

Acton Cemetery



and St John Long (1834) tombs are all examples, near each other in Kensal Green. Terra cotta also had its exponents, the best known mausoleum in this tough material being the pink Gothic tomb at Norwood built for Sir Henry Doulton by his own firm (1897). Tiles occasionally give extra colour as on the famous Berens tomb at Norwood (1858). Brick is noticeably rare, although the Wren revival at the end of the 19th century ensured a few Queen Anne style specimens at Richmond and

The most common tombstone symbols

- Anchor:** *hope, or 'at rest'. An early Christian symbol.*
Angel: *the agent of God, often pointing heavenwards; also the guardian of the dead.*
Bed: *a deathbed, sometimes only a pillow.*
Book: *often with a cross lying on it, symbolising faith.*
Butterfly: *the Resurrection.*
Circle: *eternity; usually incorporated into the Celtic cross.*
Column: *the broken column traditionally signifies mortality, the support of life being broken.*
Cross: *has several meanings, but is above all the symbol of the Christian religion.*
Crown: *the emblem of the Christian martyr who may expect reward in heaven.*
Cypress tree: *mourning and death on account of its dark colour and because once cut down it never grows again.*
Dove: *the Holy Ghost or peace.*
Gates: *entry into Heaven.*
Hands: *when clasped are a symbol of farewell. On Jewish tombs two outstretched hands with the thumbs touching symbolise a descendant of Aaron, the High Priest (nearly all named Cohen).*
Heart: *love and devotion.*
Horse: *strength, courage or the swiftness of the passage of time.*
Hourglass: *the traditional symbol of Father Time, who also carries a scythe.*
Ivy: *the evergreen, symbolising immortality or friendship.*
Labyrinth: *in popular usage, symbolises eternity; used in esoteric tradition to represent the inward path.*
Lamb: *innocence, sometimes used on a child's grave.*

elsewhere, including the enormous Martin-Smith mausoleum at Golders Green (1905). Any more precious or fragile materials have suffered badly, often from vandalism, and survivors must now be hunted down in hidden overgrown corners.

Bronzes are rare and frequently despoiled (one regrettable instance is the loss of four corner statuettes stolen from the Whistler sarcophagus (1903) at Chiswick Old Cemetery). Bronze became more widely used in the late 19th and early 20th

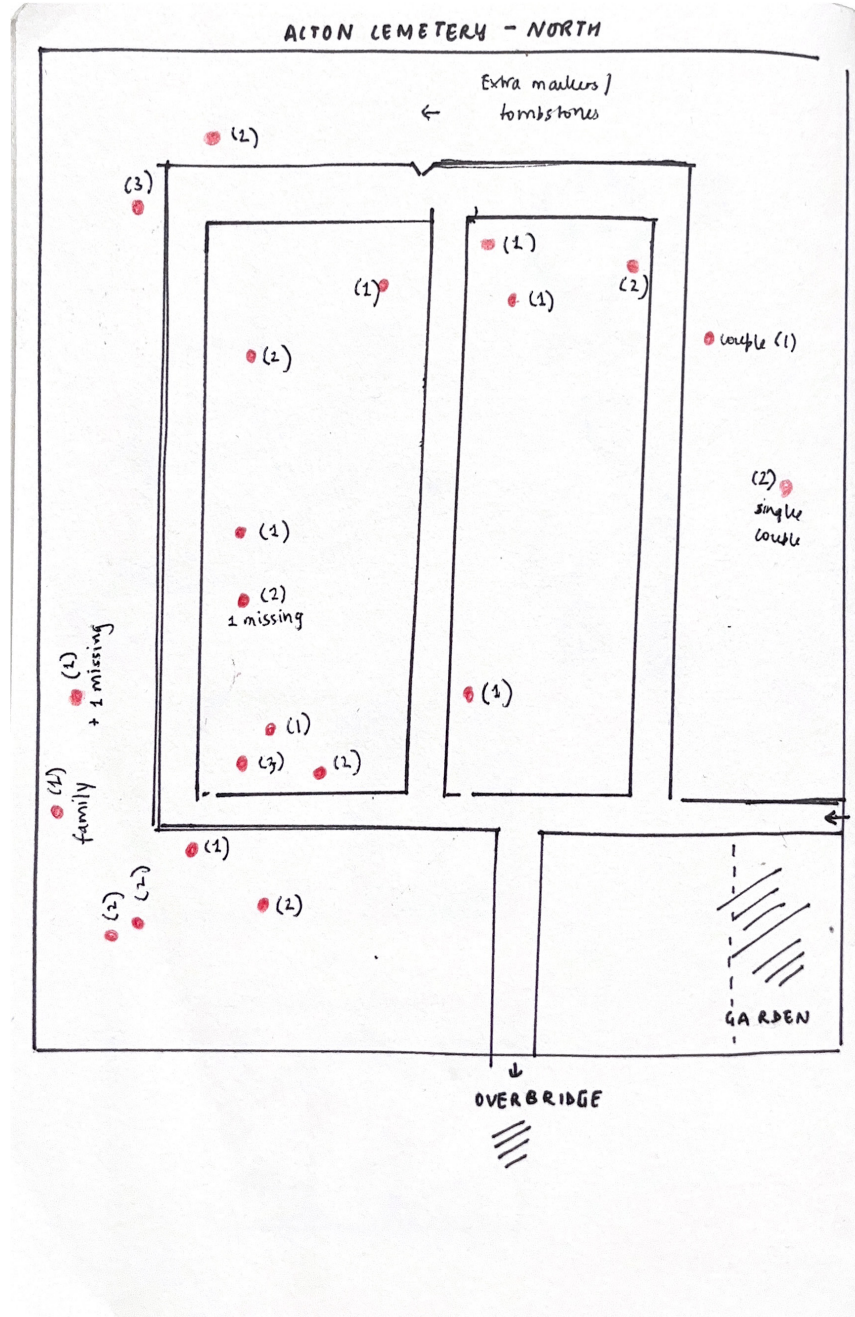
century, sometimes with great dramatic effect, as in the Goscombe John statue at Hampstead (1923) or the amazing Lankester memorial at East Sheen (1920), whilst the bronze inlaid tomb chest of Frederick Leyland at Brompton (1892) is unique.

Iron tombs are also scarce. They were most esteemed in the mid-19th century and the finest is unquestionably the Gothic traceried Farrow tomb at Norwood (1854), now rusted almost beyond repair. Stained glass was another 19th century favourite,

- Lamp:** *immortality, knowledge of God.*
Laurel: *fame, often of a literary or artistic figure.*
Lily: *purity.*
Lion: *courage, strength, the Resurrection.*
Obelisk: *eternal life, from the Egyptian sun-worshipping symbol.*
Palm: *triumph of a martyr over death.*
Passion flower: *Christ's passion, sacrifice and redemption.*
Phoenix: *Christ's Resurrection.*
Rocks: *the Church or Christian steadfastness.*
Rose: *sinless, usually associated with the Virgin Mary or Paradise.*
Scythe or sickle: *the passage of time and death.*
Shell: *pilgrimage, the badge of pilgrims who travelled to Compostella in Spain.*
Ship: *the Christian church, symbolically carrying the faithful through the world.*
Skull: *mortality.*
Snake: *with its tail in its mouth, symbolises eternity.*
Sundial: *passage of time.*
Sword: *justice, constancy or fortitude.*
Torch: *immortality; upturned, symbolises life extinguished.*
Tree: *life, regeneration and immortality.*
Urn: *draped and empty, symbolises death, derived from classical cinerary urns; if flaming indicates new life.*
Water: *a hand pouring water from a flagon may occur on Jewish tombs of the Levites whose duty in the synagogue is to pour water upon the hands of the priests.*
Wheat: *fruitfulness harvested.*
Willow: *grief and mourning.*
Yew: *mourning, on account of its dark colour and its association with churchyards.*

often fitted in the windows of mausolea, but these have been an easy target for vandals and not many are intact. The present vogue for coloured glass chippings is far removed from that tradition. Finally, wood. With the availability of so many hardwearing materials, this was seldom used. The occasional dead board can be found but the disintegration of the wooden paupers' crosses at Highgate, erected as recently as the 1940s, clearly demonstrates the reason for its rejection. The Vic-

ALTON CEMETERY - NORTH



“...It creates a relationship that can never be realized. It makes us want to know more about the person in the picture. Then it places that person beyond our reach. It makes us ambivalent, delighted and sad at the same time.”

Horne, R.W. (2004). *Forgotten Faces*

