

# Friends of West Norwood Cemetery



NEWSLETTER NO.17: JANUARY 1994

## Chairman's Report - Bob Flanagan

The last three months of 1993 were eventful to say the least. Firstly, the Consistory Court hearing into Lambeth's belated application for faculties to (i) run the consecrated areas of West Norwood as a cemetery and (ii) to authorise retrospectively the clearance operations in these areas has been concluded. Judgement is due from 24 January. Some of the issues which arose during the hearing are very complex, not least the fact that the South Metropolitan Cemetery Company was originally set up under a private Act of Parliament in 1836 (William IV Cap cxxix) which has never been repealed.

Lambeth acquired the cemetery by means of a Compulsory Purchase Order in 1965, but it seems that they may thereby have obligations to existing holders of plots which were originally purchased either in perpetuity or for a limited time. A case in point is the St Mary-at-Hill plot in the south-east corner of the cemetery. The burial rights here were purchased in perpetuity by the City parish in 1847. Sadly this was one of the areas subject to clearance operations in 1990-91. Six new graves and parts of a further six have now been inserted in this plot. Not only has this destroyed the character of the plot, which is a very unusual feature in a cemetery of this age, but also the questions of either exhumation and reburial, or payment of compensation to the parish arise.

Unfortunately, no representative from St Mary-at-Hill attended the Court despite their being informed of the situation - it seems that they were previously unaware of their rights in this plot. Other private plot holders may be similarly unaware of their rights - Counsel for Lambeth did concede in Court that it would be open to any such plot holders who could prove title to sue Lambeth for trespass if their plot

had been used for other burials. This also raises the question of the legality of reselling plots to relatives who wish to safeguard family memorials.

There were some other very worrying aspects to the Lambeth case. Firstly, we were amazed to hear Lambeth Officers claim on oath (i) that they had kept full records of all monuments removed from the cemetery over the years as required by law, and (ii) that no monuments had been removed during the clearance operations which took place in 1990-91! Fortunately we were easily able to prove both these claims as false. Secondly, it must surely be a matter of concern for all Lambeth council tax payers that Lambeth acknowledged liability for the costs of the three and a half days of the hearing save for a proportion in the event that a Restoration Order is not granted. If Lambeth Officers had been acting properly in the first place then of course none of this would have been necessary...

## *Draft Land Management Strategy for West Norwood*

The second major development has been the unprecedented activity of the Lambeth planning department in their efforts to promote the much-revised Draft Land Management Strategy for the cemetery. The impetus for this has been not only the Court hearing, but also the hearings on objections to the Lambeth Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which are due to begin this month. The revised strategy is a great improvement on the original and now places due emphasis on the importance of the cemetery and the conservation of what remains. We are grateful to Andrew Simpson and other members of his department for the work they put into this document. We are also grateful to Councillor John Whelan for initiating this review some two years ago now.

If there is an envelope addressed to our Membership Secretary, Rosemary Comber, enclosed with this Newsletter, this indicates that we have not yet received your subscription renewal for 1994. We hope you will wish to continue your membership; if so, please place your subscription (minimum £2) in the envelope and return it to Rosemary. Remember to include your name and address!

Unfortunately, the speed with which the document was prepared meant that some points of detail remain with which we are unhappy, not least the 'presumption in favour of retaining existing monuments'. Whilst this is a great improvement on the previous policy of wholesale clearance, we of course remain convinced that no further monuments should be removed. Despite our reservations, which were notified in advance to Lambeth Officers, Nicholas Long and I took a (calculated) risk and spoke in favour of the strategy at the Council committees (Environmental Services and Operational Services) at which it was considered. I am pleased to report that the strategy was unanimously approved by both committees. Indeed, the Opposition councillors at the meeting I attended spoke very warmly of the work of FOWNC and wished us well for the future. Nobody spoke against this view...

Nicholas and I felt able to support the strategy as a first step to safeguarding what remains of the cemetery because a key item is the promise that Lambeth will constitute a formal West Norwood Cemetery Advisory Group. FOWNC, the Victorian Society, English Heritage and the Diocese of Southwark will be represented on his Group as of right. It has also been accepted that the Group will not of necessity be Lambeth Officer-led. The remit of the Group will be to look at all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the cemetery not just conservation. It remains to be seen how the Advisory Group will work in practice. Indeed the whole strategy may have to be revised in the light of the Consistory Court ruling and of comments from the Victorian Society who, in the rush, were not it seems consulted by Lambeth in the later stages. In any event our own objection to the UDP remains in force to prevent any backsliding...

### *Conservation in the Cemetery*

And so to other matters. A recurrent item of concern is the continuing deterioration in the condition of the Catacombs on the site of the former Episcopal Chapel. The asphalt laid when the Rose Garden was built is cracking and this is allowing torrents of water into the vaults beneath. Lambeth have notified us that they will not allow any further visits to the Catacombs until they have placed signs warning visitors that they enter at their own risk. We do not think this is really necessary since only access by supervised parties is allowed. It would be a simple matter to get people to sign an indemnity form, for example. Sadly there is no 'sign' (if you'll pardon the pun) of Lambeth wishing to repair the Catacombs, which are now Grade II listed as members will be aware.

I am pleased to report that Paul Graham has been active in progressing conservation work elsewhere in the cemetery. Whilst visiting the site of Charles Alcock's grave in October in order to discuss a new

headstone (see January 93 Newsletter), Don Bianco of English Heritage by chance noticed the name 'Alcock' on a Carrera marble stone which was lying some distance from the site of Alcock's grave. The stone had clearly been the base of a stepped cross. Closer study revealed that the name recorded on the stone was that of the first burial in the Alcock grave, that of Alcock's son Charles Ernest, who was buried on 18 February 1874 aged 5 months. Nearby we found a second damaged stone on which we could just make out the name Alcock and the date 1907, the year of Charles Alcock's own death. Clearly this is a very exciting find. We can now plan a full restoration of Alcock's gravestone in Carrera marble complete with cross and kerbstones using as much of the original stone as possible.

Paul has also spearheaded progress in finishing the restoration of the Mantell memorial. The South London Botanical Institute kindly donated a young *Ginkgo* tree and this was planted one Saturday morning. However, as we suspected, the roots of the original tree are still there some eight inches below the surface despite the assurance that Lambeth workmen had removed it! Thus we cannot be sure that the *Ginkgo* will take root satisfactorily. Similarly, although the new railings have been put in place, we are not happy with the way they have been partially buried on the east side. We plan a site meeting to tidy up the area before planning a rededication ceremony.

### *A West Norwood Cemetery Trust?*

Finally, an item which we have already raised with Lambeth Officers and with Ms Janet Crook, Chair of the Environmental Services Committee, is the possibility of forming a charitable trust to run the cemetery along the lines of that which now runs Abney Park Cemetery. My own underlying fear is that whilst Lambeth control the cemetery all our work on conservation could easily be put to nought by a week's unnoticed work with a JCB. Lambeth might easily then claim it was a 'mistake' as they did when they demolished the de Normandy memorial. Indeed, nothing we heard during the Consistory Court hearing suggested any form of repentance for what has happened in the cemetery over the years, nor was there any evidence of enthusiasm for the new land management strategy. A further concern is that it was stated in Court on behalf of Lambeth that FOWNC had no right to object to anything Lambeth did in the cemetery as we have no legal locus so to do.

Clearly your committee, which was re-elected by acclamation at the AGM in October, has much work on hand for 1994. However, we must not lose the momentum gained during 1993 if we are to continue to make progress in conserving what remains of our heritage at West Norwood.

## New Grade II Listings

As promised in the last Newsletter, here are details of the mausolea and tombs which were accorded Grade II listed status in August 1993. Only the principal burial is mentioned in most cases. The order is that used on the listing schedule.

1. Mausoleum of Edmund Distin Maddick ( -1939) (grave 37,450, square 124)
2. Mausoleum of Sophie Beard ( - ) (grave 23,625, square 113)
3. Mausoleum of the Vallianos family (grave 27,142, square 42 - Greek section)
4. Tomb of Charles Auffray (1843-1893) and Edith O'Gorman ('The Escaped Nun') (1842-1929) (grave 25,249, square 54)
5. Tomb of Daniel (-) and Alice (1792-1854) Cooper (grave 3,657, square 53)
6. Tomb of Marie Zambaco (née Cassavetti) (1843-1914) (grave 1,971, square 28 - Greek section)
7. Tomb of Giulia Sheridan (1812-1862) (grave 8,168, square 28 - Greek section)
8. Tomb of Hans Schwartze (1825-1883) (grave 19,650, square 119)
9. Tomb of Israel Thomas (1775-1842) (grave 429, square 34)
10. Tomb of Rev. James Baldwin Brown (1820-1884) (grave 7,167, square 40)
11. Tomb of James Kershaw MP (1795-1864) (grave 9,150, square 40/41)
12. Tomb of Annie Sparenborg (1854-1904) (grave 30,950, square 104)
13. Tomb of Henry C. (1835-1885) and Lucy Gallup (1848-1883) (grave 19,605, square 120)
14. Tomb of Thomas Ibbotson (1832-1904) (grave 30,960, square 104)
15. Tomb of George Widdowson (1804-1872) (grave 7,523, square 36)
16. Tomb of Thomas Letts (1803-1873) (grave 249, square 33)
17. Tomb of Sir Horace Jones (1819-1887) (grave 12,335, square 89)
18. Tomb of Baron Paul Julius de Reuter (1816-1899) (grave 28,319, square 23)
19. Tomb of Elizabeth (1853-1922) and Henry King (1844-1923) (grave 35,926, square 51)
20. Tomb of Charles James Elworthy (1834-1870) (grave 12,958, square 40/41) - described in the listing description as F.T. Elworthy

Most of these structures are in reasonable condition. The Kershaw and Elworthy tombs, which are next to each other (they were relatives), are especially notable in that they retain their fine railings. Both were designed by Alfred Waterhouse.

## Felix Slade and the Slade School of Fine Art

A major new discovery at Norwood is the grave of Felix Slade FSA (1790-1868). The Slade family

tomb, a brick vault with flat capping stone (grave 5,736, square 62) lies just to the west of the Davidge monument, opposite the Stevenson mausoleum. It is in reasonable condition.

Felix Slade was born in August 1790. He was the younger son of Robert Slade ( -1835) who made a fortune as a proctor in "Doctors' Commons", i.e. the College of Advocates and Doctors of Law in Knight-riding Street (near St Paul's) which from 1572 had housed the ecclesiastical (the Court of Arches) and Admiralty courts. On the death of his elder brother in 1858 Felix inherited all of the family wealth. He became known as a liberal purchaser of books, bindings and engravings. However, his glass collection (on which he spent £8,000) was his pride and joy.

Felix died unmarried at Walcot Place, Kennington on 29 March 1868. His will was proved at under £160,000. His glass, engravings, manuscripts and other items were bequeathed to the British Museum together with £3,000 for the purchase of material to supplement his glass collection. He also bequeathed £35,000 to endow three Professorships in Fine Art. At Oxford and Cambridge the holders of the Chairs, during their relatively short terms of office, have produced outstanding series of lectures. The first Slade Professors at Oxford and Cambridge were John Ruskin and Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt, respectively.

Felix Slade's bequest to University College London (UCL) linked the Professorship to his parallel foundation of six scholarships (£50 per annum) for students under 19 years of age. By 1871, UCL had augmented the bequest, built a new wing, and opened the 'Slade School(s) of Fine Art'. Students were admitted to an advanced syllabus under a young and gifted Professor, Sir Edward Poynter RA - his inaugural lecture was an account of the disposition of Slade's bequest. By 1882, there were 44 male and 55 female students, and the premises had been extended. Now there are over 200 full-time students, half of them postgraduates.

The original buildings still house the undergraduates. However, the antiques and extensive 'life rooms' which Slade would have recognised are gone. One 'life room' remains, but in addition there are painting, sculpture and multi-media studios, together with areas devoted to printmaking and stage design. However, there are still strong links with the views of Slade's generation: investigation and experiment remain of great significance.

Thanks to Stephen Chaplin, Slade Archivist and Research Fellow at UCL, for providing up-to-date information about the Slade School and to George Young for re-discovering Felix's burial at Norwood. It is noteworthy that neither we nor the School knew the whereabouts of the Slade tomb until George's researches initiated a search.



## Review of FOWNC Events - Autumn 1993

We were very pleased to welcome Peter Clayton, FSA, well-known in the art history world as an expert on the life and work of David Roberts, to speak before our AGM on 16th October. His theme was David Roberts' Egypt and the Holy Land - Then and Now, and he took us on a fascinating journey, following in the footsteps of Roberts up the Nile and then to such spectacular locations as Petra. Using two slide projectors simultaneously, he showed us, wherever possible, the comparison between a scene as painted by Roberts and a modern photograph of the same view. Time and again the artist's skill in putting on to canvas a massive piece of architecture or a landscape was evident, since even a wide-angle lens camera was unable to exactly capture the same picture from the same viewpoint. We heard amusing stories of Roberts' adventures disguised in Arab dress to make himself less conspicuous whilst sketching, and an important point emerged about the value of his work to present-day archaeologists: Roberts' meticulous drawings and notebooks often provide unique information about the appearance of structures such as temples at that time (1838/39), and are helpful in conservation projects. The popularity of the subject was clear from the excellent attendance - at least 45 people. The talk was followed by the AGM - if any member would like a copy of the minutes, please contact Jill Dudman.

Another well-attended and most interesting talk was given on 20th November by Judy Harris, who must be *the* expert on the Roupell family. She has been researching this family in depth for many years, and was able to present a detailed and sympathetic study of the most well-known member, William Roupell, copiously illustrated with slides. The story was related of William forging his

father's will and other documents, mortgaging and eventually losing most of the family land, becoming MP for Lambeth, being convicted for fraud at the Old Bailey, serving 14 years in prison, and finally returning home to Streatham to spend his time gardening and running the Christ Church slate club. Judy takes the view, after much investigation into his character, that he was not motivated by evil or greed, but rather by a desire to be popular and well-known, and that he was simply careless in handling his finances and continually trying to get out of debt. His generosity was shown when he founded the local corps of the Surrey Rifles Volunteers, paying for all the men's uniforms, and thoroughly enjoying leading them up and down the streets of Lambeth. The family name is perpetuated in the present Roupell Park council estate, ironically not on the site of but adjacent to the original family land.

## FOWNC Officers - 1994:

### *Chairman & Publications Officer:*

Bob Flanagan, 79 Durban Road, London SE27 9RW (Tel: 081 670 3265)

### *Vice-Chairman:*

Nicholas Long, 58 Crescent Lane, London SW4 9PU (Tel: 071 738 8480)

### *General Secretary:*

Jill Dudman, 119 Broxholm Road, London SE27 0BJ (Tel: 081 670 5456)

### *Membership Secretary:*

Rosemary Comber, 170 Knights Hill, London SE27 0SR (Tel: 081 761 3996)

### *Treasurer:*

David Comber (address and telephone as above)

### *Conservation Coordinator:*

Paul Graham, Flat 4, 9 St. Andrew's Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4DT (Tel: 081 390 0182)

### *Newsletter Editorial Board:*

Bob Flanagan and Jill Dudman

\*\*\*\*\*

## The Origins of Metropolitan Cemeteries

by Celia Smith

By the 1830s, the state of London's churchyards and burial grounds was such that questions were being asked in Parliament concerning the health of London's overcrowded population. Many eminent men of medicine were of the opinion that the stench emanating from these places was one of the main causes of the repeated epidemics of cholera, smallpox and possibly the almost endemic tuberculosis.

The custom of burying the city's dead within and around their parish churches had become untenable, due to the increase in population seeking

employment in the metropolis, allied to the appalling death rate. In many parts of the city, burial as such was no longer feasible. Cartloads of topsoil were imported from the countryside, on the instructions of the church beadle, and used to merely cover the latest "burials" which were stacked on top of one another, necessitating the "grave-digger" to jump up and down on the last one in an effort to cram it further down. This explains the phenomenon of city churchyards which even today are on a higher level than the actual church door.

Within the larger, less closely observed burial grounds, quite recent interments were unceremoniously exhumed and dumped to one side, and

then used as infill. In less scrupulous establishments the resulting broken coffin-wood was sold as firewood to the poor. Bones were collected up and ground for fertilizer, lead linings were sold as scrap to totters, and any decent coffin furnishings, i.e. plates, handles or ornaments, were sold back to undiscerning undertakers.

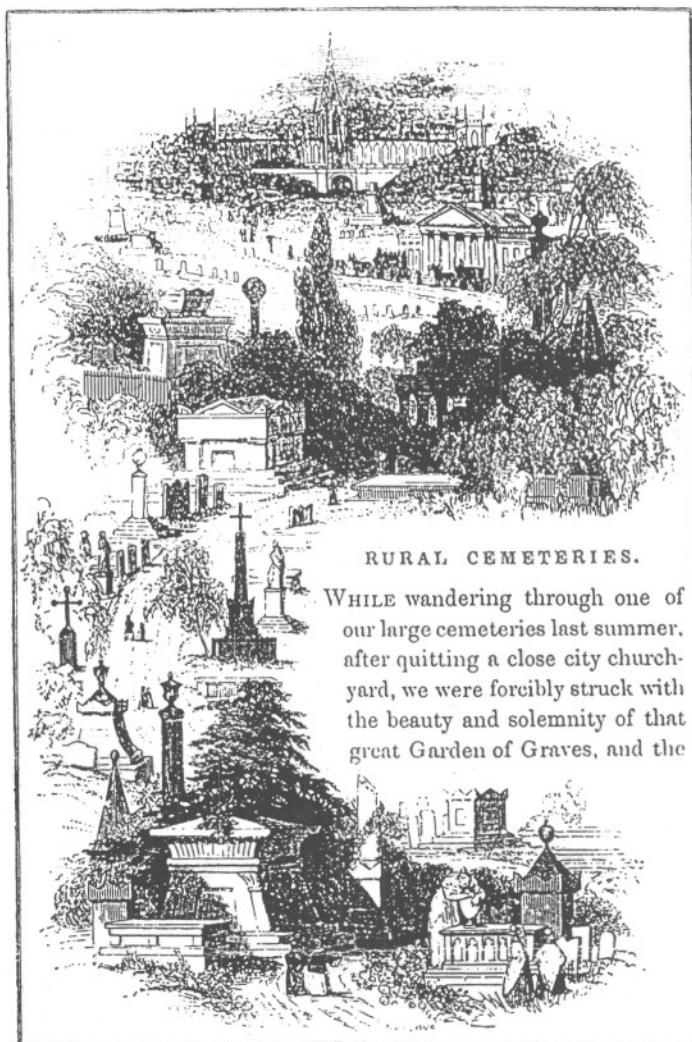
It was obvious to all that this state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, if only by reason of the noxious odours. The situation was well documented by Dickens, a frequent visitor to graveyards, in *Bleak House*:

"There!" says Jo, pointing, "Over yinder, among them pile of bones, and close to that there kitchen winder! They put him very nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp upon it to git it in. I could unkiver it for you with my broom, if the gate was open, that's why they locks it, I s'pose."

For some unexplained reason, London, the pinnacle of civilization, the capital of an Empire upon which the sun was never supposed to set, lagged far behind its European counterparts, and indeed behind other British cities as well. Norwich, Manchester and Liverpool all had their extramural cemeteries, independent of any particular church, in use years before London. In Paris it had been forbidden to bury the dead in city churchyards since 1804. Its Père Lachaise cemetery became the envy of the "burying world" in Europe, and was followed in Britain in a small way by Norwich in 1819, Manchester in 1821 and Liverpool in 1825. These were established mainly to answer a need for Dissenters' cemeteries, since being of any other Christian persuasion than Church of England made you a Dissenter.

Things had reached a parlous state in London by the time Parliament actually got around to doing anything about it. The first act establishing a metropolitan cemetery was eventually passed by both Houses in 1832, not a moment too soon. London was ravaged by a series of cholera epidemics, and large cemeteries were needed to receive the sorry victims. Most funeral directors are now taught that cholera is one of the diseases communicable *after* death, but as they did not know in those days, the insanitary methods of disposal they employed probably added to the regular outbreaks of the disease. Many of the overcrowded churchyards were right next to the local pump or water supply.

A vision of new "garden cemeteries" began to be realised and, practical as ever, the Victorians invited designs for a competition. The new cemeteries were to be enjoyed by the living – somewhere to stroll with the family on a Sunday afternoon.



#### RURAL CEMETERIES.

WHILE wandering through one of our large cemeteries last summer, after quitting a close city churchyard, we were forcibly struck with the beauty and solemnity of that great Garden of Graves, and the

It was soon realised that more private cemeteries would be needed, and after the opening of the first, All Souls at Kensal Green, in 1833, plans were soon underway to open the second, the South Metropolitan at Lower Norwood, in 1837.

At first there was great resistance by the Church of England to burials outside their jurisdiction (lost fees played no small part in this). However, compromises were made in that ministers would consecrate parts of the cemeteries to the Diocese, and these parts would fall legally under the power of the Chancellor of the Diocese, from whom permission in the form of a faculty would have to be obtained for any exhumation or removal of monuments. Also, a fee would be payable to the minister taking the funeral service, who should be the parish minister of the deceased if possible. Thus all parties were satisfied. Ultimately, the Burial Act of 1852 brought into force a complete ban on city burials.

Celia Smith Dip.F.D., M.B.I.F.D. is a funeral director and FOWNC committee member. She has undertaken much research into the history of her profession.

### **Forthcoming Events - January-March 1994**

General tours are held on the first Sunday of each month (2 January, 6 February, 6 March). The tours start at 11.00 at the Cemetery main gate and last about 2 hours. Talks are held in the Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way, West Norwood SE27 and begin at 14.30. Chatsworth Way leads off Norwood Road, but the entrance to the meeting room is at the side of the Church in Idmiston Road.

There is no formal charge for any event but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) to help cover costs. Talks are usually illustrated with slides and are open to all - please tell your friends. Remember that the informal sessions after the 'coffee break' at indoor meetings are intended to give members an opportunity to discuss topics which they feel would be of interest to others - please make use of this facility in 1994!

#### **Saturday 15 January: Lecture - John Lawson Johnston and the Bovril Company by John Armstrong**

Born in Roslin, Midlothian in 1839, Johnston ('Mr Bovril'), a dietetic expert, invented Bovril in about 1875. He lived at Kingswood House, Sydenham ('Bovril Castle'). He sold Bovril to E.T. Hooley for £2 million in 1896. He was chairman of the War Employment Bureau on the outbreak of the Boer War and died at Cannes in 1900. His tomb at Norwood can still be seen to the North of the crematorium. Unfortunately many of the Bovril Company's records were destroyed in World War II. However, Prof Armstrong (Thames Valley University) has been piecing together the history of the company.

#### **Saturday 19 February: Lecture - Doultons and other Lambeth Potters by Brian Bloice**

John Doulton (1793-1873) founded the firm which bears his name in 1828. His sons Frederick (1824-1872), MP for Lambeth 1856-72 and friend of William Roupell, and Sir Henry (1820-1897) were subsequently associated with the company, as was Sir Henry's son Henry Lewis (1853-1930). Many others buried at Norwood were associated with Doultons. These include John Watts (1786-1858), John's first partner, James Stiff (1808-1897), an early employee, and George Tinworth (1843-1913), Doulton's most famous potter. Brian Bloice is a well-known lecturer on many aspects of the history of South London.

#### **Saturday 19 March: Lecture - The Cuming Museum by Fiona Talbott**

Richard Cuming (1777-1870) and his youngest son Henry Syer Cuming FSA (-1902) amassed a vast collection of documents, drawings and artifacts. Richard was on friendly terms with many of the noted scientists, artists and literati of his day. The source of his wealth is unknown, however. On Henry's death the collection was donated to Southwark Borough Council. Although sadly neglected until recently, much of it can still be inspected in the Cuming Museum where Fiona Talbott is Assistant Keeper. The Cuming vault at Norwood is in good condition.

### **Events at Other Societies - January-March 1994** (Admission free unless otherwise stated)

#### **Tuesday 25 January at 20.00, All Saints' Parish Rooms, Beulah Hill, SE19: Lecture - Norwood Personalities by Bob Flanagan**

Our chairman will be speaking about distinguished members of the local community in times past who are buried in the Cemetery. Donations are invited to help cover costs of the meeting.  
(*Norwood Society*)

#### **Wednesday 16 February at 18.30, St. Bartholomew's Medical College, Charterhouse Square, EC1: Lecture - Tower Bridge: Its First 100 Years**

Tower Bridge was designed by the City architect Sir Horace Jones, whose monument at Norwood (on the Ship Path) has recently been listed Grade II. The bridge was finally completed, after Jones' death, in 1894.

(*Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society*)

#### **Saturday 5 March at 14.00, Charlton Cemetery, Cemetery Lane, SE7: Tour by Nicholas Reed**

Those who wish will be meeting at the Bugle Horn pub, Charlton Village at 12.30, leaving at 13.30 to walk past (and perhaps briefly inside) Charlton House, London's finest surviving Jacobean mansion, and then through the park to arrive at the Cemetery entrance at 14.00. Cost: £2 per person.  
(*Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery*)

#### **Thursday 17 March at 19.45, Nunhead Community Hall, Nunhead Lane, SE15: Lecture - The South Metropolitan Cemetery, West Norwood by Bob Flanagan**

(*Friends of Nunhead Cemetery*)

#### **Saturday 19 March at 14.30, Charlton House, Charlton Village, SE7: Lecture - E. Nesbit and Her Homes in S. E. London and Kent by Nicholas Reed**

E. Nesbit's most famous novel is *The Railway Children*; her father and grandfather are both interred at Norwood.

(*Charlton Society*)