

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery



NEWSLETTER NO 11: AUGUST 1992

AT LAST: A NEW POLICY FOR NORWOOD?

We are very pleased to announce that, after representations made by the Friends to various Councillors, Lambeth has decided to review the whole question of the management of Norwood. A paper is being drawn up by the Planning and Environmental Services Departments, and is due to be discussed at a major Committee Meeting in September. We shall try to inform you when we know the date, as the Agenda should make interesting reading and the meeting itself could be crucial for the Cemetery's future.

Meanwhile, Lambeth is drawing up a new Unitary Development Plan for the Borough. All Boroughs have to do this, and also have to submit the Draft Plan to public scrutiny. The only mention of our Cemetery in the Draft was the suggestion that it should be declared a Nature Reserve. This suggestion in itself, if adopted, could lead to better management, though so much undergrowth and so many trees both large and small have been removed in the last 18 months that it will take some time for the Cemetery to recover. But such a policy would make it more difficult to maintain the "lawn conversion" plan, which is still official policy in the Cemetery at the moment. Anyway, we have submitted our own detailed suggestions for alterations and improvements to the Plan, and emphasised what an important tourist attraction the Cemetery could become, if managed appropriately. We understand that English Heritage have also submitted evidence and that this has been largely accepted by the Lambeth Department revising the Plan. So that is good news in itself.

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CEMETERY OPENING HOURS

A reminder that the opening hours are:
April to October: 8-6 weekdays, 10-6 weekends
November to March: 8-4 weekdays, 10-4 weekends

NATIONAL FEDERATION NOW ESTABLISHED

At the Annual Meeting of Cemetery Friends groups on 20th June 1992, some twelve such groups were represented, out of the 20 which have now been established throughout the country. But this time there was a proposal (originally advocated by Bob Flanagan) that a permanent Federation should be set up, with a proper constitution and elected officers. This could comment on new issues in the management of cemeteries generally, encourage collaboration between Friends groups and we hope also encourage the growth of new groups to protect further threatened cemeteries.

At the June meeting, a new constitution was unanimously adopted, and Peter Salter, from the Friends of Abney Park Cemetery, was elected as the first Chairman of the new body. The Secretary is Gwyneth Stokes, who has been editing the Federation Newsletter for the last two years, and the Treasurer is from Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol. With these new officers, we can expect our cemetery movement to take a higher profile in the media.

The London cemeteries for which there are now preservation groups, in addition to ourselves, are: Abney Park, Highgate, Kensal Green, Nunhead, and Woodgrange Park. There is also a new body and a new colour booklet for Brookwood Cemetery near Woking.

In view of the impending privatisation of the management of Brompton Cemetery, owned by what was the Department of the Environment, one can hope a Friends group will soon be established there. As we know, it has been far too easy for new management in cemeteries to embark on clearance of neglected tombs as part of a "tidying-up" of the area. Hugh Meller's standard work "London Cemeteries" (2nd edition 1985, still in print, price £17.50) devotes six pages to the eminent buried at Brompton: the same number of pages as Norwood. It would be nice to have a tour there sometime.

By contrast, the Open Day at Kensal Green this year proved even better organised by their Friends than last year, and was greatly enjoyed by those of us who went. It was particularly interesting to visit their catacombs, which still accept interments.

THOMAS LYNN BRISTOWE REMEMBERED

Centenary of Brockwell Park

The centenary of the opening of Brockwell Park, on D-day (as it now is), 1892, was marked by cutting the ribbon around five newly-planted trees in the Park. The whole ceremony was due to the industry of Robert Holden, one of our members, and the owner of two family graves at Norwood.

It was largely owing to the hard work of the then MP for Norwood, Thomas Lynn Bristowe, that Brockwell Park was bought for the public in 1892. Mr Bristowe attended the opening ceremony and speech by Lord Rosebery on 6th June, but unfortunately suffered a heart attack and died almost immediately. He is buried at Norwood along the Doulton path, not far from the tomb of Henry Doulton (Manning booklet no 16).

At the ceremony this year, the present MP for Norwood, John Fraser, unveiled one tree and survived the experience: among those who unveiled others were Lady Butler, whose husband Sir Robin Butler is Secretary to the Cabinet; they are also Herne Hill residents. But Robert also tracked down two direct descendants of Mr Bristowe: a grandson and a great-grand-daughter. They too unveiled a tree, and we hope they will adopt their forbear's tomb.

BROCKWELL HALL IN BROCKWELL PARK

Brockwell Hall is the ruined structure in the centre of the Park, currently undergoing restoration after being burnt out in 1990. Some of you may remember when one of our members, Patricia Jenkyns she conducted our original Artists Tour at Norwood in 1990. Patricia has now moved from Herne Hill to Eastbourne, but she has tracked down much material about the two families who owned Brockwell Hall in the last century.

The former owners were from the Blades and Blackburn families, and both their tombs survive, appropriately next door to each other. They are almost directly behind the tomb of the artist Samuel Prout, and west of the listed tomb of the Rev William Punshon. The Punshon tomb appears as no 24 in the Manning booklet, and indeed the Blades and Blackburn tombs are visible in his photograph: they are the tall table tombs on the left of the photo. The base of Punshon was damaged when the earthmovers were levelling the site all round Square 60 in 1990: we can at least be glad that these other historic tombs were saved at the same time!

THE HOMES OF AUGUST MANNS

We asked if someone could find out where August Manns lived in the area: he was Director of Music at the Crystal Palace for 50 years from 1856 and of course is buried at Norwood. Our member Betty Griffin has kindly provided most of the answers.

In 1867 he was at 4 Tudor Villas, Kirkdale, Sydenham, and in 1869 he is found at Athol Lodge, Kirkdale. Was this the same house? While living in Sydenham he attended Holy Trinity Church, Sydenham Park, according to Doris Pullen. Between 1880 and 1889 he was at Larkbeare, which he also regarded as Sydenham, though the actual road is Dulwich Wood Park. His house stood near the top of the road on the left, round about where nos 3-4 are now. Unfortunately this house has gone, though some of its neighbours survive.

By 1897 and until 1907 he was at Gleadale, 4 Harold Road, Upper Norwood, which has also gone, to be replaced with a modern estate. He moved to White Lodge, Beulah Hill in the year of his death 1907, and his widow continued to live there until at least 1919.

So unless we can locate either of his earlier houses in Sydenham, it looks unlikely we can ask English Heritage to put up a plaque to him. But perhaps there is somewhere appropriate and more prominent at the Crystal Palace where one could commemorate his name. What about an August Manns Music Room somewhere in the new complex, when it's finished?

It turns out that Manns had two brothers both living at Norwood: did all three come over with their parents much earlier? His brother Otto was a violinist in his brother's orchestra for many years, living first at 6 Jasper Road, and then from 1900 to 1918 at 58 Maberley Road. When both Otto and his other brother Gustave had died, their widows lived next door to each other at 48 and 50 Maberley Road, Upper Norwood. A touching thought!

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A NEW BURIAL POLICY IN LONDON?

Members may remember that a campaign last year resulted in Southwark reversing its plans to clear parts of Camberwell Old Cemetery in order to make room for further burials. Indeed since then four of the monuments in it have been listed by the DOE, including that to Frederick Horniman, creator of the Horniman Museum. But what we did not anticipate was the result of this success on burial policy in Southwark itself, results which could have implications for Lambeth in the future.

Back in 1904 Southwark bought some 12 acres of open fields in the Honor Oak area for possible use as cemetery space. Then then leased this land for amenity use by residents of Lewisham, until Southwark wanted it back for future burials. Ever since, it has been a popular open space much used for recreation by the locals. But last year, Southwark's officers claimed back 4 of the 12 acres, fenced them off and started further burial there. At a Committee Meeting on 20th July 1992 they heard a deputation from Save Our Spaces in London, which was set up to try to preserve further green spaces in inner London threatened by their use for burial land.

The only legal obligation on London Councils is to provide a system for disposal of bodies. This need be a cremation-only service, if they so decide, and they could tell those who wish for earth burial to buy a plot in a private cemetery elsewhere. This is the policy applied in several central London boroughs. But Southwark has decided that as part of their "equal opportunities" goals, they must offer burials to Borough residents (and, more remarkably, to residents outside the Borough as well). Not all Labour authorities do this: Camden, for example, has said that despite its commitment to equal opportunities, they simply cannot provide earth burial for their residents, as they have no space.

Southwark did briefly consider the possibility of buying land outside: something which Hammersmith also considered, when they wrote around to other London Boroughs to see if they were willing to help with the expense: there was no interest. Anyway, Southwark listened to the deputation from SOS London. They then decided both to continue with burials in the recently reclaimed four acres, and to proceed to take over the other eight acres for burials. This, they say, will give them enough burial space until 2025.

So as a result of this new policy, 12 acres of open green space in Southwark will be covered with burials by the year 2025, and they will then be back to square one.

One hopes that Lambeth's new report in September will address the question of future burial space in the Borough: a recent rough estimate is that they have enough for space for "up to 2000 and beyond": but how many years beyond, and does that mean using every available plot at Norwood, and surrounding every historic tomb with new burials? We must urge them to start looking a few years beyond the next ten. Anyway, the September report on Norwood should make very interesting reading.

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of the Evening
Standard 29 May
and 4 June 1992

Mystery of the Disraelis

THE HUNT was on today for a missing piece of English history — the tombstone of the sister of Queen Victoria's favourite Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli.

The monument to Sarah Disraeli had graced the Willesden Lane cemetery in Kilburn for more than 100 years.

But when Baron Dombor, a distant cousin of Disraeli, went to pay his respects he was told the black granite headstone had been removed "to make it easier to mow the lawn".

Now the Hungarian-born baron has written to Westminster's Lord Mayor, Dr Cyril Nemeeth, demanding that the headstone be found and returned to its proper place.

Baron Dombor was visiting the cemetery to photograph Sarah's tombstone for a book on his family's history, which he is preparing for the British Museum.

Too few rest in peace

YOU report (29 May) on the disappearance of the monument to Disraeli's sister. It is likely to have been broken up and destroyed. This is unfortunately all too typical of the threat to our heritage in London's cemeteries.

Two years ago, an important and attractive monument to Charles Dickens's son was removed without trace from Barnes Cemetery. The excuse was the same: "It's easier to mow the lawn". Not very convincing, now that the invention of strimmers means that mowing is unnecessary.

In Norwood, three of the 44 listed memorials have disappeared in the last 10 years. It seems likely this was to create space for new burials. The shortage of burial space throughout London is something which needs to be tackled quickly, either by insisting on cremation only in inner London, or by buying a green field site outside London.

The latter is exactly what happened 150 years ago, when the first cemeteries were established. But it took an unhealthily dangerous situation in the City churchyards before this obvious step was taken.

Without such action, many more important memorials to our Victorian forebears will disappear, often without even a photograph being taken. — Nicholas Reed, Chairman, Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, Hichison Road, Peckham.

THE NORWOOD CATACOMBS

One of our members, Celia Smith, has written a project about British burial customs, which makes very interesting reading. For those who wondered why some people were buried in catacombs, rather than in the ground, we now have the answer. According to Celia, "Catacomb burial was the province of the nouveau riche, or life peer type. Too impecunious to run to a full mausoleum, but too snobbish to descend to common earth burial, albeit bricklined."

Members may remember that among those placed in the catacombs are Sir William Tite, architect of the Cemetery, Lord Hannen the judge, and John Collis Nesbit, the father of Edith Nesbit, the children's story writer. Mr Nesbit, who died when she was only four, had run an agricultural college at Kennington, and no doubt like many schoolteachers, this did not leave him a wealthy man!

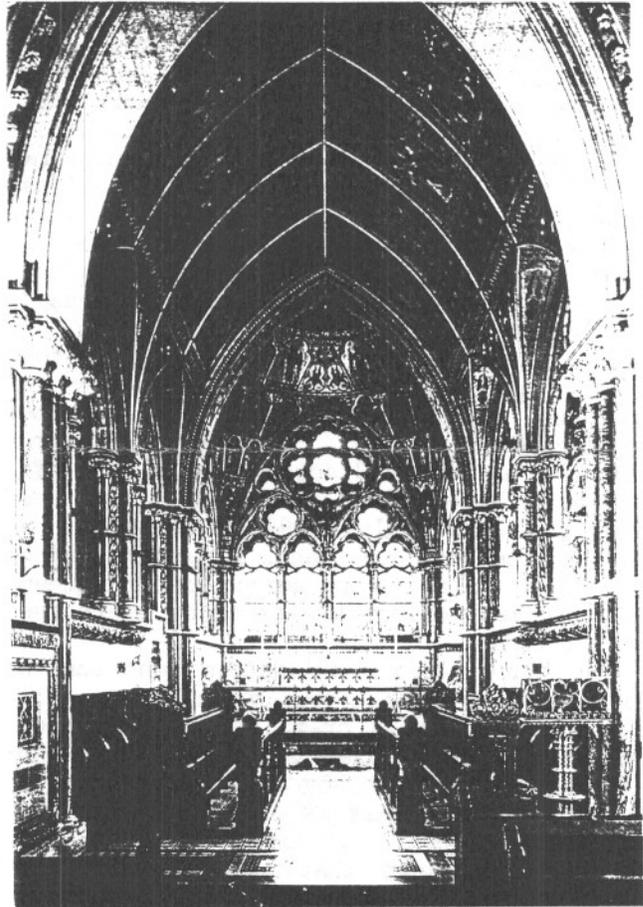
Our visits to the Norwood catacombs normally attract a considerable audience: the next visit on which we hope to visit them will be on our Scientists' and Inventors' tour at 2.30 pm on 6th September.

Publications News - Bob Flanagan

A few spare copies of the programme for the concert held in March [Music at the Crystal Palace: August Manns (1825-1907) by Leon Conrad] containing background information on Manns and his circle are now available, price 75 p.

Postcards (35 p). William Burges: Exterior and interior (illustrated) of St Mary's Church, Studley Royal (1871-8).

William Burges was buried at Norwood in 1881 in the tomb he himself designed for his mother. The vault, which is listed Grade II*, lies in square 34 just to the west of the 'Doulton Path'. Burges was amongst the outstanding architects of the Nineteenth Century yet few of his major projects were ever fully completed. In part this must be due to the fact that his father, Alfred Burges (-1886), a successful civil engineer who is also interred in the family tomb, gave him a substantial allowance. William thus felt little need to compromise his (expensive) designs in order to simply make a living. The pair of churches at Skelton (Christ the Consoler, recently declared redundant and now closed and somewhat forlorn) and at Studley Royal (St Mary's), both near Ripon, North Yorkshire, rank amongst the finest surviving High Victorian churches and clearly show Burges's capabilities as regards both external design and interior features. The stained glass (by Weekes and Saunders), carving (by Nicholls) and the painted interiors are particularly stunning. Fortunately St Mary's is now in the care of English Heritage and is open to visitors under the auspices of the National Trust. Let us hope that Skelton may be similarly rescued before too long.



Book Review: Lambeth's Theatrical Heritage by John Cresswell. Streatham Society/Lambeth Local History Forum, 1991. 24 pages, £1.50 (softback).

Lambeth and Southwark share a theatrical heritage as rich and varied as virtually anywhere in the world. John Cresswell's booklet gives brief details of 17 theatres, music halls and pleasure gardens situated in Lambeth and also includes the Crystal Palace. No doubt other venues could have been included - I would have mentioned the Surrey Gardens Music Hall (designed by Horace Jones) in the Surrey Zoological Gardens at Walworth, the Temple of Flora which lay just to the North of the present Westminster Bridge Road and the Spas at Streatham and Beulah Hill, for example. Nevertheless, this booklet will be especially useful as a companion to our own forthcoming booklet on Entertainers Commemorated at Norwood. Those with connections with Norwood mentioned in the present booklet include: George Conquest, manager of the Surrey Theatre for 20 years from 1881; George Davidge, manager of the Royal Coburg for some seven years from 1826 and later manager at the Surrey; Frederick Gye senior, owner of the Vauxhall gardens for some 20 years from 1821; Douglas Jerrold, author of the enduring hit Black Ey'd Susan first produced at the Surrey in 1829; David Webster Osbaldiston, manager of the Surrey for several years from 1831 (see next page); and Philip Phillips, founder of the Bower Saloon - amongst those noted as appearing at the 'Sower Baloon' was Frederick Robson (the 'Great Little Robson'), credited as being one of the finest actors of the last century.

Book Review: Richard Henry Brunton - The Father of Japan Lights and Yokohama Urban Planning. Yokohama Archives of History, 1991. 104 pages + supplement, £7.95 (softback). Many colour and monochrome illustrations.

This unusual volume, with text in Japanese and in English, was produced in conjunction with an exhibition held in Yokohama last year to celebrate the sesquicentenary of Brunton's birth and the 90th anniversary of his death. A relatively junior civil engineer, Brunton sailed from Southampton on 13 June 1868 bound for Japan. As is clear from the title of this book, and as FOWNC members will know, Brunton was largely responsible for the planning and construction of the series of lighthouses and lightships around the coast of Japan which Great Britain, France, the Netherlands & the US deemed essential if trade with Japan were to be developed. Moreover Brunton was virtually the only trained engineer in feudal Japan at this time and was consulted on a range of the other projects, one of

which, the Iron Bridge in Yokohama Harbour, is the subject of a beautiful contemporary illustration reproduced in the book. Brunton's other major achievement was the founding of Japan's first school of civil engineering. He also produced many plans for revitalising Yokohama although few were executed at the time. In 1876 Brunton's contract expired and he returned to England. He was only 35 and his place in history was assured. Little is known of his subsequent career. He died at 45 Courtfield Road, SW, on 24 April 1901 and was buried at Norwood. A memorial was placed on his unmarked grave by the Yokohama Chamber of Commerce at a ceremony held last year (see Newsletter 11). The original memorial was recorded by Eric Smith in the early 1980s but the fate of this monument is unknown...

Book Review: On Lambeth Marsh: The South Bank and Waterloo by Graham Gibberd. 1992. 175 pages, £12.00 (softback). Several colour and many monochrome illustrations.

From the 14th Century until 1888 the area bounded by the Thames and north/west of Lambeth Road/St George's Circus/Blackfriars Road was known as Lambeth Marsh. Graham Gibberd has written a well-informed account of this area and its environs. However, I do find the layout confusing. The Introduction, for example, is a list of place names and their origins while Chapter 1 is a gazetteer of sites of interest going as far afield as Vauxhall and Deptford but later concentrating on the Marsh itself. All this would be better at the end of the book. Chapter 2 discusses how drainage and improved communications set up the 'Island Village' for exploitation - I found one 'howler': the London Necropolis Company's first station in York Street (later Leake Street) adjacent to Waterloo opened in 1854 not 1870. The designer was W. Tite with the assistance of Sir W. Cubitt. Chapter 3 discusses the industries which flourished on the Marsh up to the present day but Chapters 4 and 5 then go on to discuss the historical development of the area ('rural life') up to 1820. The remaining chapters are in the same vein - lots of information but oh for a clear plan.... This being said, amongst those mentioned in the book with connections with the cemetery are William Clowes (1779-1847), printer; Sir Henry Doulton (1820-1897), pottery manufacturer; Joshua Field (1757-1863), mechanical engineer; John Oakey (-1887), emery paper and blacking manufacturer; William Roupell (1831-1909), MP and perpetrator of a famous forgery; George Tinworth (1843-1913), potter.

Postcard (30 p). Mr Osbaldiston as Hoffer in Hoffer the Tell of the Tirol by Fitzball. Hand coloured etching, ca. 1810.

David Webster Osbaldiston (1794-1851), a successful actor, succeeded William Robert Elliston as manager of the Surrey Theatre in June 1831. He subsequently became manager at Sadler's Wells and, in 1840/1, actor/manager of the Royal Victoria Theatre (formerly the Royal Coburg Theatre, now the Old Vic), a post he held for some seven years. As a manager, Osbaldiston had a reputation for avarice rivalled only by that of another Norwood 'resident', George Bothwell Davidge. Osbaldiston, for example, once regularly issued all his staff with tickets for their own performances but, in contrast to contemporary practice, made them pay for them out of their own salaries! Osbaldiston died at his home in Acre Lane, Brixton on 3 January 1851 and was buried at Norwood (Square 74). Unfortunately no trace of Osbaldiston's monument now remains. However, George Davidge's elaborate tomb lies literally across the road from the (Grade II listed) tomb of Dr William Marsden near to the Stevenson Mausoleum (Square 62).



MR OSBALDISTON as HOFFER
Printed & Published by G. SKEEL, 24, Cleverton St. Saint Helier
J.C.S.

Book Review: Samuel Prout (1783-1852) by Richard Lockett. Batsford/Victoria & Albert Museum, 1985. 192 pages, £7.95 (softback). Twelve colour + many monochrome illustrations.

Prout was one of the first artists to specialize in continental views. In the early 1820s he popularized the scenery of the grand tour - Normandy, the Rhine, the Low Countries, Switzerland and Italy, particularly Venice - with a wider public via the print trade and his books of engravings and lithographs. George IV appointed him 'Painter in Water-Colours in Ordinary' in 1829. Although greatly admired by Ruskin, his work has received relatively little attention since the end of the nineteenth century. This book, the first monograph on Prout since 1929, is now out of print but we have managed to obtain a few copies. Prout lies in the Consecrated portion of the cemetery (Square 62) near to the (Grade II listed) tomb of the Rev. William Punshon (-1881). Prout's first patron, John Britton (1771-1857), is buried beneath the 'henge' opposite the Gilbert memorial near the main gate.

Book Review: An Introduction to Brookwood Cemetery by John Clarke. Necropolis Publications (Brookwood Cemetery, Surrey), 1992. 40 pages, £1.50 (softback). Thirty-two colour plates + detailed map.

Those of you who have read John Clarke's excellent book on the Brookwood Necropolis Railway (for review see October 1991 Newsletter) will also want to peruse this little booklet which is in many ways a counterpart to Geoffrey Manning's guide to Norwood. The London Necropolis and National Mausoleum Company was formed in 1852 with the aim of providing burial space for all of London's dead for the foreseeable future. Two thousand acres of 'derelict' land were purchased near Woking and initially some 400 acres (9 times the area of Norwood) were landscaped for use as a cemetery. Of prime importance was the proximity of the London & South Western Railway which offered cheap and rapid transport for coffins and mourners from Waterloo - stations were built at Waterloo itself (designed by the L&SWR architect William Tite) and Anglican and Nonconformist stations and associated chapels (designed by Sidney Smirke) on a private branch line which ran through the cemetery. The advisor to the Company, Sir William Cubitt, suggested that the chapels should both be built of wood in case the venture was not a success...

In the event some 240,000 people have been buried at Brookwood, far fewer than envisaged originally but a substantial number nevertheless. In addition, both original chapels have survived largely intact. Unfortunately few signs of the private branch line and stations remain, but the rest of the cemetery is again largely intact and, despite recent adverse publicity, seems to be in good hands. No memorials are being removed, for example, and the present owner, Mr Güney, has actively encouraged the formation of the Brookwood Cemetery Society to study the history of the cemetery and to promote conservation, a far cry from the reception we have had from the cemetery management at Norwood! [N.B. I plan to organise a trip to Brookwood next summer, meeting first of all at Waterloo to view the remains of the Necropolis Station and then travelling to Brookwood (by train of course) to visit the cemetery itself - the Brookwood Cemetery Society have promised to us a guided tour].

Graves to look out for at Brookwood include: Sir John Wolfe-Barry (1836-1918), civil engineer whose works include Tower Bridge (in collaboration with Sir Horace Jones), the completion of the Circle Line and the Barry Railway; Sir Luke Fildes (1843-1927), painter and book illustrator, one of the Melbury Road 'set' of which William Burges was an early member; Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912), Indian civil servant, botanist and ornithologist who founded the South London Botanical Institute on Norwood Road; Frederick William Spofforth (1853-1926), Australian cricketer who performed remarkable bowling feats for the Australians in Test Matches at Lord's in 1878 and at the Oval in 1888; and Charles Warne (1802-1877), archaeologist who specialised in the prehistoric remains of Dorset - his memorial consists of a rough upright stone in the centre of a low horseshoe-shaped mound and was perhaps influenced by the 1857 memorial to another antiquarian, John Britton, at Norwood. Finally, amongst those whose ashes are buried in the Glades of Remembrance are those of the author Dennis Wheatley (1897-1977), who I believe was cremated at Norwood and who is commemorated on the Baker family tombstone, a tall obelisk immediately to the west of the site of the Episcopal Chapel (the present Rose Garden).

Postcard (30 p): George Tinworth - Model for a Shakespeare Monument (Cuming Museum)

George Tinworth (1843-1913) was Henry Doulton's leading potter. He was buried at Norwood in his family grave although the tombstone is one of the many which have been destroyed in recent years. His output ranged from large religious compositions, many of which have survived, to small pieces which nowadays are much valued by collectors. He is also thought to have made the tympanum for Sir Henry's mausoleum at Norwood. Tinworth made this clay model in 1904 to commemorate Southwark's Shakespeare connections but the monument was never built. The model is, however, on permanent display at the Museum. The Cumings too are buried at Norwood. Their family vault, an engraved flat slab, lies just to the west of the 'Doulton path' immediately behind the granite obelisk which commemorates the radio pioneer Alexander Muirhead and his family.

Stop Press: The Story of Sir Henry Bessemer by Patricia M. Jenkyns. Herne Hill Society, 1984 (reprinted 1991). 24 A4 pages, £2.00 (softback).

Although dated 1991 we have just acquired a few copies of this reprint. The larger format and clearer illustrations than the original are to be commended.

