



BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY

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Arthur Melville R.W.S, A.R.S.A 10th April 1858 – 28th August 1904 Grave Restoration Project

When the exceptionally talented Scottish Artist Arthur Melville died of Typhoid Fever at his then home in the village of Witley in Surrey, England his body was cremated and his ashes were interred in the garden of the house 'Redlands'. The historian John M. Clarke then advises that because the house was later put up for sale Ethel Melville his widow, moved to Kensington in London and arranged with the undertaking department of Harrods to have his ashes exhumed and reburied in Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey. The re-burial took place on Saturday 10th July 1909, 5 years after his cremation at Woking. The London Necropolis Company was commissioned to erect a permanent memorial over the grave, consisting of pink granite kerbing and an upright rectangular block of the same material with the inscription "In Loving Memory of Arthur Melville R.W.S., A.R.S.A, born 10th April 1858 (sic), died 29th August 1904".

By the 1970's important changes of ownership and land use occurred at Brookwood and in 1973 the then owner Maximillian Investments gained Parliamentary approval to sell off cemetery land, including the section where Melville's grave is located. Other graves in the area were removed to the main cemetery circa 1977. In the case of the Melville grave it appears the memorial was desecrated and the large upright stone with his description was smashed in two and discarded in the main cemetery. However the kerbing of the grave was left undisturbed and *in situ* strongly suggesting his urn lies undisturbed. The purchasers of the land in 1977 was Woking Council who returned the site to natural heath land now known as Brookwood Heath and designated it a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

In more recent years Woking Council bought the whole Cemetery and has made substantial improvements and renovations.

With the area returned to heath land and the discarded memorial stone lost to memory the granite kerbing also disappeared into the heather and Arthur Melville's last resting place was effectively lost.

In the summer of 2019 having recently assumed the office of Treasurer for The Brookwood Cemetery Society, Jon Leech was out having a look around his 'new garden'. Having also recently read John Clarke's account of the lost grave 'in splendid isolation' on the Heath he was completely astounded to trip on part of the broken head stone with the Arthur Melville inscription, deep in bracken.

The Society in addition to historical research and running tours of the cemetery, undertakes restoration of the many graves and mausoleums it can manage within its limited budget of donations. On discovering the beauty and importance of Melville's work and his place in art history,



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Jon immediately started a plan to restore the grave and add the story into those of numerous other important artists at Brookwood including John Singer Sargent, Luke Fildes, Richard Andsell and Henrietta Normand etc.

The first task was to find the actual grave site on the heath, buried deep in thick heather with exact location unknown. Jon spent a pleasant summer of 2019 walking criss cross on the heath tapping the ground with a walking stick to try and find the kerbing but to no avail. Thankfully on hearing what Jon was attempting, John Clarke joined him and together they were able to trace the lost kerbing.

After gaining permission from the Heathland Project (under the guidance of Natural England), the Society members then tidied the grave and set about gaining the required permissions to restore it.

The plan devised and the necessary permissions have now been given and the Society is about to pay the deposit to the Funeral Director to start the preliminary restoration work on the grave, replace the memorial stone, erect suitable low fencing and also erect signage advising those who come across it when walking, the importance of the grave site.

The Brookwood Cemetery Society is now appealing for donations to secure funds for the project which is currently estimated at £6,000.

Should you wish to support this special restoration please make donations direct into the **Brookwood Cemetery Society** account Code **60-09-40** account number **40023621** reference **Melville**, please confirm your payment with an email to longjon@btinternet.com so that it may be identified and acknowledged. Donations by cheque payable to Brookwood Cemetery Society will be equally welcome, please post the cheque to

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We will keep you advised of the progress and very much look forward to the day when we can hold a service of re-dedication and celebrate the life and artistry of this remarkable talent.

Yours faithfully,

Jon Leech, Treasurer
The Brookwood Cemetery Society
www.tbcs.org.uk

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The tidied up grave
on Brookwood
Heath 2020



The memorial within
the main cemetery

