

Pathways to the Past

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On your Marks...

Well, spring is definitely crashing its way through the door. I've seen the sun, I've seen blue skies, I've found I can leave the house without a scarf (on a couple of occasions anyway), and that is such a wonderful feeling.

Last month I led my new Barbican Estate walk for the first time. It was a beautiful afternoon (even if the wind did rather take the edge off the temperatures) for strolling around the wonderful highwalks and podium level.

Travelling to Barbican tube concentrated my mind on the Circle Line and the walk I am planning for the summer months. I love my Circle Line walk for the way it cuts through the entire history of London in one huge loop. We have legal London in the Inns of Court at Temple, the City of London with its ancient history, national government in Westminster, the shops and commercial districts of Sloane Square and Bayswater, royal London in Kensington, cultural London at South Kensington, and the nineteenth century inner suburbs wrapped around the Pentonville Road.

It will be an all-dayer (I estimate 6-7 hours), so if that sounds like a good way to spend a summer day, do get in touch for further details.

Mark



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Western Front



A balcony over the battlefield: Dantzig Alley British Cemetery



Named after the nearby German trench captured by troops of the 7 Division on 1 July 1916, Dantzig Alley British Cemetery was created later that month when field ambulances and fighting units began using the roadside site for burials. By the end of the war it contained 183 graves, most of them victims of the fighting in 1916 and 1917. It was after the Armistice that it expanded rapidly when several cemeteries were concentrated into the site and brought the total number of burials to just over 2000.

The permanent cemetery constructed in the 1920s is a fascinating example of Herbert Baker's influence on the design principles of the Commission, and from its nature, I suspect that A.J.S. Hutton was the assistant architect (have a look at the similarities with Lonsdale Cemetery).

First engagement with the cemetery is a bit like encountering a highly stylised trench, for its front wall runs parapet-like, as well as tapering gently as it goes up against the gradient, and parallel with the northern-side of the main road. This wall emphasizes the horizon and leads the eye to the entrance gate tucked into the far corner angle of the wall...

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

Forthcoming London walks

Friday 15 May

2pm: The Barbican Estate: the Phoenix of the Blitz

Friday 22 May

2pm: Writers, Printers and Protesters: Fleet Street and the alleys and courts of the City

Friday 29 May

2pm: Refugees and Reformers: Jewish Whitechapel and Huguenot Spitalfields

Friday 5 June

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

2.30pm: The Barbican Estate: the Phoenix of the Blitz

Friday 12 June

2pm: London's First World War memorials

Walks above are 2.5 hours and cost £25 per person

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

The Circle Line: a summer walk

A full day, 14 mile walk going past the entrance to each of the 36 stations on the Circle Line, and covering 2000 years of London's history.

Contact me for further information, including dates and cost.

London



19 May 1929



Baker Street Station... and its buffet



More than anyone else it was John Betjeman, in his poem *The Metropolitan Railway* and his wonderful 1973 documentary *Metro-land*, who did so much to raise awareness of the wonder of Baker Street station. Originally, this great barrack of a building standing at the corner of Baker Street and Marylebone Road was nothing more than two modest stone buildings on each side of Marylebone Road. These buildings served Bayswater Paddington, and Holborn Bridge Railway Company, which by the turn of the century had evolved into a huge concern, the Metropolitan Railway. Full of ambition, the company decided that Baker Street station should become the lynchpin of its operations and launched an ambitious development programme. Frank Sherrin, architect and son of the Metropolitan Railway's consulting architect, George C. Sherrin, was asked to draw up plans. In turn, these were handed on to Charles W. Clark, who was appointed architect to the Railway in 1911. Having finalised a vision for the station, work was then heavily disrupted by the outbreak of war in 1914 and not fully completed until 1930. But what Clark created is magnificent...

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

On the Sunday morning of 19 May 1929, a ceremony took place in the Belgian village of Gheluvelt, some six miles east of Ypres, in which General Sir Alexander Cobbe unveiled the South Wales Borderers memorial, and the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon dedicated it. A copy of an ancient Celtic Cross at Carew, Pembrokeshire, the memorial is powerful for its modest simplicity. The cross emerges from a tomb-like plinth, and the base of the cross contains an equally simple inscription which grips the imagination because it is a perfect example of the less is more ethos: 'In ever glorious memory of the officers and men of the South Wales Borderers who fell in the Great War'. One adjective – glorious – does the job...

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