

Pathways to the Past

The newsletter of Connelly Contours Limited

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On your Marks...

Hello! I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. As I sit writing on this early January afternoon, I can see a solid frost outside and it brings to mind Edgell Rickwood's famous First World War poem, *Winter Warfare*, with its remarkable imagery:

Colonel Cold strode up the Line
(Tabs of rime and spurs of ice),
Stiffened all where he did glare,
Horses, men, and lice.

But every day it's getting a little lighter and when the sun comes through it streaks the horizon with copper, bronze and golden hues, and that makes me want to put on my walking boots.

For the spring, I'm offering a new walk around the Barbican and Golden Lane estates. Opinions on these remarkable examples of post-Second World War architecture and town planning tend to polarize between the lovers and haters. My self-imposed task for the spring is to turn everyone into a lover, and I'm starting with the article inside.

And I'd like to put down a marker for the summer when I'll be offering another new walk, but this one is more like a pilgrimage – exploring over a thousand years of London history by walking the entire circuit of the Circle Line (above ground!) in one day. So do get in training and look out for details in the next newsletter.

Mark



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Contact

Mark Connelly
mark@connellycontours.co.uk
+44 (0)7865 816441
connellycontours.co.uk

Western Front



St Vaast Post Military Cemetery: Charles Holden and Noël Rew's game of styles



The village of Richebourg-L'Avoué is one of those myriad places on the Great War battlefields that do odd things to the emotions. The oddness rests in the dissonance between these small, quiet places and the enormous violence once expended in and around them. It is a strange feeling that probably far more people died in and around the village during the four years of the Great War than were ever born in it and lived out their peaceful lives in it.

During the course of the conflict, Richebourg-L'Avoué experienced a series of sanguine waves. In May 1915, during the Battle of Festubert, British soldiers created a cemetery in an old orchard near a forward dressing station. Fourteen months later, the 11, 12, 13 battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment, advanced against a German position known as the Boar's Head Salient. It was a disaster that brought the agony of grief to villages across the South Downs of Sussex. In April 1918, Richebourg-L'Avoué was overrun by the Germans and soldiers in field grey buried some of their dead in the British cemetery. Then, in September the same year British forces returned, and the cemetery gained a new plot containing the graves of eighteen British soldiers killed in the vicinity.

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

Forthcoming London walks

Wednesday 11 February

2.30pm Spires and towers: the churches of the City of London

Friday 13 March

2.30pm The Barbican Estate: the Phoenix of the Blitz

Saturday 14 March

10.30am Refugees and Reformers. Huguenot Spitalfields and Jewish Whitechapel

2.30pm Writers, printers and protesters: the City's courtyards and alleys

Friday 20 March

10.30am London's First World War memorials

2.30pm Introduction to London's war memorials

Sunday 29 March

2.30pm The Barbican Estate: the Phoenix of the Blitz

Monday 30 March

10.30am Railways stations and passengers: from King's Cross to Paddington

2.30pm Upstairs, Downstairs: The squares, shops and spooks of London's West End

Friday 24 April

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

2.30pm Writers, printers and protesters: the City's courtyards and alleys

Continued over.../

London



Beauty, beast or both? The Barbican Estate



During my childhood in the 1970s, one of the great treats of our regular Saturday visits to my grandparents in Hoxton was the chance to walk down Old Street and turn into Aldersgate Street. For a budding historian it was a treasure box of delights. There was the cobbled quaintness of Charterhouse Square, the butcher's shop smells of sawdust and meat wafting up from Smithfield, the sounds of tube trains trundling along the open trench from Farringdon, and, in the middle of it all, the Barbican.

To me it was Utopia and Dystopia at exactly the same time. The Utopia was the brave new world emerging boldly upwards in great stretches of concrete and brick. The Dystopia was the surreal weirdness of it all, the weirdness of Second World War bomb craters flimsily fenced off, but with so many gaps in the fencing that the wartime devastation could so easily be seen and imagined...

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

Saturday 25 April

10.30am The Barbican Estate: the Phoenix of the Blitz

2.30pm Refugees and Reformers. Huguenot Spitalfields and Jewish Whitechapel

All walks are 2.5 hours and cost £25 per person

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

2 March 1915



On this day, after working on the Western Front since the early autumn of 1914, Fabian Ware of the British Red Cross's Mobile Unit, wrote to Arthur Stanley, Unionist MP and chairman of the Joint War Organisation of the British Red Cross. Ware was clearly delighted to inform Stanley that the Mobile Unit had been officially recognised by the French government and military authorities 'as the only organisation authorised to deal with the question of the locality, marking and registration of graves of British officers and men in this country'.

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



Company No. 15189859
Registered address: Under Knowle,
Covet Lane, Kingston, Canterbury, CT4 6JT

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