



The yellow ribbon around the tree suggests that the new grave in the foreground has an Iraqi war casualty in it. Photo by John Dearing

Our Green Lung Cemeteries

By Daphne Chamberlain

A Holloway woman once said to me, "I'm not ready to go up to Finchley yet". By Finchley, she meant Islington cemetery, which – together with its St Pancras neighbour – has been a feature of our area for almost 150 years.

St Pancras church vestry (now in the borough of Camden) bought Horseshoe Farm in 1854 at £200 per acre, which they upped to £300 when they promptly resold part of it to St Mary's, Islington. That was the start of our enormous green lung, which expanded to nearly 200 acres, as St Pancras and Islington bought up land down to what is now the North Circular. Though St Pancras Court and Strawberry Vale now occupy some of that land, the cemeteries are still big enough to get lost in.

Life and death

If you've never ventured beyond the gates, take a walk inside. It will be on the wild side, but with plenty to interest you – and maybe raise a tear. Look for the grave of a man drowned while rescuing a dog. A stone dog stands guard over it. Track down a workhouse grave which is the resting-place for half a dozen centenarians. You can't miss the vast mausoleum of the Mond family, who changed their German name to Melchett.

(The Lord Melchett of ICI.) To understand inscriptions on some older stones, you may need to understand Welsh. These appetite-whetters, all in the St Pancras section, are only the start of a feast of discovery. Islington chapel, of course, has the memorial plaque to Valentine Bambrick, the VC whose story we have covered in *THE ARCHER*.

Life abounds in these cemeteries. Many types of bird breed here, as well as numerous foxes. To encourage wild flowers and butterflies, some of the grass is cut only in spring. No chemical herbicides or insecticides are used, except when absolutely necessary and in controlled conditions.

Go on – take a lively tour of our 'dead centre' of town.



East Finchley allotments. Photo by John Dearing

East Finchley Allotments

By Daphne Chamberlain

At the end of Plane Tree Walk, beyond Martin School, is the entrance to East Finchley Allotments. Beyond lie 180 secret gardens.

"Isn't it peaceful? Isn't it beautiful? Just like the country!" says the typical visitor. Indeed it is. The plots, each 30 x 100 ft (9 x 27 metres), appear to go on forever. Bordered by Coldfall Wood, the Neighbouring Fuel Lands allotments, private gardens and Martin field, they seem miles away from noise and pollution.

Award winners

Recent winners of Barnet's Best Allotments award, they are leased from Barnet and run by a committee. Many of the plot-holders have worked their land for decades. Some

of them make the trip from neighbouring boroughs, often in all weathers throughout the year. However, the lease now stipulates that Barnet people will be given priority among new applicants.

Sunday Trading

They grow fruit, flowers and a great variety of vegetables, both everyday and exotic. For some the allotment is simply an extra food source, while others welcome the chance to 'go organic'. Flat dwellers enjoy having their own garden, sometimes bringing along the family. On the other hand, for

visitors and those who enjoy a communal rest and picnic, a separate seating area has been installed.

The general public have a chance to see beyond the gate every Sunday, between 11am and 1pm. That's when the Trading Shed is open, selling seeds, fertilisers, etc, and – at the beginning of the year – seed potatoes and onions. A member of the committee is usually on duty.

Anyone interested in leasing a plot should contact Secretary Maureen Phillips on 0777 1683860.

East Finchley's Green Spaces

As property developers look set to concrete over every space in sight, our remaining green spaces become ever more valuable. THE ARCHER takes to the field to review what still remains.

Holy Trinity Churchyard: an Oasis of Peace

By John Dearing

Between Church Lane and Trinity Avenue lies the Holy Trinity churchyard, and through it runs an undulating asphalt path, some 50 yards long, flanked by grave-stones of varying antiquity, many of them leaning at crazy angles (one is said to be made of iron, unusual for this use).

At the Trinity Avenue end there is an iron grille gate that swings in a semi-circular iron grille fence (originally called kissing gates.) This allows pedestrians to pass, but not bicycles nor (in their day) horses. A regular stream of people pass along this path, cutting the corner to East End Road through the Churchyard, on their way to and from the tube no doubt, but few seem to stop in these busy times.

Sitting Quietly

There are a couple of benches, whereupon one may sit and contemplate life, or its passing, perhaps read a paper or even write an article for one! It is an oasis of peace on a sunny spring morning. A few school-boys pause briefly for a meeting of their morning smoking club, laughing at some shared joke, otherwise all is quiet for the most part.

Cherry Tree and Coldfall Woods are the East Finchley green

spaces that most immediately spring to mind, but that would be to ignore the smaller, less obvious places like this little gem.

Scary

At night all is completely different. The Churchyard is dark, with just the occasional glint of a streetlight flashing through the leaves of the trees. With all the gravestones and the wind in the branches, this place is seriously spooky! One needs nerves of steel to pass through on a moonless, cloudy night.

