

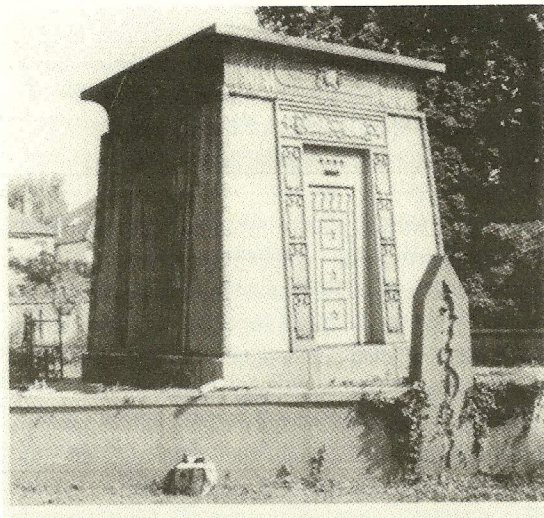
MMT News

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The House that 'Black Jack' Built

Derrick Mercer recounts the bizarre history of the Kilmorey Mausoleum, one of Richmond's lesser-known architectural delights.



On most days one of the most interesting historic buildings in Richmond-upon-Thames can only be seen from the top deck of a double-decker bus. The Kilmorey Mausoleum hides behind a high brick wall along St Margaret's Road, Twickenham, and is only accessible on one day a year when, along with other historic and architecturally interesting buildings, it opens its doors for the Open House weekend.

For the last two years at the Open House weekend around 450 people have visited the Mausoleum which was built in 1854 to an Egyptian-style

design by the Victorian architect H.E. Kendall. The Mausoleum has a grade II listing, yet the story behind its existence is for many people as fascinating as the structure itself.

The Mausoleum takes its name from its creator – the second Earl of Kilmorey. This was Francis Jack Needham, who succeeded his father to the Earldom in 1832. He was also known as “Black Jack”, although whether this was due to his complexion or his controversial morality it cannot be said for certain.

He built the Mausoleum as a shrine to his mistress, Priscilla Hoste, whom he had first encountered when he became a guardian to the children of Captain William Hoste after the Captain died.

Unfortunately, he took his guardianship to excess and in the early 1840s he eloped with Priscilla. Despite a search in Europe, the couple were not found.

However, in time they returned to the Twickenham area with which Black Jack had long had connections. On 19 July 1844 their son Charles was born and the relationship seemed set to prosper. But in 1851 Priscilla became ill and it was known that she had a terminal disease of the heart. Kilmorey began to make plans for his beloved's burial. This was not straightforward.

He wrote to the Directors of Brompton Cemetery Company regarding a plot for the Mausoleum and his application had to be approved by the Home Secretary. Approval was granted – and cost the Earl some £1,030 16s 9d on top of the £30,000 cost of the Mausoleum itself. It was designed to fit a circular plot at Brompton which measured 1,963 square feet.

The Egyptian design is believed to have been derived from a plate in a celebrated French book. The *Description de l'Egypte*, the first volume of which had been published in 1809. The shape of the building relates to the shrines at the heart of Egyptian temples – the place where a treasured image of a god was installed. It was ready for Priscilla when she died in October 1854.