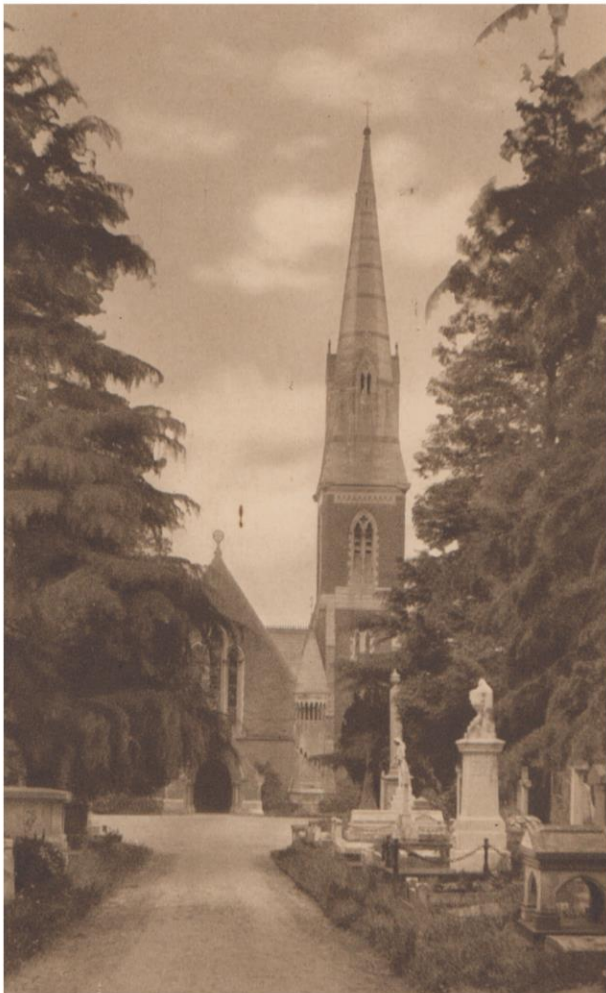


Promoting the Great Northern Cemetery Company



Brian Parsons

Promoting the Great Northern Cemetery Company

The conveyance of coffins from the Great Northern Cemetery Company's (GNCC) station at King's Cross to their cemetery at Colney Hatch has been extensively explored by Martin Dawes (1999 & 2003). In addition, Peter Kay (2009) has researched the siding and station arrangements at Colney Hatch. As has been identified, the service from the London station to the cemetery, which commenced in 1861, was only short-lived. Unusually, but not uniquely, the company was a cemetery operator whilst also providing an undertaking service. In this respect, it modelled itself on the London Necropolis Company's funeral and rail service to its cemetery at Brookwood (Clarke, 2006). Whilst this diversification provided an additional revenue streams, it required significant investment in infrastructure prompting the company to advertise widely and engage in other proportional strategies. Utilising mainly newspapers and periodicals, this article explores how the GNCC launched itself into an already well-developed and competitive market for funerals and burials.

Cemeteries and undertaking in nineteenth century London

The need for greater burial provision in nineteenth century London has been well documented (Brookes, 1989) whilst the establishment and development of private companies in the period 1830 to 1850 has also been examined (Rugg, 1997; Arnold and Bidmead, 2008). Following the opening of Kensal Green Cemetery by the General Cemetery Company in 1832, burial provision thereafter became the prerogative of the joint-stock companies. In Meller's phrase (2008), a *cordon sanitaire* forming the 'magnificent seven' comprising Brompton (1840), Highgate (1839), Nunhead (1840), City of London and Tower Hamlets (1841), the South Metropolitan (West Norwood) (1836) and Abney Park (1840) were established by private companies. The Victoria Park Cemetery (1845) at Bethnal Green was the last to open in this first wave of provision but closed in 1876, but as little evidence of existence remains, it is not included in the original seven. The 1850 Metropolitan Interments Act legislated that the Board of Health should have powers to lay out new cemeteries, advise on the closure of old churchyards and compulsorily purchase the private cemeteries. Mindful of the cost implications, only Brompton Cemetery was acquired before the Act was repealed by the 1852 Burial Act empowering London vestries to form Burial Boards and provide new burial grounds. St Pancras was among the first followed by St Marylebone (both located at East Finchley), then the City of London (at Ilford) and Kensington (at Hanwell). The presence of Boards temporarily halted private sector involvement in the burial of the dead, which did not resume until 1861 when the Great Northern Cemetery Company opened their site at Colney Hatch. This stimulated a second wave of private enterprise through the establishment of East London (1872), Manor Park (1874), Crystal Palace District (1880), Chingford Mount (1884) and Woodgrange Park (1888). In addition, the 400-acre Brookwood Cemetery at Woking in Surrey was opened in 1854 by the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company. Claiming to provide burial space for the dead of London 'forever', coffins were transported the twenty-five miles by train from a private station adjacent to Waterloo station (Clarke, 2018. See also Curl 1986). A spur to the City of London Cemetery at Ilford was proposed but never constructed (Parsons 2020a).

In parallel with the opening of cemeteries was the expansion of the undertaking industry, a situation reflecting the increase in population and corresponding level of mortality. The function of the occupation was to provide the obsequial requirements including the coffin

logistical arrangement including transport to the place of burial and mourning accoutrements, such as gloves, scarves, hatbands, mutes and palls, etc. The *London Post Office Directory* published in 1842 identifies 243 undertaking businesses in the London postal area. All would have been sole traders. Firms would have constructed their own coffins or purchased them from other undertakers or a supplier, such as Dottridge Bros (Parsons 2009). Similarly, many firms would have hired horse-drawn hearses and broughams from a carriagemaster. By 1860 the number of undertakers had expanded to 454. Closer examination of the firms reveals reoccurring trading names within a small radius, which can be interpreted as rival branches of the same families. There were also firms using an identity incorporating the words 'economic' or 'reformed'.

The undertaking industry was given a poor image by Charles Dickens and others, although the accuracy and widespread nature of allegations of manipulation and financial irregularity requires greater weight of evidence (Parsons, 2012). It is unclear whether undertakers deliberately encouraged the purchase mourning accessories or high-grade coffins or if these were requested by clients who regarded such items as a status requirement. The fact that many undertakers lived in the communities in which they worked and also traded inter-generationally questions whether their reputation would have survived if they have been accused of fraudulent activities and pressure-selling.

Background: The Great Northern Cemetery Company

A proposal to establish the Great Northern Cemetery can be found in the *Morning Advertiser* (17 February 1855) when a deputation from the burial boards of St Marylebone, St Pancras and Islington visited the bishop of London, the Rt Revd CJ Blomfield, to obtain his support by preventing the opening of the cemetery at Colney Hatch, whilst also seeking his objection to the enlargement of Highgate Cemetery. The bishop, '...expressed his opinion that it [the Great Northern] was not wanted.' What was not made clear was that the proposed cemetery was in the diocese of Rochester and therefore out of the bishop's jurisdiction. The *London Evening Standard* then reported a further deputation comprising clergy, churchwardens and others upon Sir George Grey and Sir B Hall at the Home Office to seek support for the Company's Bill. A director of the GNCC, the Revd WT Rowe, introduced the Bill by highlighting that 'the conveyance by railway would not only be cheaper, but more decent and expeditious.' In addition, the company would compensate clergy who had experienced a loss of income from the close of their burial grounds at a higher rate than other cemeteries. Sir George Grey speculated that a private company would subsidise the better class of funeral through increasing the charges for working class burials, thereby putting the company at an unfair trading advantage. Questions then ensued about charges before Sir George Grey stated that the burial boards in the vicinity that had invested considerably in their cemeteries wanted to protect their income.

By 1855 the Company was advertising to raise a capital of £150,000 through the issue of £5 share (*The Times* 9 October 1855 and elsewhere). The company also appealed to 'parishes, burial boards or other societies requiring separate burial grounds...near London, with railway communication...' that they should make contact (*The Daily News* 23 July 1856). Apart from mention of the carved oak funeral cars designed by the architect and future cemetery superintendent Edmund Alexander Spurr (d. 1873) to move coffins within the cemetery (*London Evening Standard* 4 April 1861), no details concerning the cemetery appeared until *The Times* announced that the cemetery was about to be opened (2 July 1861). On the 10 July 1861 the bishop of Rochester consecrated 93 acres for Church

of England burials whilst 44 acres were reserved for Nonconformists. *The Morning Chronicle* recorded that 'To the promoters of these cemeteries the public was indebted for the practical commencement of a most sanitary reform.' (11 July 1861). Thereafter classified advertisement for the cemetery regularly appeared in *The Times*.



An extract from the 1879 OS map showing the cemetery station adjacent to the Great Northern railway line. (National Library of Scotland)

Taking inspiration from the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company's rail services to Brookwood, the GNCC constructed a large private station to convey coffins to their cemetery. A descriptive account of the station was published in *The Builder* both in 1861 and 1862. The company also encouraged the public to inspect the cemetery and advertised that a limited number of free tickets would be available for the daily rail journey departing from their York Road station at 11am and returning at 3pm between 11 July to 31 July (Sundays excepted).

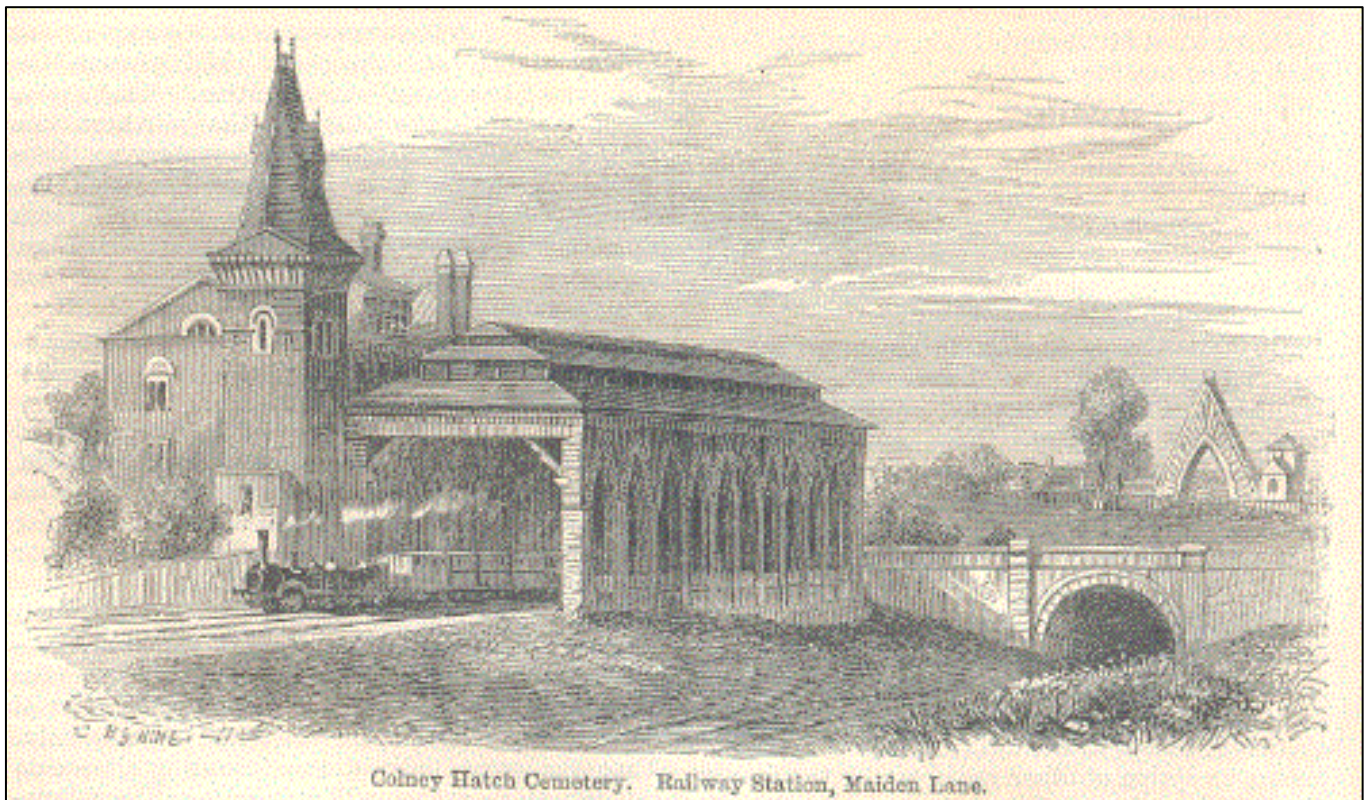
Few images of the station exist, but a recently discovered illustrated featured published in *The Penny Magazine* (23 November 1861) depicts the buildings at both King's Cross and the cemetery. This periodical with wood engravings which was published between 1832 and 1845 had a circulation of 200,000 in the first year and possibly a readership of five times this figure.

The arrangements for the separate reception of different parties of mourners are very complete and are calculated for the benefit of the humblest mourners, as well as those who could, under ordinary circumstances, have afforded to pay for the luxury of retirement and seclusion.

The Colney Hatch Company have endeavoured to grapple with the monstrous evil which arises - chiefly amongst the labouring classes - for the keeping of a corpse for an indefinite number of days in a single room inhabited by a family. That the great bulk of labouring classes do inhabit single rooms, will appear from the following table, which record the results of enquiries made in the inner ward of St George's Hanover

Square, at the time of the Committee upon the interment in towns were pursuing their labours. There is, unfortunately, little means to suppose that the state of things is improved to any considerable degree since that date.

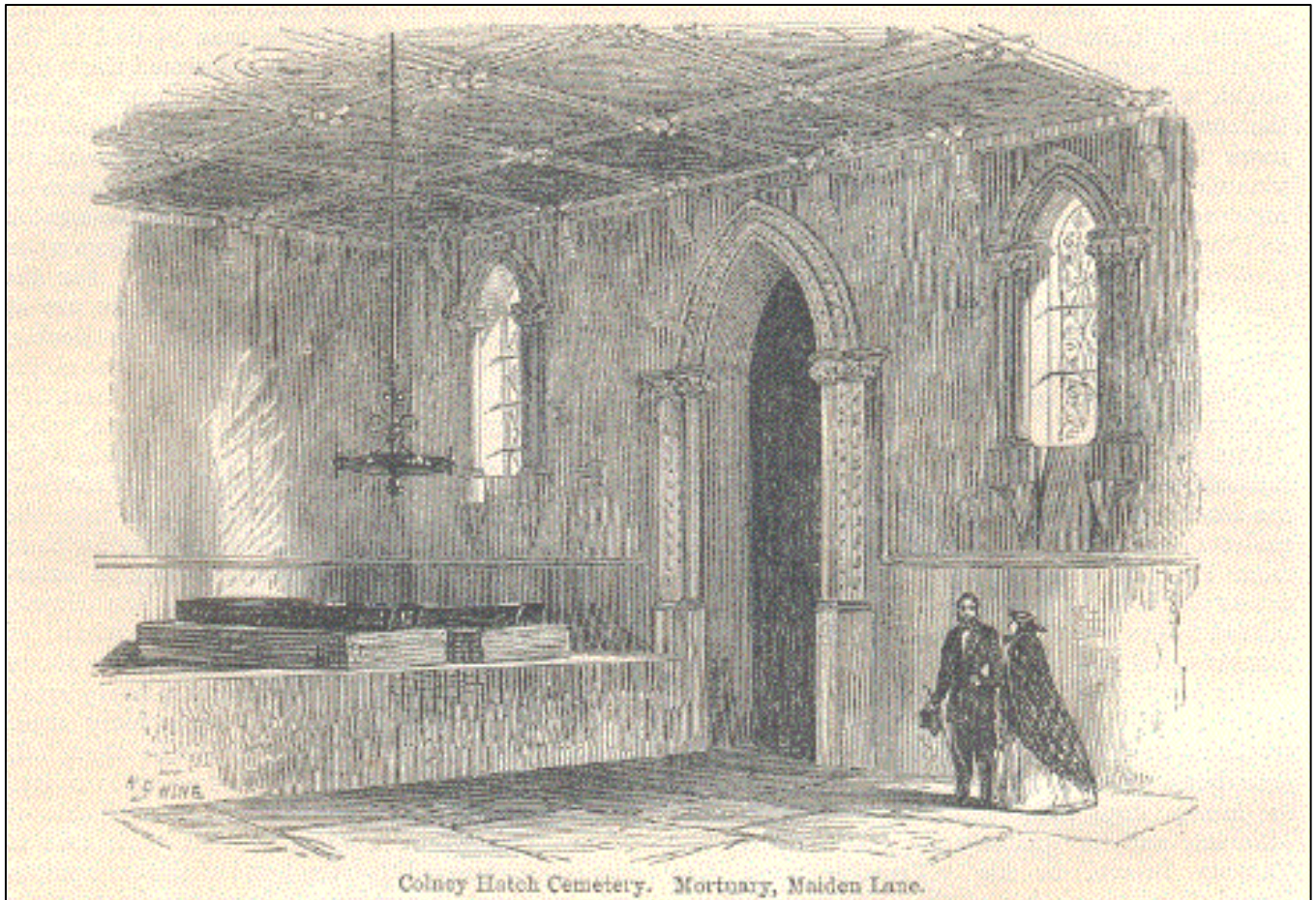
The mortuary is one of the most striking features of this arrangement at the Maiden Lane station, and well deserves a visit....The shell or coffin, on arrival at the station, is placed on a metal chair or plate, and slowly lowered down by an ingenious mechanical arrangement, and then conveyed on rails to the particular spot assigned for its reception. The apartment is well ventilated and illuminated at night, while watchers are in attendance to take every needful precaution in cases of suspended animation, should any such occur.



'London Cemeteries' The Penny Magazine (23 November 1861)

It is the want of money to defray the charges and dues of a funeral which leads in ninety-five per cent of cases to a delay in the burial. The average price of the funeral of an adult is £4, of children 30s. The sum must be painfully gathered together before the corpse is removed from the room in which it has too long retained. Now in the case of the humblest and poorest person, the Colney Hatch Company undertakes to receive the body at their Maiden Lane station, and to keep it there a sufficient time free of charge; to remove it thence to Colney Hatch for 6s with the addition of a charge of 1s 6d a-head for the return ticket of each mourner. The cost of common interment, at the lowest rate, is 13s 6d. Thus the mortal remains of the most humblest workman in London may be decently and reverently moved from the death-bed to the grave at a charge – exclusive of conveyance of the mourners – of 19s 6d.

In fifteen minutes the train – which leaves Maiden Lane – reaches its destination at Colney Hatch, and the tedious and unnecessary ceremony of a lugubrious procession through the street, or upon the suburban roads, is avoided.



'London Cemeteries' The Penny Magazine (23 November 1861)

There are two aspects to this account that warrant comment. First, the provision of a purpose-built mortuary to accommodate the dead until the day of the funeral was a facility unknown in London. The keeping of coffins at home resulted in insanitary conditions (Chadwick (1843 check) (Fisher, 2009). When public mortuaries were eventually built, they were often inadequate in terms of size and environment leading to a degree of reticence by those who most needed to use them. A survey published in the *British Medical Journal* (25 December 1875: 802-803) found that out of the twenty London districts that replied just under half had no mortuary accommodation whilst thirteen had no post-mortem room. St Pancras district had a population of 230,000 and it could only offer the workhouse to store bodies. With 112,001 inhabitants and accommodation for 40, Poplar had the greatest provision. (BMJ 25 December 1875: 802-803). The Public Health (London) Act 1891 finally made it mandatory for every sanitary authority in the capital to provide a mortuary (*Lancet* 27 August 1870). This would be three decades after the GNCC's King's Cross mortuary has been constructed. Furthermore, the presence of 'watchers' looking for signs of 'suspended animation' reflects concerns over premature burial that were prevalent in the nineteenth century (Bondson, 2001). 'Waiting mortuaries' had already been constructed on the continent, but this would be a first for London.

Secondly, as the company not only provided transport to their cemetery but also supplied coffins, it was effectively a complete undertaking service. Through providing accommodation of the coffin in their private mortuary, a facility not found elsewhere in the capital, the company was ahead of its time as it would not be until the early years of the twentieth century before the provision of a mortuary and/or chapel of rest would become an essential third feature of the undertakers facilities (Parsons, 2014).

Securing funerals and burials

The GNCC sought to not only generate income from burials, but also patronage of their undertaking and rail services. As the introduction indicated, there was much competition as within a five-mile radius around the GNC could be found Highgate, St Pancras and St Marylebone cemeteries with Hampstead about seven miles to the south of Colney Hatch. All except Highgate were burial board cemeteries financed by the local rate and interment fees and for the burial of residents of their area; non-residents could be interred but at higher charge. In contrast, private cemeteries did not discriminate according to residency. There were also a significant number of undertakers in the densely populated inner areas of north London. It was into this established trading environment that the GNCC had to penetrate by offering its funeral service and burial ground. Advertising was essential and it was to the many newspapers to which the company turned for promotion.

Newspaper Advertising

There were several local newspapers published in the potential catchment area around the company's station. Adverts for undertakers were grouped in one column and it was in this section where the GNCC's advertisements also appeared. Some of the cemeteries companies already advertised in newspapers; those for Highgate could be found in *The Era* (during the 1840s), *The Morning Chronicle* and *The Examiner*, while the Abney Park Cemetery Company consistently promoted its cemeteries in local newspapers. Very few advertisements were placed for the West of London (Brompton) Cemetery and none can be traced for Kensal Green Cemetery. From 16 November 1854, the London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company advertised its rail link to Brookwood Cemetery and also the cost of burial almost daily in *The Times*; this continued until December 1925. Private cemeteries that opened after 1861 continued to utilise this medium, such as Victoria Park (from 1862 until just before closure in 1876), East London (1872) and Manor Park (1874).

Many undertakers were already advertising their services by the time the cemetery opened, as these four titles published between 1855 and 1860 indicate:

5 June 1855 *Islington Gazette*

G Tubby 22 Offord Road

JW Baker 7 Cross Street

J Dix snr 3 Aylesbury Street Clerkenwell

W Hulton 4 Lower Terrace Islington

Louis Byfield 8 Queen's Terrace Lower Street Islington

25 September 1858 *The City Press*

T Grabham 14 John Street and 31 Little Britain

Economic Funerals 4 Lower Terrace Islington

The Finsbury Economic Funeral Office 10 Tabernacle Walk

St Luke's Funeral Carriage and Funeral Establishment 79 Judd Street

13 March 1858 *London City Press*

T Grabham 14 John Street and 31 Little Britain

J Townley 5 Dean Street Finsbury

Cattle & Sons 6 St John Street

The Finsbury Economic Funeral Office 10 Tabernacle Walk

Economic Funeral 4 Lower Terrace Islington

General Funeral Establishment (E Lenard) 76 St John Street Clerkenwell

29 December 1860 *North London News*
B Baxter 10 Union Place Lower Road Islington
Antill & Co 71 Euston Road
W Titford 12 Constitution Road, Gray's Inn Road
N Nodes corner of Liverpool Road Holloway
20 April 1860 *Holborn Journal*
Avis & Co 154 High Holborn
Henry Pierce 28 Rose and Crown Court Eldon Street Finsbury Circus

16 December 1860 *Shoreditch Observer*
J Dix 3 Aylesbury Street Clerkenwell
J Martin 78 High Street Hoxton
Mrs Townley 5 Dean Street Finsbury Square
J Dormer 4 Church Street Shoreditch
R Crafer's 32 Middlesex Place Hackney Road
P Bellamy 17 Gloucester Street

Following consecration of the cemetery in 1861, the GNCC's first newspaper advertisement appeared in *The Islington Gazette* on 27 July 1861:

'A train will run daily, at 11am, from the Company's station, in the York Road, King's Cross, direct to the cemetery, for the conveyance of funerals, mourners and attendants, for whom separate waiting rooms are provided, both at the London station and at the cemetery.'

It was also stated that a few remaining shares, tariff of charges, and free tickets to visit the cemetery...' were available from the company's office at 121 High Holborn. All private cemetery companies had a central London office where funerals could be booked by undertakers. The availability of a daily service indicated that the directors believed the demand would be sufficient.

The transportation of the coffin by rail to Colney Hatch would have been considered alien, but perhaps novel, to its prospective clientele. Whilst some may have been aware of the London Necropolis Railway service that had commenced in 1854, it's unlikely that many in the north London area would have opted for burial at Brookwood on account of the additional cost of travel. Furthermore, as St Pancras Cemetery had opened in the same year, local residents would have become familiar with the location which would only have been reached by horse drawn hearse.

A study of the GNCC and competitors' newspaper advertisements published between 1861 and 1867 indicates that both sought to attract custom through amending the wording and style to promote facilities, service and price.

Not to be undermined by the new competition, three days after the GNCC's first advertisement, The Economic Funeral Company of 28 New Bridge Street, Farringdon, (described as 'The only legitimate funeral company in London') stated their charges and that they would conduct funerals to the cemetery (*The Morning Chronicle* 13 July 1861 and *The Times* 24 August 1861).

Great Northern Cemetery,
COLNEY HATCH.

Ground Consecrated, 100 Acres—Unconsecrated, 50 Acres.
FUNERALS BY RAILWAY
In half the Usual Time and at less than half the ordinary cost.
Coffins may be deposited, FREE OF CHARGE, in the MORTUARY, at
THE COMPANY'S PRIVATE STATION, YORK ROAD, KING'S CROSS.

For Tariffs of Charges, and FREE RAILWAY TICKETS to visit the cemetery, apply at the Offices, No. 122, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.
Open for **FUNERALS BY ROAD**, at all hours of the day, without extra charge.

(Left) The GNCC's advert in the *Holborn Journal* (10 May 1862) noted:

FUNERALS BY RAILWAY: In half the usual time and at less than half the ordinary cost'.

The inference of the last phrase was that the cost was considerably less than that charged by undertakers using horse drawn transport to reach the cemetery.

Holborn Journal (10 May 1862)

The GNCC adverts appearing in the *North London News* (23 August 1862) (below) were followed by two from Titford & Co (stating that they were 'Agents for the Great Northern Cemetery, Colney Hatch') and one by Antill & Co. Titford stating their charge for:

'A Grown persons (sic) funeral (inclusive of all cemetery charges) at the Great Northern Cemetery, Colney Hatch, £2 10s'

This was the same amount for a funeral charged by the GNCC. It's therefore possible that as agents for the Company, Titford's charge was capped. Titford's second advertisement specified the cost of their four classes of funerals (£7 10s to £2 15s) along with those for children.

Responding to mention of GNCC's mortuary at their private station (where 'Coffins may be deposited free of charge...'), Antill & Co posed the question:

'What can lodgers do with a corpse in hot weather 'til the day of interment?'

And answered it by offering:

'...vaults for the reception of the above with extra charge....the first to fourth class funerals (£6 5s to £1 19s) ... From any part of London to any cemetery'.

Great Northern Cemetery,
COLNEY HATCH.
Ground Consecrated, 100 acres. Unconsecrated, 50 acres.
FUNERALS BY RAILWAY
In half the usual time, and at less than half the ordinary cost.
Coffins may be deposited, free of charge, in the Mortuary, at
the Company's Private Station, York-rd., King's-cross.
For Tariffs of Charges, and Free Railway Tickets to visit the Cemetery, apply at the Offices, 122, High Holborn, W.C.
Open for Funerals by Road, at all hours of the day, without extra charge.

A Grown Persons Funeral (inclusive of all cemetery charges) at the Great Northern Cemetery, Colney Hatch, £2 10s.
TITFORD & CO., 41, Judd-street.

Titford and Company, Undertakers,
AGENTS FOR THE GREAT NORTHERN CEMETERY, COLNEY HATCH.
41, JUDD STREET, and 13, Constitution-row, Gray's-inn-road: Carriage Department—45, Acton-street, Gray's-inn-road.
First-class Carriage Funeral, Hearse and Coach, (pairs) Feathers, Velvets, Mutes, Pages, Mourners, Dresses, best finished Coffin, attendance, and best pall, £7 10.
Second-class, with Hearse and Coach, (pairs) Mourners Dresses, Elm Coffin, (finished neatly) attendance and good pall, £4 15s.
Third-class, with Hearse and Coach with one horse (each) Mourners Dresses, Pall, Elm Coffin, finished neatly) and attendance, £3 10.
Fourth-class, Improved Carriage, Mourners Dresses, Pall, good Coffin and attendance, £2 15s.
Children's Funerals, 18s., 23s., and 30s.

What can Lodgers do with a Corpse in Hot Weather till the day of interment?
ANTILL & COMPANY., the cheapest and best Funeral Furnishers, 71, Euston Road, near Kings-cross, have Vaults for the reception of the above without extra charge—see our illustrated prospectus.
1st Class, complete..... £6 5s.
2nd ditto 3 10
3rd ditto 2 14
4th ditto 1 19
From any part of London to any Cemetery.
Grave, 12s. extra. Children's Funerals, with Mourning Coach, 17s. 6d.

The vaults would presumably have been a subterranean area below their premises at 71 Euston Road, very close to King's Cross station.

Towards the end of August, two GNCC advertisements were featured in the *London Daily News* on (26 August 1862). The first stated:

The company now undertakes funerals of all classes, by railway or road, at fixed charges which may be ascertained and covered by a single payment, at the offices, 122 High Holborn.

Whilst the second commenced:

Great Northern Cemetery. Sunday funerals by railway for the working classes. A funeral train will run from the Company's station in the York Road, King's Cross, every Sunday at 3pm, and return at 5pm.

The GNCC was not unique by accepting interments on the Sunday as the London Necropolis ran a regular seven-day train service to Brookwood. Nevertheless, the GNCC hoped to entice the 'working classes' by facilitating burial on the only day they would not be working. A two-hour timeframe provided fifteen minutes return journey time with 90 minutes for the service in the cemetery chapel followed by the committal in the grave.

The same advertisement also detailed the services provided and the cost:

Funeral complete including coffin and conveyance and body and two mourners, from the house to the station, mourners' dresses and all railway cemetery charges.

£2 5s 0d

Railway conveyance of coffin, if brought to the Company's railway station, and all cemetery charges

£0 17s 0d

The GNCC's advert in the *Islington Gazette* (30 August 1862) and other newspapers not only noted the provision of free mortuary accommodation, but also the availability of hand biers which were provided for a small charge '...for the conveyance of coffins to the London station by the friends of the deceased, to save the cost of a hearse carriage.' The hire of a hand bier to move the coffin to the Maiden Lane mortuary was an incentive to by-pass undertakers who did not provide mortuary accommodation and only used horse-drawn hearses for the journey to the cemetery.

Although the GNCC's advertising was largely aimed at north London clientele, occasional mention can be found in other newspapers such as *The Ipswich Journal* (22 November 1862) highlighting the Sunday train along with costs and the fare for other mourners: '1s 6d for every additional living subject.'

ROAD, at Fixed Charges, which may be ascertained and covered by a single payment at the OFFICES: 122 HIGH HOLBORN.	
Great Northern Cemetery.—	
SUNDAY FUNERALS BY RAILWAY,	
FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.	
A FUNERAL TRAIN will run from the Company's Station in the York-road, King's Cross, every SUNDAY, at 3 p.m., and return at 5 p.m.	
Cemetery Charges, including Conveyance of Body from the Company's Station to the Cemetery	£0 17 0
FUNERAL COMPLETE, comprising the above, as well as supply of Coffin, use of Two Cloaks, & Conveyance of the Body & Two Mourners from the House of the Deceased	£2 5 0
Additional Mourners' Return Tickets, 1s. 6d. each.	
A Mortuary	
Is provided at the Station, in which the dead may be deposited, and remain until the Day of Burial FREE OF CHARGE.	
Hand-biers	
Are provided by the Company at a small charge for the Conveyance of Coffins to the London Station by the Friends of the deceased, to save the cost of a Hearse Carriage.	
For Further Particulars, and FREE RAILWAY TICKETS to view the Cemetery, apply at the Company's Offices,	
122, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.	
ADVERTISEMENT SCALE.	

Holborn Journal (30 August 1862)

GREAT NORTHERN CEMETERY,
COLNEY HATCH.
150 ACRES.

Common Interment, including use of
CHAPEL and all Cemetery Charges ... 11s. 0d.
Conveyance of Coffin by Railway ... 6s. 0d.
Mourners' Return Tickets, 1s. 6d. each.
NO EXTRA CHARGE ON SUNDAYS.

GREAT NORTHERN CEMETERY.
Private Railway Station, York Road,
KING'S CROSS.
Mortuary for Deposit of Bodies FREE OF CHARGE.

GREAT NORTHERN CEMETERY.
Special Funeral Train every Sunday
at 3 p.m., for the convenience of the Working
Classes.

Entire expense of Working Man's Funeral,
including Coffin, FUNERAL CARRIAGE
from the House, Fittings for 2 Mourners,
Pall, Undertaker's attendance, GRAVE, USE
OF CHAPEL, and all Cemetery Charges ... } £ s. d.
2 5 0

**Great Northern Cemetery and Funeral
Company.**
The Company undertake Funerals of
all classes, by Railway or Road, at fixed charges.
Great expense saved by the employment of this Com-
pany for the entire Funeral.
Lists of prices and FREE RAILWAY TICKETS to
view the Cemetery, may be had at the
OFFICES—122, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.

Colney Hatch, and thereby secure the recommendation of undertakers who wanted to transport the deceased and their client by road. Significant from this date (August 1863) is that there is no mention of the Sunday 3pm train.

Although the GNCC never used illustrations in their advertisements, this was adopted in the *Holborn Journal* by Antill & Co on 19 September 1863 (right). Depicted was their premises on the corner of Judd Street with copy detailing the charge for four classes of funeral and that 'In Antill's patent carriage, the mourners follow the coffin, instead of sitting over it.' Mention is also made of their vaults for storage coffins in the summer months. The GNCC's detailed advert appeared above this illustration in various newspapers. Throughout the three years since the opening of the cemetery, advertisements also regularly appeared in the weekly editions of the *John Bull*.

In January 1864 the advertising by competitors intensified. In the *North London News* large box adverts were placed by Crofton, Nodes and the GNCC, in addition to

In December 1862, the GNCC's carried out an extensive advertising campaign. Four consecutively placed box adverts appeared in the *London Evening Standard*, *Islington Gazette*, *Shoreditch Observer*, *Marylebone Mercury*, *North London News* and *Holborn Journal*. (example, left, from *Holborn Journal* 20 December 1862) One competitor, Antill & Co, responded in the *Marylebone Mercury*, by headed their advertisement, which appeared above those for the GNCC, with 'Sunday funerals for the working classes', a line frequently utilised by the latter.

During 1863 many GNCC newspapers adverts included the phrase 'road or rail' thus welcoming funerals at the cemetery arriving from either the Company's station or by horse drawn transport. This would appeal to prospective clients who wanted to use the cemetery, such as those living locally to

THE GREAT NORTHERN CEMETERY COMPANY.

GREAT NORTHERN CEMETERY, GREAT NORTHERN CEMETERY
COLNEY HATCH. AND FUNERAL COMPANY.

Seven Miles from London by Railway
OR ROAD.

Ground Consecrated 150 Acres.—Unconsecrated 50 Acres.

Catacombs £8 8s. 0d.
Gravel for Bed of Vault for Six Coffins £7 2s. 0d.
Ditto £10 10s. 0d.
Ditto £10 10s. 0d.
Private Graves (no charge for
Gravel) £2 5s. 0d.
Common Graves (including Book service) £3 11s. 0d.

NO EXTRA CHARGE ON SUNDAYS.
OFFICES—122, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.

THE Company undertake Funerals
of all Classes, by RAILWAY OR ROAD, at Fixed
Charges.

WORKING MAN'S FUNERAL Complete, £1 10s. 0d.
Other Funerals from £1 15s. to £38 10s. and upwards.

MORTUARY at the Company's PRIVATE RAILWAY
STATION, YORK ROAD, KING'S CROSS, for deposit of
bodies FREE OF CHARGE.

Books of Prices and further particulars may be had of
any of the Company's Agents, and at the
Offices: 122, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.

FUNERAL REFORM.—ANTILL AND Co. ARE THE CHEAPEST.

And BEST FUNERAL
FURNISHERS, 71, Eas-
ton Road, corner of Judd-
street. The unequalled pas-
senger received the last
fourteen years shows the
most satisfaction given.
The Charges include
every expense, from any
part of London, to any
Cemetery—
First Class £ 6 5 0
Second Class £ 3 10 0
Third Class £ 2 14 0
Fourth Class £ 1 10 0
Separate Graves, £ 11 0
Child's Funeral, 9 10 0

N.B.—In Antill's Pa-
tent Carriage, the Mourn-
ers follow the coffin, in-
stead of sitting over it.
During the summer
months we have vaults
for the reception of de-
ceased persons till the
day of interment, which
may be used without ex-
tra charge. See illustra-
ted Prospectus.

CROFTON,
FUNERAL ECONOMIST,
COMBINED WITH RESPECTABILITY.
79, JUDD STREET, BRUNSWICK SQUARE, & 139, CALEDONIAN ROAD, ISLINGTON.



SCALE OF CHARGES —

Shell, London Coffin, Winding Sheet, Outside Case handsomely dressed, Silk Pall, Mutes, Horses and Pair, Coach and Pair, Feathers, Velvets, Hammocks, best Straps for Mourners, Fittings for Mourners and Undertaker	£18 5s.
Coffin, Outside Case, handsomely dressed, Winding Sheet, Silk Pall, Mutes, Horses and Pair, Coach and Pair, Feathers, Velvets, Hammocks, Tapes with Straps, best fittings for Mourners, and Undertaker	£21 12s.
Hammocks, Coffin, Folding Sheet, Velvet Pall, Mutes, Horses and Pair, Coach and Pair, Feathers, Velvets, Hammocks, Benches, Fittings for Mourners and Undertaker	£7 10s.
Neat Coffin, Folding Sheet, Velvet Pall, Mutes, Horses and Pair, Coach and Pair, Benches, Velvets, Hammocks, Fittings for Mourners, and Undertaker	£6 0s.
Neat Coffin, Folding Sheet, Velvet Pall Horses and Pair, Coach and Pair, Benches, Fittings for Mourners, and Undertaker	£4 10s.
Neat Coffin, Folding Sheet, Velvet Pall, Benches, Improved Carriage, with Pair of Horses, to convey Body and Mourners in distinct compartments, and Undertaker	£3 5s.
Plain Coffin, Velvet Pall, Benches, Improved Carriage, with Pair of Horses, Fittings for Mourners and Undertaker	£2 10s.
Child's Funeral, with Mourning Coach, complete	£1 5s.

one focussing on the interment of stillbirths. The copy stated:

Frequent complaints having been made of the disgraceful mode of interment of still-born infants, Antill & Co will undertake the funeral complete including coffin, grave and conveyance of the father to the cemetery, to see the contract properly fulfilled, for 6s. *Holborn Journal* (19 September 1863)

Although there was no formal requirement for burial in a cemetery or churchyard (and until 1926 no registration system), stillborn children were frequently handed-in to undertakers for discreetly placing inside the coffin of an unknown adult. Following the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1874, a certificate had to be produced prior to burial (Parsons, 2017a). For Antill & Co to specifically advertise this service was unique among undertakers and provided differentiation among the other firms in the classified column.

Through 1864 the GNCC continued its regular and consistent advertising in the *Shoreditch Observer*, *Islington Gazette*, *North London News* and *Holborn Journal*. Adverts also continued in *The Times* where mentioned was made of the 'Mortuary in the Company's private railway station.' (2 July 1864). Later in the year the advert was for the 'Great Northern Cemetery and Funeral Company' (*The Times* 2 Sept 1864). In November, however, the advertisement offered a discount on the cost of graves from £15 15s which was 'usually charged' to £8 8s, the ground for a brick vault for six coffins was reduced to £7 7s from £15 15s, while a private grave from £4 4s to £2 15s. (24 November 1864). By 1 Feb 1865 the discounted fees had been stopped but they reappeared in March and were still being offered on 21 December 1865. The charges 'at half the usual price' remained until November 1870. Advertisement in *The Times* ceased during 1871 but recommenced the following year, but for only two months. An advertisement appeared on 21 May 1874 with the entry containing the line: 'Catacombs, grave plots, etc at half the usual cost. Funeral charge lower than at any other establishments'.

A change of approach came in April 1865 when the advert in the *London Evening Standard* (25 April 1865) was designed to appeal to a different potential client:

To managers of hospitals, asylums, home refuges, etc...the company will remove the bodies, take charge of them until burial, provide every requisite for the funeral, grave, use of chapel, adult £2 12s 6s and £2s (under ten).

Presumably the company hoped to obtain contracts for burials with hospitals and similar institutions, which would provide a regular and secure source of income. As will be detailed below, the company had contacted many guardians of the poor for this purpose.

By May 1865, the GNCC's advert in *The City Press* (6 May 1865) contained the line: 'Mortuary at the company's private railway station', but there was no mention of the actual rail service to the cemetery. The following year advertisement continued also including those in a new newspaper the *Holborn and Bloomsbury Journal* (23 June 1866), which contained illustrated advertisement for Crofton undertakers along with a new Holborn firm, TJ Hooper 'The Central Funeral Establishment' based at 12 Red Lion Passage offering a 'Further reduction in the price of funerals'.

During 1867 the GNCC continued to advertise a 'Working Man's Funeral' for £ 2 10s and that there was a 'Mortuary at the Company's private railway station'. But again, there was no mention of train times and adverts appeared to be ambiguous on the mode of conveyance. For example, in January 1874, the reoccurring phrase 'Seven miles from London by railway or road' appeared but whose 'railway', or more specifically whether the train went from the Cemetery station or King's Cross terminus, is unclear. The advert also includes a long list of cemetery charges.

In December 1874 it can be assumed that the station at the cemetery was not in use as an advert contain the phrase 'Near Southgate station...'. What was not disclosed was that the mourners would have to walk at least 15/20 minutes to reach the cemetery gates from New Southgate and Colney Hatch, as the station was then known (*Islington Gazette* 18 December 1874). By February 1878, the *Shoreditch Observer* (23 February 1874) provided clarity – 'Near the Southgate Station of the GNR' which confirms that no trains went to the cemetery station. By this time GNCC's London office had also relocated to 10 Vernon Place Bloomsbury.

The GNCC final advertisement in *The Times* was in March 1878 which stated: 'Undertakers are respectfully informed that by the opening of the New Bridge over Pym's Brook, access to the cemetery is now perfectly easy.' (29 March 1878). The Brook is on the east side of the cemetery. Although all national and local advertising had ceased by 1879, in 1880 *The Times* stated: 'The directors, following the good example of the Bishops and liberal clergy, now permit nonconformist ministers to officiate with their own services in the consecrated Ground and Church, and the bell is always tolled.' (8 November 1880)

Accounts of funerals and visits to the cemetery

Whilst advertorial space in the newspaper was purchased by the GNCC, publicity was also secured in respect of mentions of the cemetery contained in accounts of funerals and also visits. When on 1 November 1861 the directors and shareholders travelled to the cemetery by train from 'York Road Station' to inspect arrangements, HR Beale, the chairman commented about: '...rendering the cemetery as a place of sepulchre as attractive as possible. It was well drained and tastefully laid out, and, besides, was situated in a most delightful part of the country. It was within an easy distance from town, and no probability of it being "built in" for many years to come.' (*Bell's Weekly Messenger* 2 November 1861). Newspapers also published accounts of funerals taking place in the cemetery. Whilst such descriptions were a general feature of print media of the period, the tone and vocabulary adopted in respect of the GNCC and the cemetery indicated these to be unashamed publicity to the extent that they could have been scripted by the company or a publicity agent.

The first was in December 1861 for the funeral of James Roe, corresponding secretary of the North London District of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Odd Fellows. It was reported that 800 people assembled at the GNCC's station to board a 24-carriage special train to which the carriage containing Mr Roe's coffin was attached. A further 1,200 were present at the cemetery where a service was conducted in the chapel before the committal at the graveside. A special train then returned mourners to King's Cross. (*Bedfordshire Times and Independent* 3 December 1861). The account published in *The Clerkenwell News* (4 December 1861) was remarkably eloquent in its description:

The mourners and a few friends assembled at the Cemetery Company's private station in the York Road, which is under the superintendence of Mr James Farraro....The building, a very beautiful structure, is excellently fitted up for the purpose for which it is designed. Coffins brought to the station are placed on a hydraulic "lift", by which they are lowered into the mortuary, an apartment assigned for the reception of bodies when families have no convenience....The feelings and position of relations and mourners are in every way studied by private rooms with every convenience being costlessly placed at the disposal of all on this necessary but melancholy journey.

A fulsome description of the burial was followed by the transport arrangements:

The assembled crowd, after lingering until nightfall over the grounds, took their departure for London by the special train, and arrived at the terminus in about fifteen

minutes. Thanks to the care and attention bestowed by Mr Bradley, the superintendent of the London station of the Great Northern, the very large number of persons were carried to and fro without the least inconvenience being experienced.

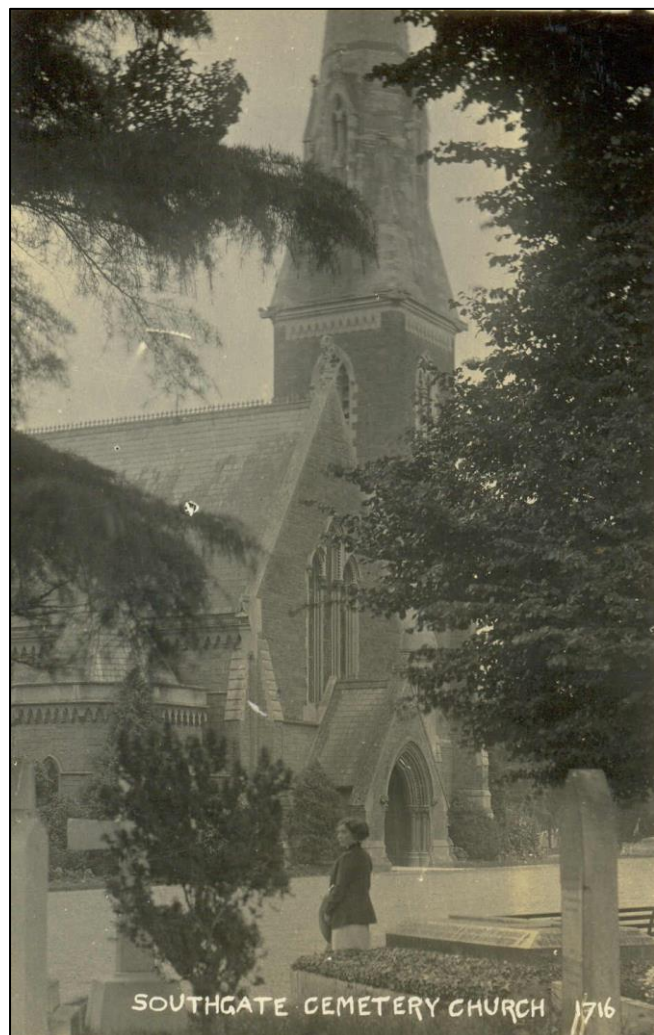


Issued as a publicity postcard by the GNCC in the early part of the twentieth century, this image shows a lavishly planted verge beside a road in the cemetery and well-developed trees.

On 8 March 1862 details of the funeral of Richard Chaplain, for 32 years a drayman with Reid & Co's brewery, were published in *The North London News*, again with use of descriptive phrases ('...every demonstration of respect' and '...greatest satisfaction was expressed of the Company's arrangements') whilst also specifically mentioning Messrs Ferraro and Spurr at the cemetery. *The Holborn Journal* gave the time of the special train as departing the cemetery at 5.15pm. Then at the funeral of Alfred Brice, a 26-year old signalman based at Holloway Station, the press coverage revealed that the eleven-carriage special train was provided by the cemetery company free of charge, after which was commented: 'And slowly, solemnly, and almost silently, the train glided out of the station - and steamed through the picturesque scenery that distinguishes the Great Northern from all other metropolitan cemeteries.' The article showered praise on the named cemetery staff involved before concluding that the deceased '...could not have been conveyed to his last home with greater decorum and respect, or have found a more delightful resting place than in the grounds of the Great Northern Cemetery.' (*North London News* 22 March 1862)

In June 1862 it was reported that members of the 'N' division of the Metropolitan Police travelled from Holloway Station to the cemetery '...with a view to judging its appropriateness as a place of sepulture for the members of the division.' (*North London News* 28 June 1862) A further effusive account described the funeral of James Fisher, a 42-year-old station-inspector at King's Cross who died suddenly. The body was removed to the mortuary at Maiden Lane on Tuesday 19 August whilst on the following Sunday the coffin was placed in a carriage at 2.30pm with the train departing half an hour later. 'It would be unnecessary or superfluous to give a detailed account of the beauty of the cemetery - it being well-known as the most available, and certainly not to be excelled, as a place of sepulchre, in or near London.' Of the interment of the body it was said that '...it is hoped they will remain undisturbed until the day of resurrection.' As before, mention of the dry soil and dignified arrangements then follow including the order of the procession was: the coffin, preceded by

the mutes, carried by four of the company's servants and six pall bearers, then the family friends and colleagues numbering about 400 along with 300 other mourners. Again, the name of the cemetery company's employee who was responsible for the arrangement was stated. After the burial the mourners went by carriage to the cemetery station and partook in refreshments before returning to King's Cross. The trains were provided free of charge by the railway company. (*North London News* 30 August 1862)



The funeral of Lady Westbury in March 1863 received coverage in many newspapers. The arrangements were managed by the Marylebone undertaker to London society, William Garstin & Sons. 'She was deposited in a brick vault expressly constructed by the company....The funeral, which was rather of a private character, consisted of a hearse drawn by four horses...'. (Her Husband, Richard Bethell, Lord Westbury was buried in the vault in 1873 (*The Graphic* 2 August 1873 and *The Times* 25 July 1873)). In June 1863 the exhumation of Charles Jones from the GNC, which took place under warrant from the Coroner, attracted national press attention. (For example, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 21 June 1863).

Perhaps due to the absence of accounts of funerals and as an alternative to classified advertising, the *North London News* (6 February 1864) managed to secure blatant publicity, which commenced: 'The attractiveness of the retired and peaceful spot for the burial of our dead is every day confirming more and more and impressions of its desirableness for such a purpose.' After mentioning the closure of urban churchyards, the full force was unleashed: 'Without prejudice to the recommendation of

older cemeteries, there is none which offers greater convenience, or really presents a more calm and reverential picture of a country church-yard surrounded by the beautiful scenery of country life, than does the Great Northern Cemetery, and as evidence of its appreciation, the number of interments during the past year has been five-fold that of the preceding.' After an absence of eighteen months, the *Morning Advertiser* published details of the funeral of Edward Sherman, a stage coach proprietor, concluding: 'The...body can be carried by rail to the Great Northern Cemetery in as many minutes as it took days (when he was young) for the coaches starting from the old "Bull and Mouth" to reach Edinburgh'. (*Morning Advertiser* 24 September 1866)

Publicity through correspondence

In addition to advertising and accounts of funerals, the GNCC availed themselves of the correspondence columns to engage with readers. But utilising a facility to raise and debate issues resulted in editors taking a balanced approach by printing responses, as indicated by the first letter of this type published in both *The Standard* and *Islington Gazette* (12 & 13 September 1862). Referring to the company's advertisement published a few days earlier in the *Gazette* that highlighted the cemetery accepting burials on a Sunday, Thomas Riddell

(MA Oxon) notes that it was ‘...for the benefit of the working classes, a step for which they will feel grateful’. He also commented on the funeral processions making their way to Ilford, Tower Hamlets, Victoria Park and Kensall (sic) Green cemeteries and that ‘By withdrawing funerals from the public roads and resorting to a railway as a means of conveyance, a great improvement will be effected....a vast boon will be conferred on the public’. The second paragraph could well have been lifted from promotional material: ‘The Great Northern Cemetery profess not only to conduct their business with the utmost decent and decorum, but also with a great saving of money.’ Burial charges were then stated before details were given of the funeral of a Great Northern Railway official attended by Mr Riddell at ‘...which the strictest Sabbatarian could have found nothing to object to.’

Two follow-up letters appeared in the *Islington Gazette* (20 September 1862). The first not only considered the term ‘working class’ which TM Jones, believed to include ‘...Lord Palmerston to the humblest worker...’ but questioned whether the cemetery should be open over seven days, so that:

...staff of undertakers, chaplains and gravediggers, may remain at home, and enjoy a “Sabbath rest” in the bosoms of their family.

The second, written under the pseudonym ‘Candour’, concluded by revealing that ‘...Mr Riddell, although no minister of religion, is the person appointed to read the burial services in the Nonconformist portion of the cemetery.’ This would explain the tone of the letter ‘...when he cried up the superlative value of his own wares.’ Tellingly, ‘Candour’ also commented that coffins being transported by train is:

‘...not only an un-English custom, but one that is contrary to the feelings of Englishmen, who object to their dead being conveyed, like cattle, per rail, and who naturally prefer decency and solemnity, when the heart is bleeding for a lost dear one, to the bustle, confusion and publicity of a railway carriage.’

Under the heading ‘Burial Charges and the Poor’, a letter endorsing the cemetery penned by John Robert Taylor of Holborn appeared in the *Holborn Journal* (6 May 1865), before being reprinted in the *Islington Gazette* (26 May 1865):

Having personally inspected the cemetery, I can speak highly of its advantages. It comprises 150 acres of ground, in the midst of picturesque country....the ground itself possess great natural beauty....and is admirably layed out and adapted for its solemn purpose...it commands itself on the score of economy, the cost of ground and interments not being more than one-half the price usually charged in other cemeteries....Then, again, are the great advantages afforded by the double-means of the conveyance by rail....There is also a mortuary at the King’s Cross station...I have thus endeavoured to set forth a few of the prominent features of the Company, and can only add that I should like to accompany you to the cemetery with about half a dozen other friends....and then you and they would perhaps be better able to judge of the great boon the Great Northern Cemetery offer to all classes.

After offering a guided tour of the cemetery, the author utilised a comment by the local coroner to highlight the Company’s Maiden Lane mortuary. This gained exposure through the *Morning Advertiser*, *Islington Gazette* and *Morning Post* (1 June 1865), in addition to the *Holborn Journal* (3 June):

Dr Lankester, Coroner for central Middlesex...suggests....it would be most desirable to erect dead-houses in every parish...I am glad that the worthy Coroner’s attention

had been drawn to this sanitary precaution....The directors of the Great Northern Cemetery Company, erected, under the direction of the Home Secretary's inspector, a large and handsome mortuary at their private railway station....No charge is made by the company....The mortuary is open every day, and may be seen upon personal application at the company's office....

This poses the question: was John Robert Taylor connected with the GNCC? Taylor was a Holborn-based law stationer who was involved in many social causes including the Universal League for the Welfare of the Industrial Classes (*Evening Standard* 14 January 1864), honorary secretary of the Franco-Polish Central Committee of France, honorary secretary of the Society of the Aged and Sick Poor, while being involved in Anti-liquor Traffic Movement, President of the East Central Temperance Association, and the author of pamphlets. It is not known if Taylor was a GNCC director as a list has not been located. It is quite possible that his letter was an altruistic attempt to secure dignified funeral arrangements for the working classes. [Taylor died in 1897 and was buried in Highgate Cemetery. (*Islington Gazette* 4 January 1887)]

Equally effusive was 'A Visit to the Great Northern Cemetery, Colney Hatch' (*The Holborn and Bloomsbury Journal* 29 June 1867), extracts of which could well have been reproduced from the company's own publicity:

Last week we paid a visit to this very interesting and beautiful place of interment, which is situated a few minutes walk from the Colney Hatch station of the Great Northern Railway....The cemetery is divided into consecrated and unconsecrated ground....A very handsome bier is provided, on which the coffin is placed and taken from the chapel or church to the place of burial, and an omnibus is also kept in case of wet weather...The grounds are beautifully laid out, the buildings being covered with climbing rose trees, now in full bloom, and the flower beds are stocked with a choice selection of standard rose trees, pansies, rhododendrons, etc. The church...is a magnificent structure...It cost some £4,500, and has a fine oak roof, and an elegant spire; underneath and around are the catacombs....Among the "resting places" near London, there is none so moderate in the charge or so easily available to the mourners by a short journey by rail, as the one at Colney Hatch; indeed in that particular, though situated a mile or two further in the country, it is more accessible than Highgate, Finchley or Nunhead cemetery.

Noticeable is the absence of any mention of the private railway station either at King's Cross or the cemetery.

The following month 'An Excursion with the Sightless' (*Holborn Journal* 27 July 1867) gave the author the opportunity to infuse the text with superlatives when 160 children from the Blind Class at the Middlesex Street school in Somers Town travelled to the cemetery:

The sky above was cloudless, the sun was pouring his radiance like a Niagara of light upon the hillside...As the party went through the cemetery the guides read several of the epitaphs...the sightless adjourned to the chapel...and sang several hymns most beautifully....Leaving the cemetery, the sightless went to the Railway Hotel, where those who were blessed with eyesight described, as best they could, the "sunny spots of greenery" through which they had passed....

They returned to King's Cross station at 9.30pm.

A correspondent who visited the cemetery whilst walking through the area contributed 'Tours Around London: XII Southgate' to the *London City Press* (8 May 1869). He/she could have sourced this material from the official guide:

Let us on to Southgate...and the Great Northern Cemetery....As we have time we will visit the latter place....The grounds are well worth seeing...possessing all the requisite advantages of natural beauty, suitable soil, and ready access from town by road or rail....A private station has been erected...if it is deemed desirable found necessary to avoid the usual display of the funeral cortege through the streets....A mortuary is established at the London station....For this innovation on a bad custom I hold the Great Northern Cemetery Company deserves to be honoured.... The park-like grounds will please the visitor much.

This series was reproduced in verbatim in the *Islington Gazette* (28 May 1869) and also the *Holborn Journal* (5 June 1869).

In January 1874, the Cremation Society of England was founded by Sir Henry Thompson and its first task was to provide cremation facilities. Contact was made with the directors of the Abney Park Cemetery Company to open a crematorium in their cemetery at Stoke Newington, but this was declined (Parsons 2020b). Although it is unclear whether the Society or the directors of the GNCC made the approach, the company offered accommodation in the consecrated part of the cemetery to construct a cremator (Parsons, 2005: 45-46). In August 1876 the bishop of Rochester, however, claimed that he did ‘...not have the power to consent to the introduction of such a mode of disposing of the bodies of the dead...’ and the scheme did not proceed further. This did, however, result in nationwide publicity.

After the late 1860s the occasional mention of the cemetery appeared in newspapers, such as the funeral of the master of Clerkenwell Workhouse, Albert Thompson (*Islington Gazette* 3 August 1869). At the time of the Druce exhumation at Highgate and the subsequent trial concerning the Duke of Portland, it was revealed that his Will that he wished to be buried at GNC if he died in London (*Dover Express* 20 August 1898). It was also reported that following the removal of human remains from City burial grounds between Blackfriars Bridge and Mansion House they would be reburied at GNC at charge of £950. (*Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* 26 Dec 1868)

Contracts for pauper funerals

A source of revenue for the company was the burial of the those under the care of the local Board of Guardians (BoG). Newspapers regularly reported on the meetings of the Boards, but the outcome of their deliberations it is not always clear.

The GNCC’s first approach was to the Holborn Union BoG when it proposed setting aside a section as a ‘parochial cemetery’ and offering to undertake an adult funeral for 17s 6d. (*Holborn Journal* 22 February 1862). This was not accepted, but discussion of the subject reoccurred during the year. (*Clerkenwell News* 13 June 1862, 5 July 1862, 1 August 1862). Contact was maintained with the Holborn BOG along with the Shoreditch and Kensington BOG with the company offering to convey bodies of paupers to the cemetery at a charge of 12s 6d (adult) and 9s 6d (child) including incumbent’s fee. (*West Middlesex Advertiser and Family Journal* 18 June 1864). In March 1865, the Shoreditch BOG discussed whether to continue to bury the 80 to 90 paupers each quarter at the City of London Cemetery at Ilford or move to the GNC, a move that would save about £80 per annum. All coffins would be transported from the GNCC’s London station.

In September 1874 complaints were made to the company about the way pauper funerals were carried out such as the use of improper vehicles for conveyance of coffins from workhouse, and the time arranged for the funeral not adhered to. (*Shoreditch Observer* 17 September 1864). In some cases, only the contract for burial was awarded to the company with transport to the cemetery provided by an undertaker; in July 1866 St Luke’s BOG

awarded a three-year contract for burials to the GNCC whilst a local undertaker, Mr Seward, provided the conveyance by road.

The GNCC attempted to secure other contracts through advertising:

Interment of Paupers. The company contracts with parishes for the interment of paupers, 9s 6d and 6s 6d under ten years plus fee to incumbent. Conveyance the bodies from the workhouse to cemetery for 3s each and will supply coffins, if required. (*East London Observer* 1 April 1865)

During the cholera outbreak in the east End of London in June 1866, the Bethnal Green BOG investigated a complaint from a Mrs Cochrane of Hackney against an undertaker, Mr Bellamy of Margaret Street in Haggerston who was contracted by the Board to bury her two children in the GNC. Together with her husband and four relatives, they travelled in a Shillibeer (combined hearse and mourning carriage) with seven coffins in an underneath compartment, two positioned with the driver and others in a following cart. With the exception of one dying from fever, all were cholera victims. Mrs Cochrane stated that ‘Matter oozed from one of the coffins. The stench was fearful...’. At the cemetery no chaplain took the burial service whilst the coffins were simply placed on the ground and covered over with soil; they were not actually buried. The undertaker responded that ‘The cholera was about then and it “was very close quarters’, before adding that he took 22 coffins to the cemetery that day. (*London Evening Standard* 15 October 1866). All these stories kept the name of the cemetery before the newspaper’s readership.

Assessing the number of available funerals and potential income

As the introduction indicated, the success of the company relied on the cemetery being selected as the place of interment along with utilising its funeral service in what was already a competitive trading environment. Understandably, the company was anxious for a return on its investment. Through advertising in the newspapers covering the areas to the south and east of the company’s King’s Cross station such as Islington, Shoreditch and Holborn, it was hoped to attract the attention of families experiencing death to not select the cemetery but also use the company’s undertaking and rail service.

The need for cemeteries and undertakers is generated by the number of deaths in an area. Table 1 indicates the number of deaths and population in the areas the company selected for newspaper promotion.

Table 1 Mortality and population, selected areas (1860)

Area	Population	Deaths	Notes
St Mary Islington	155,291	2,845	1,382 deaths under 5 years. There had been a growth in the population since 1850 of 59,962
St Pancras	198,882	4,234	1,745 deaths under 5 years (41 per cent). The MHO noted that the mortality was higher in St Pancras than St Marylebone, Hampstead and Islington, Kensington, Westminster and St George’s Hanover Square.
Bethnal Green	105,101 (1861)	2,184	
City of London	129,922	2,747	608 deaths under 5 years
Clerkenwell (The vestry of St James & St John)	Approx 65,681	1,383	624 under 5 years

(Source: <https://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/> (Accessed 11 April 2020))

The areas of Islington, St Pancras and the City of London already had their own cemeteries (the first two at East Finchley whilst the City of London being near Ilford) and it follows that these would have been used for the burial of residents. For those dying in Bethnal Green it is likely that burial would have taken place at the two local privately-owned cemeteries: City of London and Tower Hamlets at Bow and the Victoria Park Cemetery. Neither Clerkenwell and Holborn (for which no mortality figures are available) possessed a cemetery but it can be assumed that some burials would have taken place at St Pancras, the City of London or Victoria Park cemeteries. All the aforementioned cemeteries had been established over ten years by the time the GNC opened and therefore would have been known to those living in the areas. It was this prospective clientele, however, that the GNCC was attempting to attract and influence through advertising.

Two issues need to be considered which had an impact on cemetery revenue. First, the vast majority of those who died were the poor and/or 'working class' who would have been buried in an unpurchased/common public grave. Adverts in the *Holborn Journal* (19 September 1863) details that the company charged 11 shillings for 'Common interment including desk service'. This amount compares with 19s 2d charged at Victoria Park Cemetery (*East London Observer* 4 January 1862). The charge by other private cemeteries cannot be sourced.

It is likely that a significant proportion of burials in the cemetery were in common graves, although numbers cannot be ascertained. In 1899, Dr CWF Young, Assistant Medical Officer of Health for the London County Council, published his report concerning burial in London in which he stated that for each burial in a private grave, there were 4½ in common graves (Young, 1899: 1). Although over thirty-five years on from 1862, there is no reason to assume the less than three quarters of burials were in common graves. As table 2 indicates, the report also reveals that 77 per cent of burials in the Great Northern Cemetery were in public graves in 1897). The high proportion of common burials in contrast to the more profitable purchased private graves would have impacted on revenue and therefore profitability.

Table 2: Burials at selected north London cemeteries in 1897

Cemetery (and ownership)	New private graves	Public/common interments	Total
Highgate (P)	1,254	414	1,668
Kensal Green (P)	1,089	960	2,049
Nunhead (P)	931	4,403	5,334
Brompton (Gvt)	738	None	738
St Pancras (BB)	300	5,272	5,572
Islington (BB)	336	3,906	4,242
St Marylebone (BB)	186	1,666	1,852
Hampstead (BB)			821
Great Northern (P)	300	685 & 324	1,309

(P = privately owned; Gvt = state controlled; BB = Burial Board)

(Source: Young CWF (1899) *Sanitary Condition of Cemeteries and Burial Grounds* London County Council)

From examining the data presented by Dawes (table 3), the total number of burials between 1861 and 1871 was 22,711. If three quarters of the total number of burials between 1861 and 1871 (22,711) were in common graves, then this amounted to 17,033 interments at 11 shillings.

Table 3 Burials in the Great Northern Cemetery 1861-1871

Year	Number of burials in consecrated land	Number of burials in Unconsecrated land	Total of all burials
1861-2	164	40	204
1862-3	787	28	815
1863-4	1,783	45	1,828
1864-5	2,073	10	2,083
1865-6	2,172	13	2,185
1866-7	3,053	16	3,069
1867-8	2,673	19	2,692
1868-9	2,759	16	2,775
1869-70	2,699	25	2,724
1870-1	4,304	32	4,336

(Source: Dawes, 2003: 91)

Secondly, into the overall number of interments must be factored those of children. As the figures from Medical Officer of Health Reports for Islington, St Pancras and Clerkenwell reveal, the proportion of those dying under 5 years was between 40 and 48 per cent of the total. Cemeteries charged a fee significantly less than that of an adult, thus further reducing the potential income.

It was for these two reasons that the GNCC sought to attract clients to their combination of an undertaking services and a cemetery in an attempt to yield a return on their significant investment. Further research is required to assess the proportions of burials in common/public graves and also that of children.

Postscript: Cemetery and Crematoria Advertising

Although the GNCC ceased to advertise in newspapers by the end of 1879, as already other mentioned, cemetery companies continued to use this media to reminder potential clients of their custom. In 1876, the Crystal Palace District Cemetery advertised:

The cemetery is now opened for burials, part of it being consecrated. Children's Interments 25s, Adults 38s.
(*Croydon Advertiser and East Surrey Reporter* 29 April 1876)

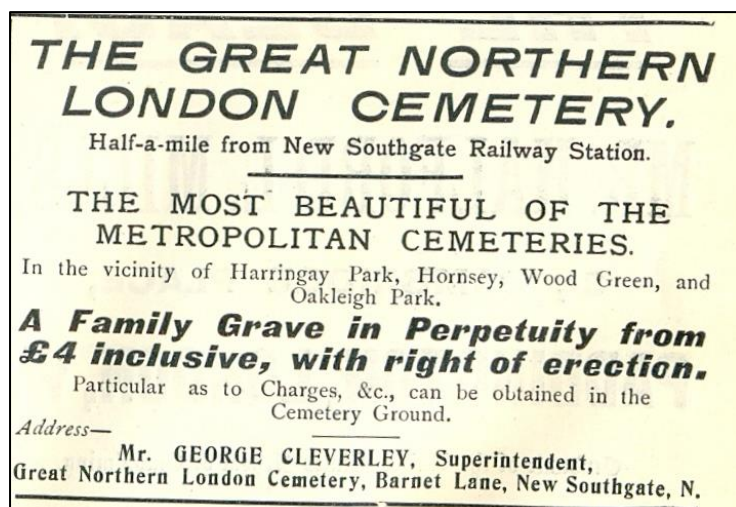
This Company continued advertising into the 1930s, for example an illustrated full-page advert in the 1937 Croydon street directory. Throughout 1917, the East London Cemetery posed a question in their classified advert while helpfully offering a solution:

Why be Buried Amongst Strangers when you can buy a private family grave for £5
(*East London Observer* 25 August 1917)

Different wording with costs appeared in 1918. The Abney Park Cemetery Company advertised regularly in newspaper covering north east London and from 1907 in the Middlesex area after its acquired Greenford Park Cemetery. As already highlighted, the London Necropolis Company advertised in *The Times* until 1925. The American-style Greenlawn Memorial Park at Warlingham in Surrey advertised in *The Times* and *The Undertakers Journal*.

As newspaper advertising was clearly regarded as a successful way of promoting cemeteries, it was also adopted for cremation. Woking Crematorium advertised its availability in 1885, as did Golders Green. In an attempt to encourage funeral directors to recommend the facility to their clients, adverts for crematoria could be found in *The Undertakers' Journal* and also

after it was retitled *Funeral Service Journal*. Local authority and private crematoria opening in London and Surrey between the 1930s and 1950s carried out extensive advertising campaigns, such as Croydon, Mortlake and Kingston, and particularly the South London Crematorium where promotion in the early years resulted in exceptional use of the facility (Parsons 2017b; Parsons 2018).



The Undertakers' Journal *January 1900*

Bibliography

Arnold AJ and Bidmead JM (2008) 'Going 'to paradise by way of Kensal Green': A most unfit subject for trading profit?' *Business History* Vol 50 No 3 May pp328-350

Bondson J (2001) *Burial Alive. The Terrifying History of our most Primal Fear* New York: WW Norton

Brookes C (1989) *Mortal Remains. The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery* Exeter: Wheaton

Clarke J (2006) *The Brookwood Necropolis Railway* Fourth Edition Usk: The Oakwood Press

Clarke JM (2018) *London's Necropolis: A Guide to Brookwood Cemetery* Second edition Catrine: Stenlake

Curl JS (1986) 'Architecture for a Novel Purpose: Death and the Railway Age' *Country Life* June 12 pp1716-1717

Dawes MC (1999) 'The Great Northern London Cemetery and its Railway Service' *The London Railway Record* No 21 October pp256-260

Dawes MC (2003) *The End of the Line. The Story of the Railway Service to the Great Northern London Cemetery* Barnet: Barnet & District Local History Society

Kay P (2009) 'The Great Northern Main Line in London: Cemetery' *The London Railway Record* No 59 April pp182-193.

Meller H and Parsons B (2008) *London Cemeteries: An Illustrated Guide and Gazetteer* Fourth Edition Stroud: Sutton Publishing

Parsons B (2009) 'Unknown Undertaking: The History of Dottridge Bros Wholesale Manufacturers to the Funeral Trade' *Archive: The Quarterly Journal for British Industrial and Transport History* No63 pp41-53

Parsons B (2012) 'Dickens and the Undertakers' *The Funeral Director Monthly* Vol 95 No 9 pp18-19

Parsons B (2017a) 'Ninety Year On: The Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1926' *ICCM Journal* Vol85 No2 pp56-59

Parsons B (2017b) 'Funeral Directors and the Promotion of Cremation: A Regional Perspective' *Pharos International* Vol 83 No 3 pp32-41

Parsons B (2018) 'The History of Mortlake Crematorium' *The Acton Historian* No 16 May pp12-19

Parsons B (2020a) 'The Proposed Rail Service to the City of London Cemetery: A little known 'Might have been' *Great Eastern Journal* No 182 April pp18-23

Parsons (2020b) 'Hendon Park Cemetery. Exploring the Third Venture of the Abney Park Cemetery Company' Privately available.

Rugg (1997) 'The Origins and Progress of Cemetery Establishment in Britain' in PC Jupp and G Howarth *The Changing face of Death. Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal* Basingstoke: Macmillan

Young CWF (1899) *Sanitary Condition of Cemeteries and Burial Grounds* London County Council p23

Unattributed Articles

'Mortuaries for the Metropolis' *BMJ* 25 December 1875 pp 802-803

The Builder, Vol.19 1861, p.809.

The Builder, Vol. 20, 11 January 1862, p.25

'A Public Mortuary and Post-Mortem Room' *Lancet* 27 August 1870 p318