



Three Cemeteries in West London

Early in 2020, when the coronavirus took over our lives, I realised how lucky I was to live in Fulham within walking distance of three cemeteries: Fulham Cemetery, Margravine Cemetery and the Brompton Cemetery. What wonderful choices for the daily walk.

Fulham Cemetery

Fulham Cemetery, established in 1865, with an entrance lodge (converted to a private house) and its remaining chapel (now somewhat derelict) is situated between the Fulham Palace Road and Munster Road, Fulham. Designated as a Garden of Rest, it is a pleasant green space, with good trees. Sadly there are no spectacular monuments, but there is a touching area of very modest headstones from the 1940s. I think its chief interest is the very large number of WWI military graves, not arranged as usual in neat serried ranks within an enclosure, but scattered higgledy-piggledy throughout the cemetery. They are there as the former Fulham Hospital just up the road, now the site of the Charing Cross Hospital, was used as a military hospital during WWI. The soldiers were buried before the War Graves Commission was set up. The Commission obviously decided to mark their graves in situ, and not to dig them up and move them to a formal setting.



Hammersmith or Margravine Cemetery



The Hammersmith or Margravine Cemetery at Barons Court, also a Garden of Rest, was opened in 1869 by the Hammersmith Vestry. The cemetery contains a recently restored and listed 'Receiving House', unique in London. It has a few distinctive monuments – the most striking are the green bronze memorial to George Broad, who owned the foundry which made the Eros statue at Piccadilly Circus and that of 'Abe Smith' an Australian gold prospector, who died in 1923, depicted in his hut. This is just close to the J. Lyons & Co WWI and II war memorials. The company was based at Cadby Hall in Hammersmith from 1894, until the 1980s when Cadby Hall was demolished and the great

company began to disintegrate. Margravine is a very 'rural' seeming cemetery – lots of open green grass areas, with few memorials, carpeted with bluebells and later cow parsley in the spring – a total joy!

Brompton Cemetery

And then of course, the Brompton Cemetery – one of London's great marvels, loved and cherished by a wide range of people, with its imaginatively planned layout, splendid architecture and fascinating tombs. A real urban cemetery – but its wonderful trees and grassed walkways give a refreshingly open and relaxing atmosphere even in the heat of the summer. In autumn with the

leaves falling from the trees and the undergrowth cut back – one can see all the memorials in full glory.

One week I went walking in the cemetery on three occasions, all ending in coffee with friends at the well-designed coffee shop, at the North Entrance- a great addition to the Cemetery and its delights.

On every visit I discover interesting memorials I had never noticed before. That is the joy of Brompton – every walk, in every weather brings forth new delights, or highlights new and never before noticed vistas. I am longing for the work on the silver numbered discs, designating famous or interesting people, to be completed, as at the moment it is somewhat complicated to attribute them to specific tombs. But it is a really good project and many congratulations to those who are working on it.



Brompton is a very west London cemetery – full of past local dignitaries, names that are well known to Kensington and Fulham local historians and also, for someone of my generation, friends of my Kensington dwelling parents. I have come across many memorials to those I remember from my childhood who are buried here with their distinctive Russian Orthodox monumental crosses.

Without the stimulus, both physical and intellectual of these cemetery walks, I would have found 2020 very difficult to cope with but thanks to these sad, but wonderful places, so many of us have found pleasure and delight and learned to appreciate the treasure of cemeteries and their passed away occupants. We thank the staff and volunteers so much for all their efforts to keep the cemeteries open to the public throughout these difficult months.

Maya Donelan, November 2020