

# Friends of West Norwood Cemetery



NEWSLETTER NO 12: OCTOBER 1992

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 1991-2

by Nicholas Reed

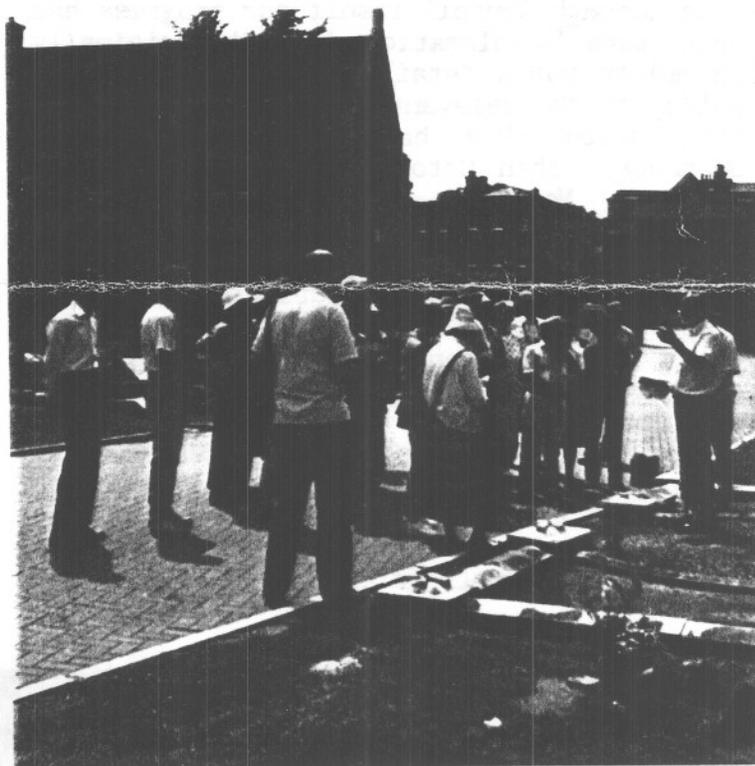
Perhaps the main achievement of FOWNC in the last year has been to see its membership grow to 200 paid-up members. For a group founded 2½ years ago, and which is still not allowed to display its posters in the Cemetery, this is a considerable achievement. It reflects well, both on the number of local people who feel proud of 'their' Cemetery, and the many people from further away who take an interest in its history and eminent 'residents'.

## ACTIVITIES

During the year, we had a good variety of talks and walks. Philip Attwood came to talk about Maria Cassavetti, and in fact his new book on her medals has just been published by the British Museum. The talk on Douglas Jerrold was well attended, as was that held to mark the centenary of the death of the Baptist preacher Spurgeon.

Almost all our tours this year were new ventures. The President of the Geologists' Association gave a fascinating tour identifying a great variety of granites and marbles. George Young took us on an unusual tour of just some of the many associations with Clapham. Our annual Charles Bravo tour worked well, and Bob Flanagan's tour of Entertainers proved most instructive. Other special tours were two arranged for the members of the Herne Hill Society and the Sydenham Society, including several tombs which proudly record their occupants' addresses in those suburbs. Repeated were the tours about Crystal Palace people, and scientists and inventors, and a well-attended concert was held commemorating the conductor Sir August Manns.

We had equally good talks about the printing firm of Clowes, and about the Tate and Leaf families. These were less well attended, probably because they took place



A well-attended start to the tour by Dr Eric Robinson, President of the Geologists' Association (right). He is standing in the forecourt of the Maddick mausoleum, which has some interesting examples of marble weathering.

on sunny afternoons in summer. On the other hand, our special walks were very well attended - except when the weather was dreadful! So your Committee has decided to follow the example of some other societies, and hold our indoor talks in winter, and a variety of tours during the summer.

## PUBLICITY

We have had highly successful stalls at the Open Day at Kensal Green, at the South London History Book Fair at Vauxhall, and the two days of the Lambeth Country Show. We took over £100 a day at each of these: a splendid achievement, largely due to the energy and persistence of our Publications Officer Bob Flanagan.

Our Newsletter is now duplicated very efficiently by the undertakers Dowsett and Jenkins, and Celia Smith, one of their staff who is also on our Committee, now produces highly imaginative and colourful posters which undoubtedly help to bring more visitors to our events.

#### LAMBETH POLICY

With Lambeth Council itself our progress has been more problematic. Lambeth originally agreed to put a detailed report on Cemetery policy to the relevant Committee in June. We then heard this had been postponed to September, then October, and the latest we hear is November. Meanwhile, burial is proceeding in sensitive areas near prominent memorials, such as along the Doulton path, and notices have appeared telling people to keep out of the "Nature Areas": a new policy which has not been announced or discussed anywhere, let alone among the Councillors, who are supposed to decide policy. Since then, Lambeth has placed notices in the newspapers, saying they intend to recommence clearance of tombs more than 75 years old, to start in November. We shall give you the latest developments on this at the AGM.

English Heritage have been rather more positive, and by the time of the AGM, the Grade II\* listed memorial to Gideon Mantell should have been fully restored, with its railings replaced. Don Bianco from English Heritage has been largely in charge of this, and Heritage and the Geologists' Association have provided almost all the finance for the restoration. We are most grateful to both of them, as we are to the Heritage of London Trust, who largely paid for the successful restoration of the Stevenson mausoleum completed early this year. Meanwhile, private money has provided a new headstone for William Simms, the maker of astronomical instruments, and for the civil engineer Richard Brunton (see Newsletter 10).

#### FAMOUS COMPANIES

As we know that the founders of so many companies lie at Norwood, I suggest that sometime soon we might start to hold a commemoration ceremony on the anniversary of the death of the founder. If we were to place a small wreath on the tomb, we could invite a representative from the company to attend. This could lead them to take a greater interest both in their founder's tomb, and in the Cemetery generally.

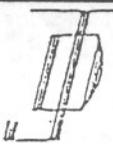
On a personal note, I have decided to step down as Chairman after three years in post, though I shall be staying on Committee. The Friends is now firmly based, with a knowledgeable Committee. Most importantly, there has been no wholesale clearance since 1990. All good wishes to my successor, and I can assure the members that if Lambeth do start major clearance again, I shall be back manning the barricades as vigorously as ever!

Nicholas Reed

#### HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN WEST NORWOOD

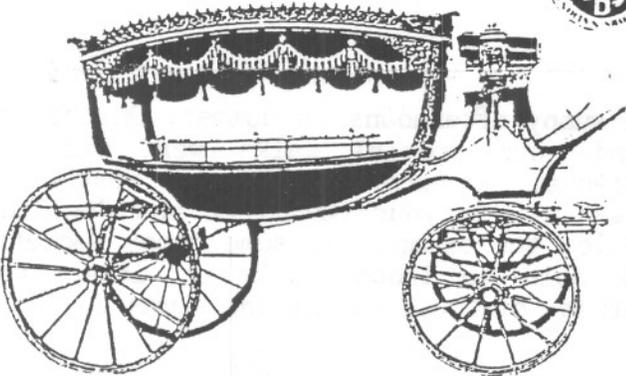
There are only about two buildings in West Norwood which are 'listed', i.e. they cannot be demolished without planning permission. Both are pre-Victorian, but their character has been largely destroyed by later alterations. Yet some of the most attractive and distinctive buildings of West Norwood are Victorian.

Take the old Nettlefold Library, with its seven busts of famous writers looking out over St. Luke's churchyard. Or the old Fire Station, now the home of the South London Theatre Centre. And lastly, the mock-Jacobean Lodge opposite Cotswold Street: all that is left of the magnificent mock-Jacobean Jewish Orphanage, demolished by Lambeth Council in the 1950s. The old Library and the Lodge still belong to Lambeth. We have suggested that all three buildings should be listed, and will inform you if our suggestion is accepted.



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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

A reminder of our remaining events for 1992: both talks will be held at Chatsworth Baptist Church in Chatsworth Way, off Norwood Road, SE27. Please use the entrance in Idmiston Way: it is the right-hand entrance of the several doors on that side.

Saturday 17th October, at 2.30 pm

Talk: "Charles Stuart Parnell and the Scandal of Kitty O'Shea." A talk by Winifred Murphy, who is Chairman of the Parnell Restoration Fund, and also looks after the grave of Kitty O'Shea (later Mrs Parnell) and their daughter, who became a nun. Kitty O'Shea lived in North Park, Eltham, while her aunt lived in Eltham Lodge, which is now the Clubhouse for Blackheath Golf Club.

Lord Hannen, who chaired the Parnell Commission, is buried at Norwood, and Hannen Road beside the station is named after him. We believe the prosecuting Counsel of the Commission is also at Norwood. This meeting will be followed by tea at 3.45 and then our AGM at 4 o'clock.

Sunday 15th November at 11 am

Tour of Military Connections, starting from the Cemetery entrance.

Just one week after Remembrance Day, we shall be looking at the graves of distinguished soldiers and sailors who took part in the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean Wars (including one of Florence Nightingale's nurses), the Boer War, and finally the last two wars.

Saturday 28th November, at 2.30 pm

Talk: "Charles Dickens and his Circle." Following his very stimulating talk on Jerrold early this year, Professor Michael Slater returns to talk to us about the circle of Charles Dickens, many of whom are buried at Norwood, including the artist Cattermole and the radical judge (!) and playwright Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd.



*Trevor Eve as Parnell and Francesca Annis as Katharine in Parnell and the Englishwoman*

## ONE EVENT NOT PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED

Wednesday 14th October, from 6 pm to 9 pm.

The AGM of the Upper Norwood Improvement Team will take place at 6.30 pm, but there will be exhibitions and publications on sale from at least ten local organisations, including ourselves, starting at 6 pm. This will be at the Queens Hotel in Church Road SE19: everyone is very welcome.

## CEMETERY OPENING HOURS

A reminder that the opening hours are:

April to October: 8-6 weekdays, 10-6 weekends

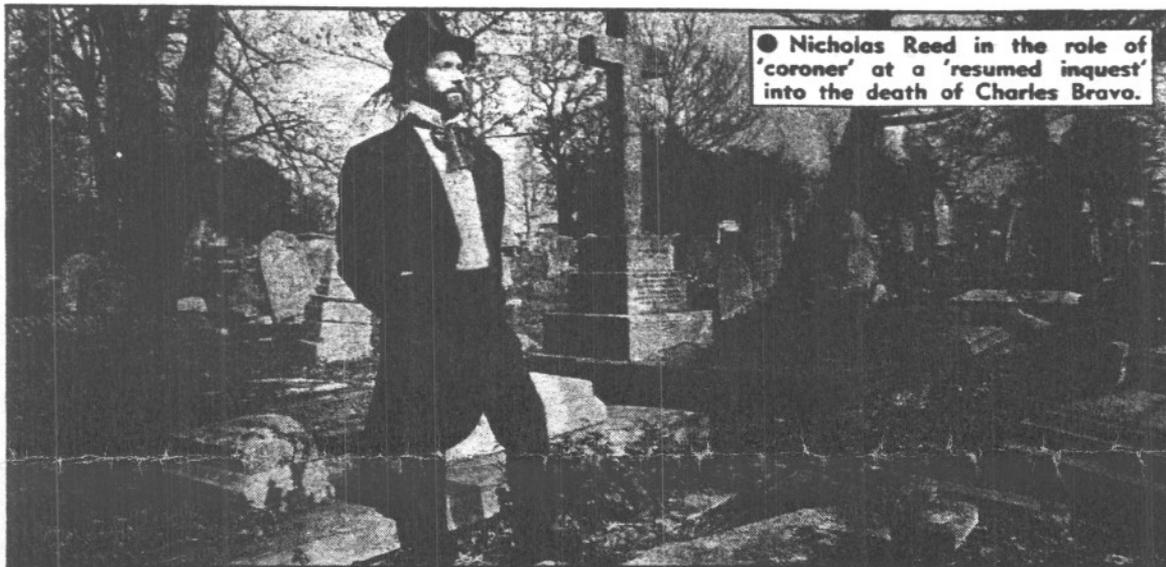
November to March: 8-4 weekdays, 10-4 weekends

## FOWNC OFFICERS

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10 SOUTH LONDON PRESS, Thursday, April 16th, 1992



# UNSOLVED MURDER

**A COLLAPSED, crumbling headstone and an overgrown grave hardly do justice to the memory of Charles Bravo — one of south London's most celebrated murder victims who died 116 years ago.**

The barrister spent two-and-a-half days dying in agony after being slipped a fatal overdose of antimony.

The arsenic-like poison was used by Victorians to make horses' coats glossy and, in small doses, to reduce over active men's libidos.

But in April 1876, one of at least three people administered the fatal dose to Bravo, the-then owner of Balham Priory in Bedford Hill.

Was it his wife Florence, her lady's companion or her ex-lover? Two inquests failed to find the culprit and since then the case has remained shrouded in mystery.

On Saturday, the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery visited Bravo's grave and reopened the inquest into the death.

Friends' chairman Nicholas Reed donned a top hat and tails to become 'coroner' for the day and 40 people tried, in vain, to unearth new facts about the 116-year-old case.

The original inquest suggested 31-year-old Bravo had killed himself but the finding prompted uproar from his relatives and a second hearing was opened three months later.

An example of positive publicity for the Cemetery, which it would be good to see more of during the coming year.

The body was exhumed for the second inquest and jurors were able to view Bravo's blackened face through a hole cut in his lead coffin.

The month-long hearing concluded Bravo had been murdered but was unable to identify a culprit.

Mr. Reed believes Mrs. Bravo's companion Jane Cox may have been responsible. She had a motive as Mr. Bravo had wanted to sack her and she had apparently left him in agony for five hours before calling doctors to treat him.

The inquest also revealed a previous affair between Mrs. Bravo and eminent physician Dr. James Gully.

The pair had lived near each other for some years and Gully was said to have made Mrs. Bravo pregnant and then given her an abortion. There was speculation that either of them could have murdered Bravo.

The inquest bought shame on Dr. Gully for carrying out an illegal abortion. He was to die in obscurity but few forgot the case.

When his son entered the House of Commons as an MP there were cries of 'Bravo Gully' among the general applause.

Florence, like her first husband, drank herself to death and only survived Charles by three years.

Only Mrs. Cox came to a relatively peaceful end, dying in Lee Green aged 90.

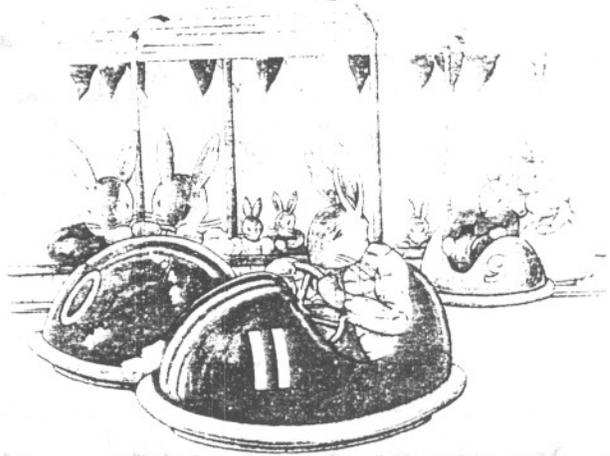
**JON BIRD**

**Publications News - Bob Flanagan**

We now have copies of an 8 page, A4 illustrated booklet entitled **Burges in Wales**. This outlines the relationship between the 'Pre-Raphaelite' architect William Burges and his principal patron, the Third Marquess of Bute, which led to the restorations at Castell Coch and Cardiff Castle which are so well-known today. Good value at 45 p.

**Postcard (30 p): Royal Doulton - Dodgem Cars. Bunnykins design, Barbara Vernon, ca. 1934.**

Royal Doulton's most popular series aimed at the nursery. First introduced in 1934, some designs are still in production. The creator of this 'whimsical rabbit family', Barbara Vernon, has spent her life in a convent. Some early Bunnykins pieces sell for hundreds of pounds at auction. I thought this postcard would prove equally popular but I have only sold two in the last year!



**Book Review: Lambeth Stoneware - The Woolley Collection by Rhoda Edwards. London Borough of Lambeth, 1973. 46 pages (softback). £2.00. Many monochrome illustrations.**

This book was said to be out of print but Lambeth have discovered a 'stock pile' somewhere! Charles Woolley (1847-1922) was a distinguished member of Lambeth Council from 1900-1912. He lived in Dulwich Road, Herne Hill and was known as the 'Historian of Lambeth'. He presented his pottery collection to the Borough in 1915 to provide a nucleus for a Museum, possibly in Brockwell Hall! Seventy years on we are still waiting for a Borough Museum and also for a use for Brockwell Hall... However, this booklet does catalogue Woolley's gift of pottery, which includes pieces by James Stiff (1808-1897) and other Lambeth potters in addition to Doulton ware. The tombs of John Doulton (1793-1873) and his original partner John Watts (1786-1858) survive intact in the Unconsecrated part of the cemetery while Sir Henry Doulton's terracotta mausoleum is a prominent feature of square 36 to the East of the present rose garden. James Stiff's monument, though, is in a sad state, lying as it does by the road junction near the East wall of the cemetery (square 24) where the management have their 'dump' of top soil. Woolley too is buried at Norwood in the grave he himself bought for his mother (grave 24,192, square 103) but their tombstone seems to have disappeared - such do the London Borough of Lambeth reward their benefactors. I wonder what Alderman Woolley would have thought to the destruction wreaked elsewhere in this historic cemetery in the last few years...

**Book Review: London Cemeteries - A Guide and Gazetteer by Hugh Meller. Edition 2. Gregg International, 1985. 328 pages, £19.95 (hardback), £17.95 (softback). Many monochrome illustrations.**

This book has attained the status of a classic. We have obtained the last few copies from the publisher. A series of introductory chapters are followed by a gazetteer which gives detailed information on 102 London cemeteries from Abney Park to Woolwich and also on Golders Green crematorium. Each gazetteer entry is accompanied by a list of notable burials or cremations. Very few mistakes given the pioneering nature of the work. An essential companion for those with an interest in cemeteries when visiting 'pastures new'!

**Book Review: A Guide to The General Cemetery of All Souls, Kensal Green. Hammersmith and Fulham Amenity Trust, 1990. 36 pages, £1.50 (softback). Illustrated.**

Kensal Green, the first of the great Commercial Cemeteries of London, was opened in 1833. It was always the most fashionable private cemetery north of the Thames and is still owned by the original company. The mortuary chapels, gatehouse, catacombs and most of the monuments remain largely intact. Indeed the cemetery company have actively encouraged the formation of a Friends group to assist with conservation, a far cry from the situation at Norwood! This booklet contains a brief history of the cemetery, notes on the flora and fauna, a map and a gazetteer of notable monuments. Burials with especial connections with Norwood include: Sir Marc Isambard Brunel who worked with Joshua Field on the Portsmouth Block Mills, looked upon as the first example of 'mass production'; Isambard Kingdom Brunel, an early advocate together with Sir William Cubitt of 'atmospheric' railways; Commander Charles Spencer Ricketts, whose ornate Gothic tomb was designed by William Burges; Jean Francois Blondin, whose feat of crossing a river on a tightrope was emulated by Paul Cinquevalli prior to the latter's near fatal fall; William Charles Macready, at whose farewell performance H.T. Craven played Malcolm to Macready's Macbeth; Sir William Siemens, inventor of a process for steel production which was for many years the only alternative to Bessemer Steel; and William Makepeace Thackeray, friend, rival and in the end pall-bearer to Douglas Jerrold.

**Meeting Report: Geological Walk - Eric Robinson (Geologist's Association)**

Some 30 members attended this walk held on Sunday 28 June. By way of introduction Dr Robinson discussed the essentials of the geological classification of rocks. (a) **Igneous rocks.** Rocks formed by the cooling and solidification of molten material. Common examples: granites, gabbro, basalt. (b) **Sedimentary rocks.** Rocks formed by disintegration of igneous rocks, from organic matter or by precipitation, subsequently compressed and naturally cemented. Common examples: limestones, sandstones. (c) **Metamorphic rocks.** Igneous or sedimentary rocks altered by heat and/or pressure. Common examples: marbles from limestones, quartzites from sandstones, slates from clays.

Granites are characterised by their heaviness, hardness and density, being robust with exceptional weathering qualities and durability. Limestones are usually characterised by the presence of shell fragments and other evidence of living organisms having played a part in their formation and are often extremely durable. The durability of sandstones, however, depends on the main constituents of the matrix and varies from extremely hard wearing stone to materials with very poor weathering qualities. A wide variety of stone has been used in the construction of the memorials at Norwood. This is a common feature of Victorian cemeteries but is no less interesting for that. The following paragraphs list some of the interesting features observed. Most of the monuments named lie near the road from the cemetery entrance to the Gilbert monument. It is hoped to produce a more comprehensive guide in due course.

**Igneous rocks (i) Granites:** Peterhead granite from the Aberdeen coast is coarse-grained and salmon pink in colour made up of pink feldspar, grey quartz and flecks of black mica. The firm of A. MacDonald & Leslie pioneered the use of this and other granites, devising patterns and setting standards worldwide. Their work produced many fine designs: the draped urn, so common a feature, is typical of their influence. *Memorial:* Thomas William Trodd. Correnie granite from Balmoral is fine-grained and a deep pink colour. *Memorials:* Alexander Croll, Lucy Gallup (part). Rubislaw granite from central Aberdeen is medium-grained and grey in colour often with xenoliths (commonly known as 'heathens'), random inclusions of, in this case, dark patches of slate. *Memorial:* Thomas King, Lucy Gallup (part). Cornish granite is coarse-grained and whitish in colour made up of white feldspar, grey quartz, and flecks of black biotite. *Memorials:* Sir Hiram Maxim, James Gilbert (rail posts). An imported granite from Stockholm (Sweden) bearing the British name of Balmoral is coarse to medium-grained and red in colour, and is made up of red feldspar and coarse aggregates of blue/violet quartz producing an unusual effect caused by shattered crystals forming fracture planes which reflect white light in a blue hue. *Memorial:* M. A. J. Crellier. (ii) **Gabbro:** Gabbro from South Africa, also known as 'Diamond Black' because of its distinct, uniform jet-black colour relieved by laths of shiny feldspar which catch the light, is used for many modern headstones. It looks 'plasticky' but is a smooth, hard, stone which withstands weathering and is totally out of place in a Victorian cemetery.

**Metamorphic rocks (i) Marble:** Carrara marble from Italy, known as a 'saccharoidal marble' because the grains have a sugar-like texture, is pure white with pale grey veining and sometimes buttermilk streaks. Popular in Victorian times for its ease of carving and mellow weathering, nowadays its surface can be badly eroded by the effects of acid rain. Also used for typical 'white' modern headstones. *Memorials:* Franz Beutlich, Sparenborg, William Richard Sutton. (ii) **Serpentinite:** This stone, also known as Lizard Serpentinite, is obtained from the Lizard in Cornwall and is named after its appearance - dark red mottled black or green mottled green/yellow on an oily polished surface looking very much like serpent skin. *Memorial:* Joan Crandon Keown-Boyd.

**Sedimentary rocks (i) Limestones:** Portland stone, from the Isle of Portland and Purbeck, is a Jurassic limestone which has a fine, even grain and a warm white colour which weathers black and white. Roach contains fossilised shell casts bonded with calcareous mud and is often honeycombed. Other types not so composed are Whit Bed, Base Bed and Purbeck. All are excellent building stones and are termed 'free' having the ability of being easily worked in all directions. *Memorials:* Distim Maddick, Alfred Longsdon, J. W. Gilbert. Anston stone from Sheffield, South Yorkshire, is compact, fine-grained and of a brown/cream colour and is used extensively as a building stone for cathedral and church work throughout the country. *Memorial:* William Morley Punshon. (ii) **Sandstones:** Millstone Grit from Northern England weathers to give a dark brown/black surface patina. Sandstones inter-bedded with shales and mudstones clearly mark its origin in river deposits and give it a rough and rugged appearance. *Memorial:* John Britton. Coal Measures or York stone from the Leeds-Bradford-Brighouse area, is fine-grained, compact and highly laminated, but also hard and durable. Ideal for landings of graves because it is available in extremely large slabs, often tooled to remove flaking material and give a sound, solid stone. Even more commonly found as Elland Flags used extensively for pavings.

*The Berens Mausoleum:* Our brief excursion into the geological wealth of Norwood was concluded by considering the spectacular Berens Mausoleum, depressing in its neglect, but a joy in its abundant mix of stone: a fine-grained, grey Rubislaw granite bed; pink Peterhead granite plinth; a body of dark Carboniferous limestone, probably from Wales; red marble column bases from Devon; yellow Sienna marble column shafts; carved Portland stone capitols and statuary; all surmounted with a roof of Derbydean limestone...