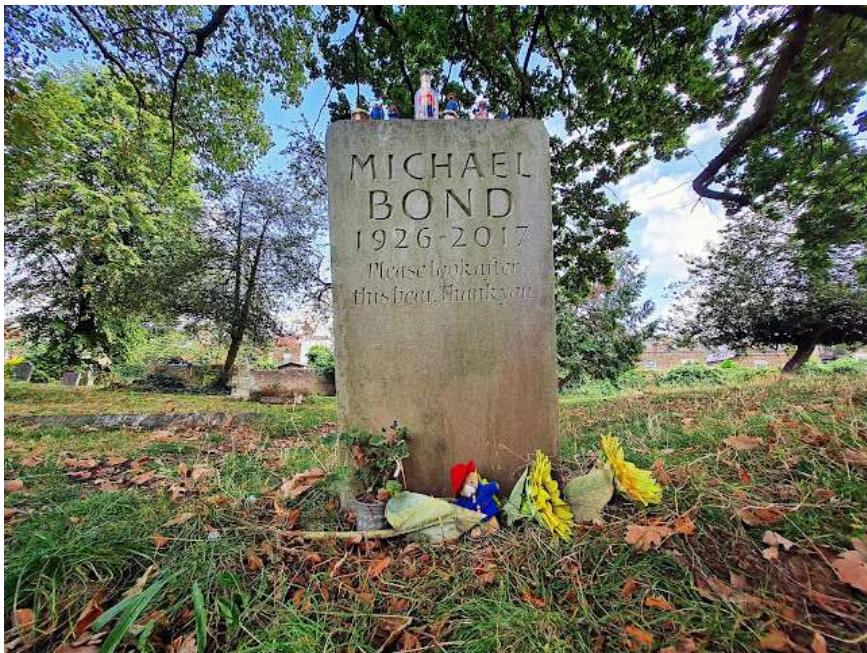


# The London Dead

Stories from our cemeteries, crypts and churchyards

Wednesday, 20 September 2023

Dog day afternoon; Paddington Old Cemetery, Willesden Lane, NW6



And there were dogs, more dogs. Devoted dog-tendance—by schoolchildren, by women in fairly high style, by certain homosexuals. One would have said that only the Eskimos had nearly so much to do with dogs as this local branch of mankind. The veterinarians must be sailing in yachts, surely.

Saul Bellow – Mr Sammler's Planet

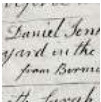
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**The Legend of Long Bill Jenkins - William Daniel Jenkins (1767-1798), Nunhead Cemetery**

William Jenkins' burial in the bank as recorded in the burial register of St Mary Lothbury. On the 24th inst. died, at Edinburgh, ...



**The price of fame; Joyce and Ronald McQueen, Manor Park Cemetery and Crematorium**

The night before Joyce McQueen was due to be cremated at Manor Park Cemetery her husband Ronald and the couple's children had to decide...



**"A most awful tragedy"; Medi Oliver Mehra (2003-2014) Kensal Green Cemetery**

There seemed to be more dogs on parade in Paddington Old Cemetery than I have ever seen anywhere in London with the possible exception of Crufts. It was a sunny September afternoon and there were, as far as I could see, no mourners whatsoever in the cemetery. There were dozens of visitors though, large numbers arrive on foot but also a steady stream of them kept arriving by car and parking in front of the fenced off chapels; every single one, pedestrian or driver, was accompanied by at least one canine, often two sometimes three. Bowls of water are scattered throughout the cemetery for the comfort of canine visitors, most of whom were off the leash and roaming at will. It was a very middle-class collection of hounds, certificated pedigrees (french bulldogs, golden retrievers, dachshunds), and designer crossbreeds (cockapoos, labradoodles, schnoodles), predominated. There were no youths from council estates with squat, muscular, short muzzled, bull baiting breeds, shuffling their way along the paths on overdeveloped thighs and frightening the native bourgeoisie. It was all very genteel. There wasn't even any dog shit on the ground; every single owner was responsibly collecting their pooch's still warm stools in black plastic bags and disposing of them out of sight. I have never seen so many dogs in a cemetery.



Even for those without a penchant for dog watching Paddington Old Cemetery is worth a visit. It does not have any really outstanding monuments but there are quite a few interesting ones and the cemetery has more than its fair share of occupants with colourful pasts. Paddington was one of the first municipal cemeteries (as opposed to private ones like nearby Kensal Green or Highgate), opening in 1855 just three years after the 1852 Metropolitan Internment Act began the process of closing London's churchyards and parish burial grounds to further internments. The Paddington Burial Board acquired 24 acres of land close to what was then the still rural village of Willesden. The cemetery was designed and laid out by Thomas Little, a mainly ecclesiastical architect who designed the gothic chapel at Nunhead (best known today perhaps because George Devey, a much better architect, spent nine years working as his pupil). Little designed the twin chapels with porte cochere and central belltower which luckily still stands at the centre of the cemetery (though it is in the habit of shedding masonry at inopportune moments and so is now completely fenced off to prevent lumps of Kentish ragstone dropping onto the dog walkers). The cemetery still has its two original lodges but both of these have been sold off and are now private residences.

When an 86-foot-long half circle of Corinthian columns, suddenly appeared in Kensal Green a few years ago I was slightly puzzled to see su...



**Death in the Pillory; John Waller, Seven Dials, 1732**

When in the pillory a malefactor was completely at the mercy of the mob.

Some escaped unscathed; when Daniel Defoe was pilloried for satiri...



**Grave Wax, Corpse Liquor and Kissing Dead Queens – the boundless curiosity of the Gentlemen of the 17th Century**

John Aubrey in his prime. I have recently finished reading (with immense enjoyment I should add) Ruth Scurr's 'John Aubrey; My Own Life...



**The pious pelican and devoted mother of Highgate; Baroness Elizabeth de Munck (1767-1841) Highgate Cemetery**

When the savage pelican resolves to give his breast to devour his young, having as witness only he who knew how to create such a love, i...



**Hung, flayed and crucified; the gruesome fate of James Legg (1731-1801)**

In May the Royal Academy finally opened

the doors to its £56 million redevelopment to the public. The event received much coverage in...



**Martha Gall-Bianchi (1897-1936), Hampstead Cemetery and Cesare Bianchi (1898-1945), City of London Cemetery**

The splendid Grade II listed Art Deco Bianchi memorial was created by Cesare Bianchi for his wife Martha who died in 1936 giving birth t...



**St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cemetery, Leytonstone**

"A scruffy closely packed cemetery sited on the edge of the Central Line. Few trees and the lack of coherent landscaping contribute...



**The Coffin Works & Warstone Lane Cemetery - a date with death in Birmingham**

Is there a more entertaining way to spend a cold, dull, and wet day at the fag end of the year than in taking yourself off to Birmingham...

## Popular Posts - last month



**The Gardener Hath Plucked a Still Rarer Flower; Gladys Spencer (1837-1931) City of London Cemetery, Manor Park**

"City of London Cemetery .....mostly obelisks and angels on pedestals provide the principal accents. An eccentricity is the memorial to G...



**"A most awful tragedy"; Medi Oliver Mehra (2003-2014) Kensal Green Cemetery**

When an 86-foot-long half circle of Corinthian columns, suddenly appeared in Kensal Green a





The cemetery is now immaculately kept but this was not always the case as reported by the Marylebone Mercury on Saturday 03 July 1937;

*PADDINGTON CEMETERY* Councillor Turner asked whether a letter had recently been received from a relative of persons buried in the Willesden Lane Cemetery, complaining of desecration alleged to be due to wanton neglect, and stating that "the scene beggars description and has to be seen to be believed"; and did the writer complain that, by reason of the overgrowth around it, he and his wife had great difficulty in finding graves of departed relatives, and there were other bereaved persons in similar straits? Were letters of complaint received but not presented to the Committee? Councillor Mrs. Seale M. chairman of the Cemetery Committee, said several letters of complaint had been received. It was impossible to cut all the grass at the cemetery at one time. There were 32,410 graves, and not sixty per cent were looked after by the people themselves. The others had to be cut by the Council. Letters of complaint were placed before the committee, investigated and dealt with.

By the 1980's the cemetery had become the responsibility of Westminster Council, a responsibility that weighed heavily on the shoulders of the council leader Dame Shirley Porter. Paddington was one the cemeteries that Dame Shirley wished to divest the council of and sold off for a nominal sum (usually a pound) but unlike the other three (Hanwell, East Finchley and Mill Hill) the sale of Paddington never became a **scandal** for the simple reason that it was bought by a responsible owner, Brent Council. With no intention of milking their asset Brent simply continued to run the cemetery as a cemetery, raising a large section of the ground in the southern part to allow new burials to take place.



Paddington's most famous burial is a relatively recent one, Michael Bond, who died at the age of 91 at his home near Paddington and is best known, of course, as the creator of Paddington, the bear from darkest Peru with a liking for marmalade and a penchant for creating chaos. The bear had popular since the early 1960's (I eagerly read the books as a schoolchild in South Yorkshire, having seen Thord Hird read the stories on *Jackanory*) but Bond didn't live to see his creations greatest triumph, taking tea with

few years ago I was slightly puzzled to see su...



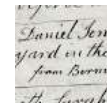
**The Headhunter in the the Haymarket; Horatio Gordon Robley (1840-1930) Streatham Park Cemetery**

The Wellcome Collection has a heavily annotated copy of this (in)famous photograph of Major General Horatio Gordon Robley seated before his ...



**The three burials of Captain Elton; Erle Godfrey Elton (1869-1899) Kensal Green Cemetery**

How many times was Captain Erle Godfrey Elton of the Black Watch buried? Some sources say he was buried on the battlefield of Magersfontein ...



**The Legend of Long Bill Jenkins - William Daniel Jenkins (1767-1798), Nunhead Cemetery**

William Jenkins' burial in the bank as recorded in the burial register of St Mary Lothbury. On the 24th inst. died, at Edinburgh, ...



**Death by water; Antonio Pedro da Gama Lobo Salema de Souza e Vasconcellos (1963-1989), Putney Vale Cemetery**

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead, Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell And the profit and loss. ...



**Death at the Zoo; murder, suicide and drunken accidents in the first 75 years of London's Zoological Gardens**

Children of all ages will be Interested in the chatty and pleasant account of "Half Holidays at the Zoo," issued from the Westmins...



**The price of fame; Joyce and Ronald McQueen, Manor Park Cemetery and Crematorium**

The night before Joyce McQueen was due to be cremated at Manor Park Cemetery her husband Ronald and the couple's children had to decide...



**The Mysterious Amos Grave; City of London Cemetery**

This unusual grave is a complete mystery; I can find out nothing about it. It contains no names other than Amos which I presume is the occ...



**The pious pelican and devoted mother of Highgate; Baroness Elizabeth de Munck (1767-1841) Highgate Cemetery**

When the savage pelican resolves to give his breast to devour his young, having as witness only he who knew how to create such a love, i...

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the Queen at the 2022 Jubilee just before Her Majesty also shuffled off the mortal coil. Bond's grave is decorated with small Paddington statues left by admirers. There is also a potted plant, perhaps a reference to another of his creations, the BBC TV series *The Herbs*.



Other interesting burials include jockey Captain Martin Becher; the identification of his burial site was reported in the *Liverpool Echo* of 11 November 1996:

*GRAND National expert Reg Green has solved a 130-year-old racing mystery. The super sleuth has tracked down the unmarked grave of Aintree legend Captain Becher in a London cemetery. The flamboyant jockey gave his name to Aintree's brook fence after toppling into the water during the 1839 race. For decades his final resting place has baffled race historians. Now race officials are planning to mark Becher's contribution to the famous steeplechase by buying a new headstone. The plot was grassed over in 1963 when officials at Paddington Old Cemetery in Kilburn destroyed several damaged, unsafe and forgotten gravestones. Records show Captain Martin Becher, 67, was buried on October 15, 1864. His wife Susan and son Ernest, five, are buried with him... Aintree marketing manager Joe McNally said: "It is a terrific piece of detective work. We want to get a new headstone but we need permission of living relatives who I want to get in touch with us."*

No new headstone was ever put up for Becher (whose party trick was leaping onto a mantelpiece from a standing jump apparently, impressive for a short man) presumably because no living descendants were traced. Becher is famous for not winning the Grand National but another cemetery resident, Danny Maher won the Epsom Derby three times (1903, 1905, 1906) and the Ascot Gold Cup in 1906 and 1909. He was born in 1881 in Hartford, Connecticut and had a successful career in the US before coming to Britain where he won an astonishing 1421 races. He died in 1916.



The *Dundee Courier* (and many other newspapers) reported on 08 April 1930 on the funeral at Paddington of actress Anita Foy Tipping;

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[Dog day afternoon; Paddington Old Cemetery, Willes...](#)

[Respeito pelos mortos; Cemitério da Lapa, Porto](#)

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About Me

**David  
Bingham**

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*ACTRESS BURNED TO DEATH WOMEN IN TEARS AT GRAVESIDE. Moving scenes were witnessed at Paddington Cemetery yesterday, where the funeral took place of Miss Anita Foy Tipping, the young actress and dancer, who was burnt to death at Twickenham Film Studios when her frock caught fire. Scores of women, among them many of Miss Tipping's colleagues from studio, gathered near the grave. When the cortege arrived, and the plain oak coffin was carried to the grave, many of the women were in tears. The brief service the graveside was conducted by Father Herbert Vauglian, of Brondesbury. Scores of magnificent wreaths had been sent, and these were piled up about neighbouring graves. Among them was enormous wreath of daffodils in the form of cushion three feet square from the "boys and girls of the 'Here Comes the Bride' Company." Nearly all the wreaths were composed of spring flowers, and the senders included Mr and Mrs Julian Wylie, members of 'Cinders' company, the Film Artists' Guild, and Twickenham Film Studios.*

Nita Foy, as Anita Tipping was professionally known, was a chorus girl in West End theatres and was currently appearing in 'Here Comes the Bridge' at the Piccadilly Theatre, at the time of her death. She and five other girls from the chorus line had been given parts in a ballet scene for the film 'Spanish Eyes' by Twickenham Film Studios. The scene was being shot on the last day of the production and could only be filmed when the girls had finished at the theatre. It was well after midnight when the exhausted actress was invited to his dressing room by Donald Calthorp, the star of the film for a brandy and soda. Calthorp told the inquest at Richmond Coroners Court that *"she came in, and sat down on the sofa, which is beside an electric radiator, and I pulled out a small bottle of brandy... and poured a little out and said, "Would you like soda, or water, or plain?" Mr Coote, the assistant director, then put his head in the door and said, "All ladies are wanted on the set." Miss Tipping was then standing and I noticed that her eyelashes were white with powder. I said to her, "Surely you cannot go on. We always darken our eyelashes - it is better for the camera." She said, "Oh, have you got any wet black?" and I pointed at a little red tin on a shelf over the radiator. I remember turning to the door... There was a flash behind me... I turned round and saw that Miss Tipping was a sheet of flame."* The chorus girls were dressed in crinolines for the ballet scene and it was this that caught fire on the electric radiator.



Meller and Parsons (*London Cemeteries - An Illustrated Guide and Gazetteer*) mention the mausoleum close to the Lidiard memorial; "a lavish exercise in the fourteenth-century Gothic style including a sculpture of the Ascension in the tympanum, fearsome over-sized gargoyles and a three-sided apse with shattered fragments of stained glass in the lancet windows. It is a tragedy that such an extraordinary building has suffered from neglect and vandalism." The broken windows at least allow you to peer in and see the coffin still sitting on its shelf. Meller and Parsons do not name the occupant of the mausoleum, I presume because, Like me, they could not make out the name inscribed on the step.





They also mention the 'early examples of porcelain photographs of the deceased' such as the ones below;





Posted by [David Bingham](#) at [06:48](#)

6 comments:



**Billy Blue Eyes** 20 September 2023 at 10:59

Soem intersting people mentioned there, I often wondered how Bechers book fence got it's name

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**David Bingham** 22 September 2023 at 08:29

Hi Bill, I was quite interested too to find out that Bechers Brook took its name from the first rider to fall off his horse there!

---

[Reply](#)



**HoosierSands** 18 October 2023 at 11:10

Seems that I can't comment via Google anymore :-)

When I visited in 2014 (!) there were a lot of dogs about too. Then there were signs saying "No Dogs" so I guess the signs are gone now.

I see Ivy's had a clean; she no longer looks like a pensioner.

The mausoleum name you couldn't decipher is MATTHEW CANTLON ESQ. The Mausolea and Monuments Trust website helped me out on that.

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**David Bingham** 19 October 2023 at 02:39

No, you can't comment via google anymore; and even worse they deleted all existing comments. It's disgraceful, companies that provide you with a free service think that they can just do what they like...

The exclamation mark after the 2014 made me laugh - I thought I had been to this cemetery relatively recently too prior to this visit, and then found my old photos were all taken in October 2013. A decade gone in the blink of an eye.

Ivy is definitely cleaner than she was 10 years ago - now it is us that look like pensioners!

Thank you for finding out who the Mausoleum belongs to. I think Meller and Parsons had more of a duty to identify him than I did, as they were writing a book, but I still feel slightly guilty for my laziness in not digging around a bit more. Now I am wondering who he is...

---

[Reply](#)

**Anonymous** 27 October 2023 at 05:02

Hi David, superb blog! I have a question regarding Kensal Green. I'm looking for a grave at this cemetery, are you aware of any map of burials I can look at? I've got the burial number, but don't know where to take it from here.

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**David Bingham** 27 October 2023 at 05:08

You'll need the grave number and the square number - if you have those I can find a map of the relevant square for you. Normally you have to go to the General Cemetery Company for these but I happen to have a set. Email me the details you have on binghamd@ymail.com

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