

## Highgate Hovis

On Sunday we visited Highgate Cemetery. Perhaps, you might think, a rather strange place to spend a Sunday afternoon but have you heard how many famous and interesting people are buried there?

Among the many who have been laid to rest in this serene, wooded encampment are Herbert Spencer, philosopher and sociologist who coined the term "*survival of the fittest*" for Darwin's theory of evolution and valid for business too if we subscribe to Porter's competitive advantage theories. We also saw the final resting places of Patrick Caulfield (Artist); Malcolm McLaren (Manager of the sex pistols); John Betjeman (Poet's Poet) and John Lobb (Maker of bespoke boots and shoes) a poor Cornish boy who developed his company to become supplier to the great and the good.

I began to think about what my epitaph would be and considering the competition such as Spike Milligan's self written epitaph "*I told you I was ill...*" a great deal of consideration would need to be given if I were to figure out something deeply witty and memorable.

I suppose the two monuments which interested us the most, because their lives were interesting and their gravestones are too, were Karl Marx and Douglas Adams. There is a very large bust of Karl Marx rising some fifteen feet in the air utterly dominating its particular corner of the cemetery. While we were there, a young couple stood for some twenty minutes paying their respects. As for Douglas Adams, in stark contrast, there is a very simple, small and humble looking stone with very few words and no epitaph. There are towels that people have left on the stone and a jar of pens that we contributed an Emirates Airlines pen to, a gift from a former client of my colleague, now donated in memory of Mr. Adams.

Richard Smith, 1836 – 1900 was a baker nicknamed 'Stoney' who was the first to mass produce brown (wheat-germ) bread. Of course he was challenged by many who thought he was crazy to do such a thing given that we already had white bread. Why would anyone want brown bread? His reply was because it makes a man strong! This clever maverick, used his strap-line, the latin term 'Hominis Vis' meaning strength of man and abbreviated it to 'Hovis' and the rest as they say is 'his story'.

We have to get the message across in stone while we're alive. Who we are, what we are about, what is the mission? Sometimes it difficult to do this but it's important to have a voice and for that voice to be heard. Considering our own epitaph, although perhaps rather morbid, is a great way, if done with a good balance of humour to the pathos, of visualising what we are here today to achieve.

Later in the afternoon, we walked on Hampstead Heath and happened upon one of the houses in Hampstead where John Constable lived in Well Walk near the heath which we only noticed because of the blue plaque outside on the wall. This really made our day since I have been going through a bit of a Constable phase. Perhaps his greatest epitaph is the paintings he left for us and maybe this is the point, after all, it does say at the base of the Karl Marx tomb, "*The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point however, is to change it*".

I'm still not sure what my grave stone would say, I think it's still blank at the moment but, if I opt for the humorous, I was thinking about this... *"Couldn't delegate this one..."* perhaps in a nice font, yes, why not, perhaps Comic Sans!

- *Dedicated to organizational mavericks and the memory of 'Stoney' who still gives us each day, our daily strength...*

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