

# RESEARCHING SYMBOLS AT ABNEY PARK CEMETERY



Angel Guardian

Many grave memorials display incised or three-dimensional objects, animals, plants or body parts and these have strong symbolic meanings.

The following are some of the most commonly encountered symbolic designs:



Celtic Cross  
Eternal life



Rose  
Innocence, good



Ruined Temple  
Perishability



Obelisk  
Egyptian – Eternal life



Uprturned torch  
Extinguished lifelight



Torch  
Life, Light



Rose  
Innocence, good



Wheat  
Harvest/Afterlife



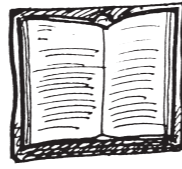
Tree:Yew  
Sign of Life



Flaming Urn  
New life



Cloth draped Urn  
Greek/Roman – death



Book  
Faith, Life



Rocks  
Strength, Safety



Ivy  
Unfading memory



Lantern  
Knowledge



Hands clasped  
Farewell, promise of future meetings



Anchor  
Hope, Safety



Lily  
Purity



Palm  
Triumph over death



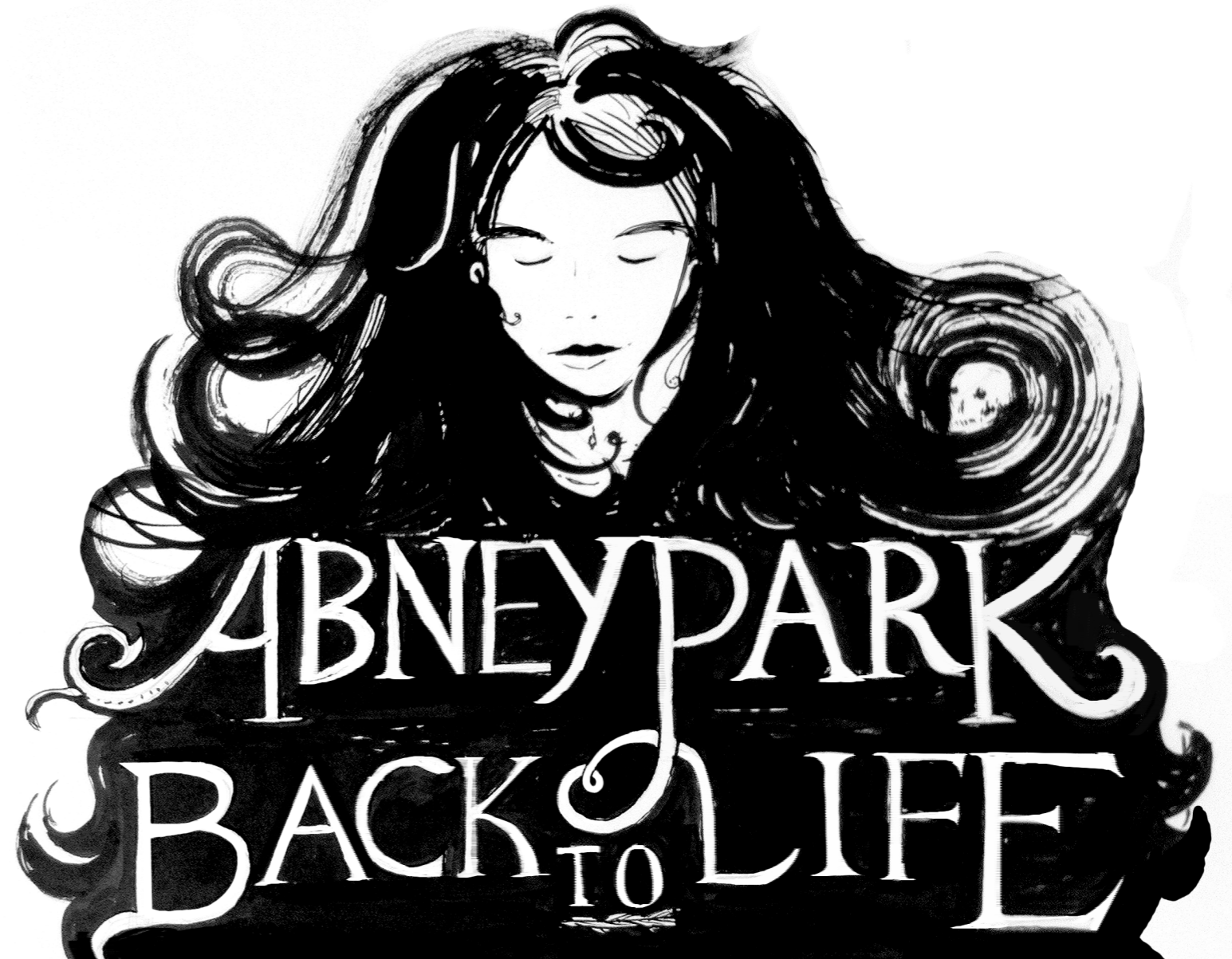
Heart  
Love, Devotion

## DO IT YOURSELF

On your visit to cemetery do some symbol spotting, maybe you can do a competition who can spot the most symbols. Maybe you can draw them or take pictures with your camera?

### ABNEY PARK CEMETERY TRUST

South Lodge, Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington High St, London N16 0LH



## INFORMATION PACK FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**A**bney Park Back to Life was a project for young people age 13-26, that took place during the school year 2010/2011.

Twelve young people took on the challenge to research the history of this amazing site to help create short films and site specific installations for a live audience.

Abney Park in Stoke Newington, London, formerly one of the 'magnificent seven' garden cemeteries of London, is now a woodland memorial park and important Local Nature Reserve.

The park originated in the eighteenth century when the land was laid out by Lady Mary Abney. With over two hundred years of heritage and more than 240 thousand people buried in Abney Park, there is a lot of history to uncover!

Why not to try it yourself?

# RESEARCHING THE PEOPLE BURIED AT ABNEY PARK CEMETERY

**T**here are many ordinary and extraordinary people buried at Abney Park Cemetery (240 thousand people! that's a lot!)

Maeve took part in our project and she researched the music hall star Nelly Powers.

"I choose to create a piece about Nelly Powers. She has her own grave which is unusual in this Victorian cemetery and was one of the first female music hall stars. She was a rare amongst the "Lions Comique" who were the 'heart throbs' of the Victorian era and whose attitudes were distinctly laddish. I was inspired to explore the complexities of her status

as a woman in this profession and this era.

How was she viewed by men?  
How was she viewed by her own romantic partners?

She died young and single and seems, from notes surrounding her death, to have suffered considerable heartache because of who she was.

I feel she used her 'charming' voice to empower herself and to reach out to the audience, perhaps for a brief moment being able to transcend the boundaries of gender and class and share a truth about human experience."

As well as attending workshops as part of the project Bringing Abney Park Back To Life! Maeve also used the internet, the archives and made visits herself to research the character.

**Maeve researched the following:**

The Changing representation of women,<sup>1</sup> Love letter and relationship research.<sup>2</sup>

She watched and listened to a lot of footage of various Music Hall performers,<sup>3</sup> and looked up old lost music hall theatres,<sup>4</sup> and found one in Stoke Newington!<sup>5</sup>

She took a trip to Wilton's Music Hall to soak up the atmosphere.<sup>6</sup>

## Resource notes

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/womeninvictoriantheatre/music-hall-1">sites.google.com/site/womeninvictoriantheatre/music-hall-1</a> | 4 <a href="http://www.arthurloyd.co.uk/LondonsLostTheatres.htm">www.arthurloyd.co.uk/LondonsLostTheatres.htm</a>                       |
| 2 <a href="http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/10feb2011aac.pdf">www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/10feb2011aac.pdf</a>          | 5 <a href="http://www.arthurloyd.co.uk/AlexandraTheatreStokeNewington.htm">www.arthurloyd.co.uk/AlexandraTheatreStokeNewington.htm</a> |
| 3 <a href="http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/o/ohmisterporter.shtml">lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/o/ohmisterporter.shtml</a>        | 6 <a href="http://www.wiltons.org.uk">www.wiltons.org.uk</a>   |
| <a href="http://www.barron.co.uk/Lilian+Lancaster">www.barron.co.uk/Lilian+Lancaster</a>  |  |
| <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kwmeoi7DX4&amp;feature=related">www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kwmeoi7DX4&amp;feature=related</a>          |  |
| <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-RpyLmIn3k">www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-RpyLmIn3k</a>  |  |

## DO IT YOURSELF

- Choose a historical character buried at Abney Park Cemetery from the list included in this pack and research their story; you might want to look on the internet or even visit Abney Park Cemetery with your school to find out more, first hand!
- You could then make a performance or a short film like we did or perhaps you'll come up with new ideas to share your findings?

# GRAVE SEARCHING AT ABNEY PARK CEMETERY.

## UNCOVER YOUR FAMILY'S HISTORY A 'How To' Guide

**T**oday you might find that death is a taboo subject, but the Victorians embraced the subject of death. Finding your Family's History can be fun, as you get to search for the graves of relatives that lived before you and imagine how they lived.

- First it would be good to note down the names of all of your grandparents and find out which different surnames have been in your family over the years.
- Once you have some names you can enter them into this fantastic 'find a grave' website to start looking for your relatives: [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)
- Or if you know your family was from the Stoke Newington area it might be best to go directly to the Abney Park website or office where they have a searchable index of burials: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~abneypark/abneyy.html>
- If you manage to find anything it's best to do some more research on the Hackney Archives website: [www2.hackney.gov.uk](http://www2.hackney.gov.uk)  
Or write to them at: Hackney Archives, 43 De Beauvoir Road, London N1 5SQ
- If you do manage to find some records of your relatives at Abney Park Cemetery the next step is to visit the Park's office and use the maps there to find the exact spot in the park that they are buried.
- The team in the office will help you with this and then will take you out into the park to hunt through the undergrowth and find the spot where the grave should be.

Good luck!

And here you can have a look on my research notes and pictures.

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