildlife reserve. They have published a "Guide to Abney Park Cemetery" by Paul Joyce, 1994.

Brompton Cemetery

Run by The Royal Parks, Brompton Cemetery

(http://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/brompton_cemetery/) publishes a booklet "Brompton Cemetery: An Illustrated Guide" and the Friends group organise regular guided tours and have a very informative website (<http://www.brompton-cemetery.org/>).

City of London Cemetery

Tel 8530 2151; Website www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/cemetery

The Corporation of London publish the following booklets available at the cemetery front office:-

An Official Map, Heritage Brochure and Tree Trail

"The Cemetery in a Garden: 150 years of the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium" by David Lambert, 2006.

East Finchley Cemetery

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/communityandliving/burials/eastfinchley/>

Hampstead Cemetery

Friends of Hampstead Cemetery (<http://thefriendsofhampsteadcemetery.com/40201.html>) organise events and Camden History Society has published "The Good Grave Guide to Hampstead Cemetery" by Marianne Colloms and Dick Weindling, 2000.

Highgate Cemetery

Highgate Cemetery and Friends of Highgate Cemetery (<http://www.highgate-cemetery.org/>) allow access to the East Cemetery for a small charge. Access to the West Cemetery is usually only by guided tours, which are run regularly (see website).

Kensal Green Cemetery

Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery (<http://www.kensalgreen.co.uk/>) publish a “Concise Guide” which is available at the gatehouse. They run a number of guided tours and lecture programmes and have a variety of associated publications; see website for details.

New Southgate

The Westerleigh Group who now run the cemetery have a website (below) and a booklet “The End of the Line: the story of the railway service to the Great Northern London Cemetery” can be obtained via FOWNC (see West Norwood).<http://www.newsouthgatecemetery.co.uk/index.html>

Nunhead Cemetery

Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (<http://www.fonc.org.uk/>) have produced a number of publications (see website) and organise guided tours.

Tower Hamlets Cemetery

The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (<http://www.towerhamletscemetery.org/>) run a number of guided tours and activities and have published a booklet “Ship to Shore” commemorating people buried there with connections to the sea or River Thames.

West Norwood Cemetery

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery (<http://www.fownc.org/>) publish the booklet “The South Metropolitan Cemetery, West Norwood: An Introductory Guide” (2007) as well as booklets on Musicians, Dickens Connections, Music Hall and Sportsmen and various postcards. They run regular guided tours.

There is a useful guide to identifying the rock types found in cemeteries at

http://www.es.ucl.ac.uk/schools/LondonWalks/Spot_the_rock.pdf

If you print yourself off a copy of this, I can guarantee hours of fun visiting any of the cemeteries mentioned.

The author has produced a detailed geological walk for the City of London Cemetery at

<http://www.es.ucl.ac.uk/schools/LondonWalks/Geological%20Walk%20in%20the%20City%20of%20London%20Cemetery%20A4.pdf>

and there is further information about the stones to be found in cemeteries at

http://www.es.ucl.ac.uk/schools/london_fieldwork/col/index.htm

Postscript

Below is a table – not to be taken too seriously – reflecting my preferences as at the time of writing. If you have any comments on the cemeteries please contact me. I am not an expert on building stones, architecture or history, in fact my main expertise is in chemistry. I would welcome any further information on any aspect which enhances ones appreciation of our heritage given in such cemeteries.

	Geology	Monuments	Walk	Celebrities
Highgate (East)	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇
Highgate (West)*	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇
Abney Park	◇◇	◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇
Tower Hamlets	◇	◇◇	◇◇◇	◇
Nunhead	◇◇	◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇
West Norwood	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇
Brompton	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇
Kensal Green	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇
City of London	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇
Islington and St. Pancras	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇
East Finchley	◇◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇
Hampstead	◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇	◇◇◇

* Highgate, West is not featured in this guide as it is only accessible by guided tour and doesn't contain especially noteworthy geology in its memorials.

Notes