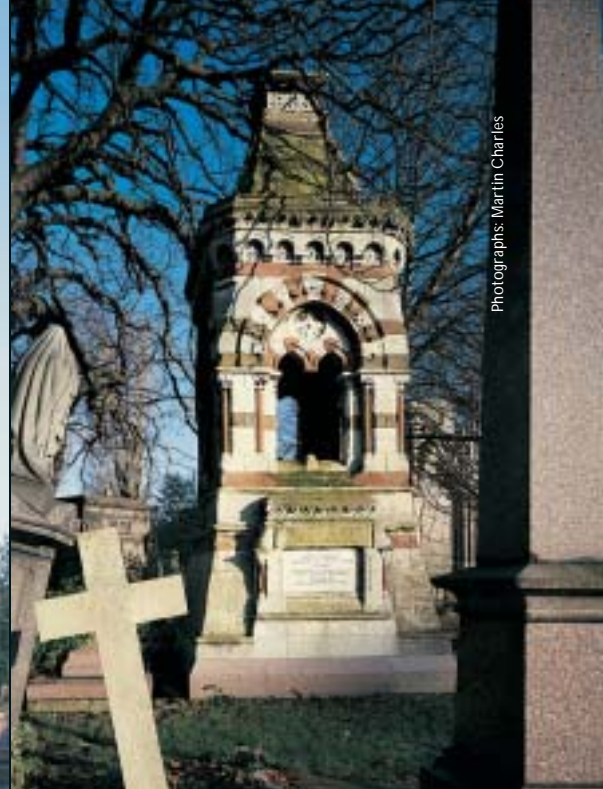


delight



Photographs: Martin Charles

THE VAST VICTORIAN CEMETERY IN LONDON'S KENSAL GREEN WAS ONE OF THE FIRST GREAT METROPOLITAN BURIAL GROUNDS. AS A NEW BOOK REVEALS, IT STILL EXERTS A POWERFUL HOLD ON POPULAR IMAGINATION.

The General Cemetery of All Souls at Kensal Green (consecrated in 1833) was the first great necropolis to be laid out near London, and owes its origins to the transformation of the picturesque English landscaped garden in France as a place of sepulture, commemoration and Elysium of allusion. A milestone in urban hygiene, the cemetery was also of great aesthetic and social importance in the civilising of death.

Kensal Green was landscaped with care, and the board of the General Cemetery Company (which still owns and manages the cemetery) went to great lengths to ensure that the buildings (two chapels with catacombs, a colonnade over another catacomb, the

entrance gate and lodges, and the boundary wall and boundary railings) were architecturally distinguished and soundly built in order to attract custom. An architectural competition was held in 1831-32, attracting 48 entries, including some interesting designs that were not realised. In the end, the architect responsible for the magnificent cemetery buildings and some of the mausolea was John Griffith (1796-1888). JAMES STEVENS CURL

James Stevens Curl is editor of *Kensal Green Cemetery*, to be published by Phillimore & Co, Shopwyke Manor Barn, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 6BG, this autumn (e-mail: bookshop@phillimore.co.uk). The lavish book will demonstrate why the place is of national and international significance, and discuss the cemetery's history, buildings, monuments, sculpture, flora, fauna and landscape.