

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery



NEWSLETTER NO.15: JULY 1993

Chairman's Report - Bob Flanagan

Early in April I was at last sent a copy of the Lambeth draft Land Management Strategy for the Cemetery. This was accompanied by a request that I reply with the views of the Friends within two weeks or so! Given that a report on the future of the cemetery has been promised for over 20 years and that the present document has been under preparation for approximately 16 months this contrast in time scales seemed somewhat surprising to say the least.

Having informed Lambeth that we needed a little more time in which to reply, Nicholas Long and I duly compiled a detailed response which incorporated comments kindly supplied by the Norwood Society. This response was agreed in detail with your committee and subsequently sent to Lambeth and to English Heritage, the Diocesan Registry, the Victorian Society and other interested parties by the end of May. We await developments. Copies of the Lambeth report and our response may be borrowed from Nicholas or myself.

A further point of interest was raised at the National Federation of Cemetery Friends AGM (York) with respect to consecrated ground (about four fifths of West Norwood is consecrated). It seems that all actions undertaken on such ground require a faculty from the Church authorities. Thus Lambeth may also be brought to task for re-selling burial plots in the consecrated areas and for offering a service for the maintenance of monuments in the consecrated areas of the cemetery without benefit of faculty.

But what of the cemetery itself? It seems that the annual budget allocated by Lambeth for grass cutting and general maintenance (which probably included 'lawn conversion') in its three cemeteries (West Norwood, Lambeth and Streatham) was £820,000. This has now been cut to some £220,000 with a consequent decrease in the frequency of grass cutting and redundancies amongst some 'direct labour' gardeners. Further redundancies amongst other groups of staff may follow hence the protests which featured in the press and on television recently.

Whilst feeling relieved that the immediate pressure to undertake more 'lawn conversion' has evaporated it is nevertheless sad to record this episode as a further example of Lambeth's chaotic management of the cemetery and indeed of the staff working in it. We of course await further developments but one immediate consequence has been that the Cemetery Superintendent, Mr Bob Mackay, asked that we take over the running of the Open Day scheduled for 20 June. Committee member Celia Smith subsequently spent many hours planning this event. A report on this very successful day appears later in this Newsletter.

As to FOWNC itself, I am pleased to report that our membership remains around the 200 mark and our meetings have in general been well-attended. We are continually cementing our links with other Cemetery groups and are now at the height of the summer season of tours, visits and open days. We would welcome additional help in manning our stall, recruiting new members, helping with guided tours, preparing contributions to the Newsletter, suggesting future events, lectures, etc. Remember that every little helps - all donations at meetings and all profits from booksales, etc. go towards conservation in the Cemetery for example.

As noted in the last Newsletter, we featured Arthur Anderson, Thomas Griffith, Georg Hackenschmidt, William Peek, Charles Haddon Spurgeon and John Withers in the Personalities of Norwood Exhibition held at Upper Norwood Public Library during May. The exhibition was publicised in the local press and was generally well-received. Our contribution is now on display at West Norwood Library until further notice. We hope to find further sites in due course. Please contact Rosemary Comber if you can suggest additional suitable venues. Secondly, we would like to purchase a lightweight display stand to enable us to take this and similar displays to meetings, etc. However, it seems that such a stand would cost some £400 - can anyone suggest a sponsor for such an item? All ideas to me, please.

Last but not least, I attended the National Federation of Cemetery Friends AGM on Saturday 12 June. The meeting was hosted by the Friends of York Cemetery and the business meeting was held in the newly-restored mortuary chapel - York's pride and joy, and no wonder. A building in the classical style, it is unusual in that only the southern half was consecrated thereby allowing the unconsecrated portion to be used for Dissenter's services! I plan to obtain copies of the very detailed cemetery guidebook (£3) for sale on our bookstall. Representatives from many friends groups attended and the day seemed to go very quickly.

On behalf of FOWNC I offered to host the 1994 National Federation meeting and I am pleased to report that our bid was successful, Brookwood agreeing to host the 1996 AGM. The date for your diaries is Saturday 18 June 1994. The meeting will be based at Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way. There will be tours of the Cemetery in the morning and displays of the work of FOWNC and of other cemetery preservation groups will be on view at the Church. I will give further details of the programme in due course.

FOWNC Entertainers Booklet

The Society for Theatre Research have generously awarded a grant of £200 to Bob Flanagan towards publication of his booklet 'Entertainers Commemorated at Norwood'. As a direct result of a contact made via this Society we have found that the singer G.H. MacDermott (1845-1901) is buried at Norwood (grave 24,074, square 78). MacDermott made his name in 1878 by singing G.W. Hunt's famous song 'We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do...' which became the 'battle cry' of the war party in England during the Russo-Turkish War and gave the term 'jingoism' to the English language. I have yet to check if his monument is still extant.

Thanks most recently to the researches of George Young we now know of some 80 sportsmen, actors, etc. buried in the Cemetery. Major new discoveries include: Thomas Grieve (1799-1882) and his son Thomas Walford Grieve (1841-1899), two of the famous Grieve family of theatrical scene painters - some 600 (yes, 600) of their often spectacular designs are preserved in the University of London Library, the largest single survival of work by a scenic artist/group of scenic artists from before 1900; the musician Alfred Cellier (1844-1891), who worked extensively with W.S. Gilbert, Arthur Sullivan and Richard D'Oyly Carte; and the cricketer Edward Barrett (1844-1891), the only man apart from Jim Laker to take all 10 wickets in an innings for an England XI v. Australia (at the Oval in 1878) - sadly this was two years before Charles Alcock organised the first official Test hence Barrett's feat does not figure in the Test statistics so widely quoted today.

Meeting Report

Our joint meeting with the Marylebone Society was held on 28 April. An audience consisting of some 12 members from each Society were privileged to hear Dr Megan Aldrich pronounce upon the Craces, a subject in which she is an undoubted authority. Her presentation, using two slide projectors simultaneously, was most lucid and we all learnt much about the Crace family and their contribution initially to coach manufacture and later to interior decoration and furniture design and manufacture. Dr Aldrich confirmed that the most notable members of the family were Frederick, John Gregory and John Diblee Crace, all of whom lie at Norwood. Of these she thought John Gregory, with his association with Pugin, the most important overall. [N.B. A few copies of Dr Aldrich's excellent book on the Craces are still available via the FOWNC bookstall].

Conducted Tour: Authors at Norwood

On 18th April Paul Graham led a group of about 25 people around the Cemetery and pointed out the tombstones (or sadly, in several cases, the sites of tombstones now gone) of a number of eminent authors, selected from the seventy or more buried here that Paul has been researching. He has covered all fields of writing, fiction and non-fiction, in his project, and on his tour he talked about such diverse characters as: John Britton, antiquarian and author of works on medieval cathedrals and other buildings (his memorial is the Grade II* listed "stonehenge" monolith near the entrance); James Gilbart, writer on banking and first manager of the London and Westminster Bank (now the NatWest); Dr. Gideon Mantell, geologist, scientific writer and discoverer of the Iguanodon (his Grade II* listed memorial is undergoing restoration with assistance from FOWNC); Douglas Jerrold, dramatist, journalist and editor of *Punch*, who coined the name "Crystal Palace" for the 1851 Exhibition building, and his colleague Samuel Laman Blanchard (their tombstones a few yards apart have both now disappeared); Samuel and Isabella Beeton, journalists and compilers of the famous *Book of Household Management*; Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, a remarkable combination of dramatist, journalist and judge; Sir William Napier, military historian; Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Baptist preacher and author of many religious writings: to list just a few of the best-known names. Paul is compiling a booklet based on his researches, but he keeps finding more and more people to add, so publication keeps getting postponed!

FOWNC Events - July-September 1993

General tours are held on the first Sunday of each month (4 July, 1 August and 5 September). All tours start at 14.30 at the Cemetery main gate (off Norwood Road) and last for 2 hours or so. There is no formal charge for any event but donations of £1 (£0.50 OAP/other concessions) towards conservation in the cemetery are welcome. (N.B. Note that we will be hosts to the Norwood Society for their annual 'Tomb Trek' on Sunday 1 August - the Catacombs will thus be included on this tour).

July 10 (Saturday): Special Cemetery Tour - 'Dickens Connections': Paul Graham

Charles Dickens attended at least two funerals at Norwood, those of his close friends Douglas Jerrold and George Cattermole. Many more of his friends and acquaintances lie here including his uncle John Henry Barrow, Richard Bentley (the 'Burlington Street Brigand'), Laman Blanchard, William Bradbury, John Britton, David Roberts, Fred Robson, Richard John Smith, Sir John Easthope & Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd. The Catacombs will be visited during the course of this tour.

July 17 (Saturday): Special Cemetery Tour

A specially arranged tour for our sister organisation in South London, the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery. FOWNC are members welcome to join in! We hope to visit the Catacombs during the course of this tour.

August 15 (Sunday): Special Cemetery Tour - 'Artists': Nicholas Reed

Visit the tombs of architects, painters, sculptors, engravers, interior decorators, medallists, potters and others associated with the visual arts such as Turner's agent Thomas Griffith and Burne-Jones' model Maria Cassavetti. Nicholas Reed is well-known for his general interest in the Arts and for his booklets on the Impressionists in London.

September 19 (Sunday): Special Cemetery Tour - 'Science, Engineering and Medicine': Jill Dudman and Bob Flanagan

Our most popular tour which changes every year as we discover more scientists, inventors, etc. who are buried at Norwood! Some new additions are: James Esdaile (1808-1859), surgeon and mesmerist; the chemist Frederick Field (1826-1885) (Field's candles); Joseph Glass (1791-1867), inventor of the first successful chimney-sweeping machine; and the engineer J.H. Greathead (1844-1896). The tour will include the hydraulic coffin lift in the Catacombs.

Advance Notice - October 16 (Saturday) - FOWNC Annual General Meeting - Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way - 14.30 onwards

This meeting will commence with a talk on the artist David Roberts RA by Peter Clayton - more details in the October Newsletter. Our AGM will be held after this talk.

Additional Forthcoming Events

Kensal Green Cemetery Open Day - Saturday 10 July (13.00 onwards).

The General Cemetery of All Souls, Kensal Green was the first of the great commercial cemeteries of London. Opened in 1834, it was the most fashionable cemetery north of the river in the last century. There are at least 12 listed monuments and both Mortuary chapels survive largely intact. There will be a range of specialist tours and other events, including access to the Catacombs beneath the Episcopal Chapel.

Friends of Dulwich Picture Gallery Biennial Fete - Gallery Road, Dulwich - Sunday 11 July (14.00-17.00)

We will have a stall - volunteers willing to help on the day please contact Jill Dudman!

Lambeth Country Show - Saturday/Sunday 17/18 July (11.00-17.00) - Brockwell Park

We will have a stall as usual. Volunteers again please contact Jill Dudman!

Lambeth Archives Open Day, Minet Library - Saturday 25 September (10.00-16.00)

The theme this year is 'The Victorians'. We will have a stall/display and Dr Brent Elliot will give a talk on Victorian funerary monuments. Details of the full lecture programme should be available soon from Lambeth Archives, Minet Library, 52 Knatchbull Road, London SE5 9QY (Tel: 071 926 6076).

FOWNC Officers - 1993

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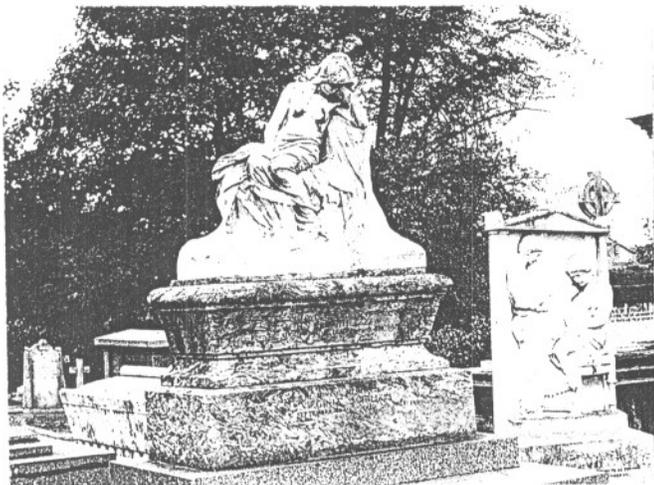
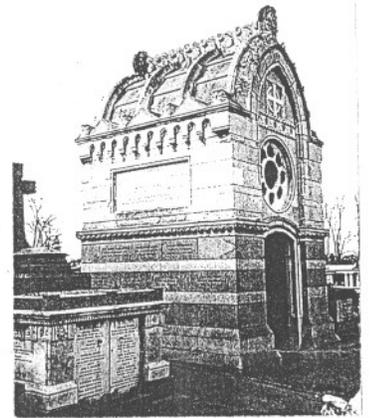
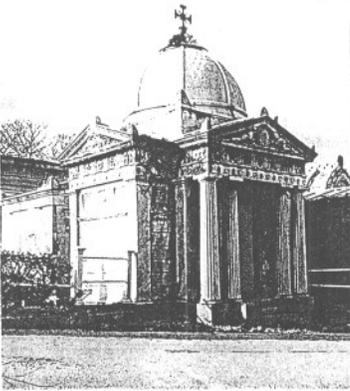
THE GREEK CEMETERY

The last Newsletter carried a brief review of a talk given in January by Paul Calvocoressi of English Heritage, explaining the origins of the Greek Community in London. On 16th May Don Bianco, also of English Heritage, picked up the theme where Paul had ended, and conducted the most detailed and deeply-researched tour of Norwood's Greek Cemetery that we have ever held, much appreciated by the crowd of more than 30 people following him around.

Don started by describing the historical development of the Greek enclosure: it has grown in stages to its present size, beginning with the leasing in 1842 of a rectangle of land about 50ft by 30ft in the unconsecrated part of the then South Metropolitan Cemetery, to a group of prominent London Greek merchants (including two of the Ralli family) at a cost of £300. The area leased was added to in 1860, but much the largest extension took place in 1872 at a cost of £4,390, bringing the total enclosure to about 184ft by 103ft; a large section of this new ground was sold in perpetuity to Stephen Ralli for the erection of a mortuary chapel. Another small expansion was made in 1889.

Despite its extent, the profusion of grandiose mausolea and other monuments makes the Greek enclosure very congested compared with the rest of the Cemetery. These monuments have generally fared quite well and most are in a sound state, thanks to the Greek Orthodox Church having continued to exercise some administrative authority, and to the Greek family tradition of looking after burial places; overgrowth of vegetation has been avoided. Unfortunately, some tombs are beginning to decay – mosaics are disintegrating and marble is blistering; and some of the temple mausolea have had their entrances sealed with concrete to avoid vandalism (although a number of fine decorated doors do remain).

Don then set off on a tour of the most important fifty or so monuments. Pride of place must go of course to the Grade II* listed Ralli mortuary chapel (more correctly St. Stephen's Chapel), built by Stephen Ralli in memory of his Eton schoolboy son Augustus who died from rheumatic fever. This is a classical Doric temple, attributed to the architect J. O. Scott (because he designed the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sophia in Bayswater), but Don disputes this attribution since no mention is made of this massive structure in any list of Scott's works;



it is a precise copybook classical design with no personal styling – a piece of detective work is needed here to find the real architect. The pediment contains some striking sculptures in marble and terra-cotta depicting the sounding of the last trump and the resurrection of the dead, and the entablature below has a series of sculpted Biblical scenes in marble. The other Grade II* listed monument is the mausoleum of John Peter Ralli (an infant) and several family members, dating from the 1860's and designed in a hybrid classical/gothic style with Italian influence by G. E. Street (architect of the Law Courts in the Strand); notable are the pink and grey granite bands, the stained glass window, the decorated door and the crested roof.

This article can do no more than pick out a few of the most interesting tombs on which to comment, such is the wealth of funerary architecture here – a further twelve monuments are listed Grade II. As well as the Victorian structures, there are numerous early 20th century monuments, of which the listed John Schilizzi tomb (1908) is considered the finest 20th century tomb in the entire Cemetery; a semi-naked draped maiden mourns on a rocky seat atop a sarcophagus, the structure being largely of marble. Other examples of marble statuary include the striking mother-and-child figures on the tomb of Maria Eliadi (1928); and the listed T. E. Schilizzi tomb (1872) with a draped female standing under a dome carried by four columns.

Mausolea abound in a variety of styles: the listed P. A. Argenti tomb is an Egyptian style building, whilst the octagonal mausoleum of Maria Ballianos

(1910) is reminiscent of the Temple of the Winds in Athens. The Pandeli Argenti mausoleum (1911) has a quite exceptional interior, with walls lined in marble, a vaulted mosaic ceiling and a stained glass window, and has retained its bronze doors. Most flamboyant of all is the listed Greek Doric temple of Eustratios Ralli (1875), with its cross-capped dome and profuse decoration, designed by E. M. Barry (son of Sir Charles Barry and architect of Covent Garden Opera House) with sculptures by C. H. and J. Mabey.

Some fine sculpted relief panels are to be seen, for example the huge figures of a seated woman and her female attendant on the listed Maria Michalinos tomb (1911), and the religious scenes on the sarcophagi of Demetrios Cassavetes and Giulia Sheridan. Mosaic pictures also appear, as on the headstone of the two infant Frangopoulo sisters (1919). A notable feature of the Greek enclosure compared with the rest of the Cemetery is the number of railings and chains that have survived: especially fine are those around the listed Nicolaos Mavrogordato tomb (1890), the Alexander Ionides tomb (1898) and the listed Pandia Ralli tomb (1869), not forgetting of course the railings around the enclosure itself.

Don had compiled a fully-illustrated booklet (indeed a treatise!) to accompany the tour, incorporating the text of Paul's lecture as an introduction. Photocopies of it were handed out to the "tourists", and there are just a few copies left – please contact Jill Dudman if you would like one (address and phone number on page 3).

THE OPEN DAY

On 20th June FOWNC held its first-ever Open Day at the Cemetery (replacing the annual Open Day held in April for many years past by Lambeth, but abandoned this year). It was a nerve-wracking occasion for the committee, having no idea how many people would turn up in response to the scores of posters distributed – and of course so much would depend on the weather. Luckily, it was a perfect day, staying dry and not too hot for walking around the Cemetery. The attendance was very pleasing – more than 100 people joined in the conducted tours held at hourly intervals during the afternoon (as it turned out, we really needed more tour leaders to make the sizes of groups manageable); and hundreds more strolled around the Cemetery enjoying both the superb funerary architecture and the special attractions of the day. The tour led by Dr. Brent Elliott of the Victorian Society, concentrating on the art and architecture of the Cemetery, was particularly well-received

and clearly deserves being repeated one day. Lined up just inside the main gate were a number of vintage funeral vehicles, including a Rolls-Royce and a horse-drawn hearse (without the horses!), all immaculately polished. The other location of special events was the Greek Cemetery, where permission had been given to open the mortuary chapel for viewing, and a most interesting demonstration of stone-masonry was staged on the front steps; here also were the bookstalls and displays of FOWNC and our guests, the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery and the Brookwood Cemetery Society. At the conclusion of this very successful day, it remains only to thank Celia Smith for coordinating all the events (with huge amounts of letter-writing and telephoning); Mr. Mackay and his staff for their help, notably in escorting touring parties into the catacombs; Celia and her helpers for dispensing orange squash; everyone who staffed bookstalls and conducted tours; the St. John Ambulance lady for being in attendance; and not least W. S. Bond, Funeral Directors – see next page.

W. S. BOND, FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Members may have noticed that FOWNC posters advertising special events and tours are now being sponsored by the West London firm of Funeral Directors, W. S. Bond. The fascinating exhibition of vintage funeral vehicles and the demonstration of stone-masonry at the Open Day on 20th June were also generously provided by this firm. Our committee member **Celia Smith**, herself a funeral director, has recently left her previous firm of undertakers in Streatham to join W. S. Bond. She has started leafing through their old records, and is compiling a history of the firm called "125 Years in Harness"; members may be interested to read the following extract.

William Stephen Bond, the founder, opened his first shop in North End Road, Shepherd's Bush, when it was only a shepherd's bush, literally - a small quiet village on the outskirts of London.

In an age of decorum, a funeral was a sedate affair, with a horse-drawn funeral car and following broughams, with the shades pulled down. Women were rarely seen at funerals, preferring to stay in their carriages unseen, if they attended at all. Poorer folk attended to most of their own arrangements, carrying the coffin, digging the grave, and mounting guard over it until the danger of "resurrectionists" had passed.

In 1894, Mr Bond could furnish an elegant funeral, with triple coffin: elm coffin, lead casing and oak case, all the size of a small row-boat; richly covered with velvet, studded with brass decorative nails and lined with swansdown. With a four-horse funeral car or glass hearse, two broughams and pair, the total price ranged from £40 to £100. On the other hand, a modest but perfectly respectable funeral could be arranged, with a Shillibeer's Patent Funeral Carriage, plain deal or cloth covered coffin, pall and all the necessary attendants, for as little as £2.15s.0d.

The black feather plumes, which were the hallmark of the Victorian funeral, were largely dropped due to the campaigning of W. S. Bond, who believed them to be cruel to the horses. The problem was that the plumes got wet in the rain, became heavy and trailed miserably into the wretched creatures' eyes. In the end the RSPCA banned their use. The feathers had to go somewhere, so a bearer was

detailed to carry an enormous "feather tray" of massed plumes on his head. The top of the hearse car was also adorned with more feathers. Never mind the cruelty to the horses, there must have been wholesale slaughter of ostriches and ospreys to obtain them - obviously no RSPB then!

Soon W. S. Bond had a stud of a score or more Belgian black horses, or Friesians as they more properly were. He supplied carriages of the latest and most elegant design to the wealthy families who lived close to his livery in Holland Park, at the Royal Crescent Mews. As a latter day Robin Hood, whilst he did not "rob" the rich, he charged well: his name had snob value. This gave him the wherewithal to finance his other work amongst the poor of Notting Hill, to whom he became a legend. In common with other Victorian philanthropists, Lord Shaftesbury and Dr. Barnardo, he was a great champion of the less fortunate and used his money to improve their lot and save them from the twin evils of poverty and drink.

Making Norland Road his base at first, he then opened 21-22 Shepherd's Bush Green, where he also had a large mansion (the BBC TV Theatre is now situated on its site): this became his head office. It was extensive, with a preparing room, coffin shop, and possibly the first Chapel of Repose on private premises. Hitherto the late lamented would lie at home in the parlour until the day of the funeral; now they could lie in the "Funeral Parlour" instead. Further branches and shops were opened all over West London. Bonds were among the first to install electric lighting and telephone; before this a pony and trap plied between branches with errands, in particular to the little village of Ealing. That shop was in the High Street, but was bombed in the Blitz - the new shop is in the aptly named Bond Street. There are only five shops left now, from the fourteen there once were.

At the outbreak of the First World War, many of the young men and horses went to battle, never to return. The firm passed down through the Bulley family, the Millwoods, and finally went to their long-time competitors, the even older Kenyons. In the main the ethic of community service is still there, and old W. S. Bond can rest in peace in his plot in Margravine Cemetery, alongside many of his former friends and clients, only 200 yards from his Fulham shop which celebrates one and a quarter centuries early next year.

The committee of FOWNC would like to thank W. S. Bond for their valued contribution to

the very successful Open Day at West Norwood Cemetery