

Pathways to the Past

The newsletter of Connelly Contours Limited

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On your Marks...

Well, what a strange summer it was. I watched the world go scorched yellow and toast brown. In London the parks seemed to go into autumn mode in mid-August. I found it very odd to wade through drifts of leaves that crunched and crackled under every footstep as if it was October.

I've found myself doing a lot more exclusive walks for groups. I've had people celebrating their birthdays by gathering family and friends, there was a work awayday, and a party from the Western Front Association. So, if you have a group of friends or associates with a particular interest in a London walk, do get in touch.

And as we enter autumn and begin the path towards winter, views open-up in London and across the battlefields. In London, statues on their plinths stand starkly against leafless trees; in France and Belgium, the ridgelines become harder and the cemeteries become prominent in the landscape emerging out of the enfolding crops. The seasons change our sightlines and perceptions of landscape. Come along for a walk or a tour and see for yourself.

Mark



Inside

Western Front

Sitting on top of the world: Grove Town Cemetery

Forthcoming London walks

London

Outside the box: Lloyd Square and Percy Circus

13 October 1915

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Western Front



Sitting on top of the world: Grove Town Cemetery



To drive, cycle or walk from the village of Étinehem-Méricourt towards Meaulte means ascending from the low ground along the banks of the Somme up to a high plateau. As Martin Middlebrook stated in his guidebook to the Somme battlefields, the Rue d'Étinehem 'would have been a bleak march in bad weather, a shadeless and sweaty one under the summer sun'. The views from this mini-tableland (perhaps coffee-tableland sums it up best) are slightly disconcerting, for being so high and so flat nothing can be seen or discerned. Morlancourt and Ville-sur-Ancre are out of sight in the valley to the left, Albert is directly in front, but utterly invisible, even the huge aircraft factory and airport at Meaulte only announces itself if a plane is heard in ascent or descent.

It was probably this flatness and hiding-in-plain-sight-ness that made the location so perfect for the establishment of casualty clearing stations in September 1916. Being far enough from the fighting lines it was possible to bury the dead here in relatively neat and ordered plots from the start which then left the IWGC with a simple site to deal with when its staff began planning the permanent cemetery...

[Click here to read the full article on my website.](#)

Forthcoming London walks

Friday 16 October

2.00pm: Refugees and Reformers: Jewish Whitechapel and Huguenot Spitalfields

Sunday 15 November

2.00pm: The Barbican Estate: the Phoenix of the Blitz

Sunday 29 November

2.00pm: Railway stations and passengers: from King's Cross to Paddington

Saturday 5 December

10.30am: Spires and Towers: the churches of the City of London

2.00pm: Writers, Printers and Protesters: Fleet Street and the alleys and courts of the City

Friday 18 December

10.30am: Upstairs, Downstairs: the squares, shops and spooks of the West End

2.30pm: Bah! Humbug!: A Christmas Carol

If you are interested in a walk, but the scheduled date is not convenient, please do contact me to register your interest for the future, or explore alternative dates.

**Walks last 2.5 hours and cost
£25 per person**

**[Click here to find out more
and book](#)**

London



Outside the box: Lloyd Square and Percy Circus



Just off King's Cross Road in the top corner of the parish of Clerkenwell are a square and a circus. Far from the glamorous Upstairs, Downstairs aura of Belgrave, Eaton and Cadogan squares, Lloyd Square and Percy Circus are, nonetheless, gems and are among my favourite places in London. The origins of the development rest in the power and influence of the New River Company. Awarded its royal charter in 1619, it was formed to bring water from Hertfordshire to London and became a significant landowner in Clerkenwell.

In 1841 the company began work on a hillside site under the direction of its surveyor, William Chadwell Mylne. Not completed until 1853 and named after Robert Percy Smith, a senior member of the New River Company, the circus consisted of 27 houses (15 of which were lost through bombing in the Second World War) in two crescents centred on an enclosed circular garden. Wander up either Great Percy Street or Vernon Rise from King's Cross Road and the wondrous span of the circus begins to reveal itself...

[Click here to read the full article on my website.](#)

13 October 1915



As anyone who has read the British official histories of the fighting on the Western Front knows, they are dense in detail; so dense in fact, that understanding the larger picture can sometimes be very difficult, even with the help of the excellent maps that accompany the volumes. However, every now and then there's a flash not just of insight, but also judgement, and often judgement in stark and haunting words. The example that comes to my mind is the conclusion on the final days of the Battle of Loos: 'The fighting on the 13th-14th October had not improved the general situation in any way and had brought nothing but useless slaughter of infantry.' 'Useless slaughter of infantry' is such a sobering phrase. When translated into statistics it means somewhere in the region of 4000 casualties over a couple of days...

[Click here to read the full article on my website.](#)



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