Chairman’s Report - Bob Flanagan

Many members will know that on 8 March the Chancellor of the Diocese of Southwark, Robert Gray QC, gave judgement in the Consistory Court hearing into Lambeth’s management of the cemetery. The judgement was delivered at the Old Bailey where the Chancellor was sitting as a Recorder. In summary Lambeth’s petitions for faculties to (i) manage the consecrated areas of West Norwood as a cemetery and (ii) to authorise retrospectively the clearance operations in these areas are to be granted. However, such stringent conditions are to be attached that the judgement is clearly a landmark in the history of the cemetery since it gives legal backing to our attempts to preserve what remains of this historic site. Indeed, the Chancellor roundly condemned the ‘wholesale destruction’ of large numbers of monuments over the years and confirmed that Lambeth had acted illegally in virtually all respects since they took control of the cemetery in 1965.

The Open Spaces Act 1906

The judgement, which runs to some 50 pages, has yet to be published. However, some items seem clear. Firstly, Lambeth are to be granted powers under the Open Spaces Act 1906 to manage the consecrated parts of the cemetery. However, Lambeth’s practice of reselling unused spaces in existing graves, the burial rights in which were originally purchased from the South Metropolitan Cemetery Company either in perpetuity or for a limited period, was deemed ‘wholly illegal’. Thus it seems that Lambeth will have to stop further burials in unused spaces in existing graves, although the cremation service will presumably continue. This is of course supremely ironic since it was the plan to resell unused grave space which was the trigger for the massive clearances in the late 1970s and again in 1990. The status of the burials which have been inserted in existing graves in the last few years is at present unknown.

A condition of the grant of the faculty will be that all headstones or other monuments introduced into the consecrated parts of the cemetery will have to comply with the terms of the directive of the Chancellor of the Diocese of Southwark on Churchyards and Churches currently in force. Where a proposed memorial does not comply with the terms of this directive, a faculty will be required to introduce the memorial into the consecrated parts of the cemetery. This will put a stop to the insertion of some of the less sensitive monuments in the consecrated areas. Finally, Lambeth’s powers are also to be conditional on the introduction of a Scheme of Management acceptable to the Chancellor. The parties to the Scheme are to be English Heritage, the Archdeacon of Lambeth, the Victorian Society and ourselves in addition to Lambeth.

Retrospective Faculty

Lambeth’s petition for a retrospective faculty to authorise the clearances and some other aspects of their operations since 1965 is also to be granted except that the policy of reselling grave spaces will not be authorised - this latter practice is illegal, as discussed above. However, as a condition of the faculty Lambeth will be ordered to restore the missing listed memorials, viz. those to Sir William Cubitt, John Garrett and William Grane. They will also be ordered to restore four damaged listed memorials, viz. those to Ann Joyce, William Morley Punshon, James Gilbart and Dr Gideon Mantell, and to cooperate with us in preparing as complete a record as possible of the inscriptions on the missing monuments.

In this context, will any members who have photographs taken in the cemetery over the years please get in touch with me as soon as practicable.

Two further aspects of the judgement are of far-reaching importance. Firstly, the Chancellor ruled that since the monuments are fixed in the ground they thereby have become part of the fabric of the cemetery. At first sight this means that Lambeth are responsible for the upkeep of all the memorials in the cemetery, including the listed memorials. No longer will they be able to abdicate responsibility for the listed memorials by simply saying that they belong to the families whose graves they mark! Secondly, the
Chancellor has ruled that the curtilage, i.e. the surroundings, of the listed memorials, seven of which are listed Grade II*, is the cemetery itself. This means that all changes in the consecrated or unconsecrated areas of the cemetery are subject to direction from English Heritage. Carried to its logical conclusion this appears to mean that English Heritage could prevent all new burials in the cemetery since all such burials detract from the setting of the listed tombs.

**Future Options**

Hopefully further details of the judgement will become clearer when the written transcript is to hand. Although comprehensive, the judgement will not be all embracing and there is nothing to stop relatives or other interested parties taking independent action against Lambeth in order to have a particular memorial reinstated or indeed to repossess an old family grave. Since the clearance operations have been ruled illegal, it would seem that all that needs to be proved in the case of a monument is that the monument was in good condition prior to its demolition. A good example is the de Normandy memorial which I photographed two days prior to demolition. A further point which we ourselves intend to take up with Lambeth is the name of the cemetery. Since Lambeth did not promote a private Act of Parliament to take over the running of the cemetery from the South Metropolitan Cemetery Company it could be they had no right to change its name....

Be this as it may, we all owe debts of gratitude to the Venerable Richard Bird, Archdeacon of Lambeth, for initiating the case and to Nicholas Long, Michael Slater, Roy Brendry and Elizabeth Pamourgias-Morrison for helping present our evidence before the Court. Thankfully it looks as if Lambeth will shoulder most, if not all, of the costs of the case, estimated at some £40,000. What a pity that Lambeth did not act sensibly rather than forcing us to present evidence to contradict their (false) arguments....

**FOWNC News**

And so to other matters. This month our Conservation Coordinator, Paul Graham, starts what we hope will be a regular column giving details of progress on conservation and associated fund-raising projects in the cemetery. With the future of the cemetery no longer in doubt we will all be able to devote more time to supporting Paul in this vital work.

As members will know in June we host the 1994 National Federation of Cemetery Friends AGM (see below). We plan to produce a series of views of the cemetery as postcards in time for this event. We are also making a big effort to get a couple of booklets published by June 18. I am doing *Sportsmen* and Paul Graham is doing *Dickens Connections*.

Finally, our paid-up membership stands at over 200 for the first time at this stage in a year. This high level of support is of great encouragement to all the members of your committee. Perhaps with your help we will reach 300 by the end of 1994....!

**Postscript - Nicholas Long**

I think members should know that, in my opinion, Bob Flanagan's own evidence to the Court, in which both the historic nature of the cemetery and the brutal clearance operations of 1990-91 were carefully detailed, was crucial to the outcome of the case. Letters written to Lambeth and photographs taken by Nicholas Reed during 1990-91 were also important components of our evidence, as indeed was a letter written by Eric Smith in the 1970s in which Lambeth were asked to justify the process whereby memorials were being 'selected' for removal.

**CONSERVATION NEWS - Paul Graham**

One of the principal aims of the FOWNC is to restore/maintain those memorials that have fallen into disrepair or, in some cases, been destroyed. Mention of particular projects has been made from time to time within these columns. In this, the first of what I hope will be a regular feature, I am taking the opportunity to advise members of the overall progress made in furthering this aim.

Given the potentially massive sums involved in this work, two main criteria have influenced the choice of monuments to be included on our priority list. One is the architectural and/or historic merit of the monument : the second is the availability of funding.

The priority list currently consists of the monuments to: Alexander Berens (square 63); Ann Farrow (6); Gideon Mantell (100); Charles William Alcock (86); David Roberts (38); John Stevens (47); Frederick Gye (98); Dr. William Marsden (62); George Jennings (34); and Charles Bravo (99).

Financial assistance has been committed or promised from Mr. Frank Brightman, the Geologists Association and the Geological Society in respect of Mantell; from the Football Association, Surrey County Cricket Club, and Mr. R. Daughtry in respect of Alcock; from the Royal Opera House Trust in respect of Gye; and from the Royal Marsden Hospital in respect of Marsden. Our plans to replace the headstone of Roberts have received support from Mr. Peter Clayton and from the Mathaf Gallery Ltd. of Motcomb Street, SW1. In addition, the Thomas Schuster Gallery, Maddox Street, W1 have agreed to donate 4 half plates of works by Roberts for us to auction. The auction is provisionally set for the A.G.M. and Richard
National Federation of Cemetery Friends

1994 AGM - Saturday 18 June - West Norwood

The National Federation hold their AGM at a different venue each year. This year we are the hosts. The meeting will be held at Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way, SE27. There will also be tours of the Cemetery. We are expecting 30 or so delegates from around the country. Long-standing FOWNC member Rosemary Dawson has agreed to coordinate the catering arrangements. Please contact Rosemary (071 733 3668) if you feel able to help either by purchasing or preparing food in advance or by helping on the day. FOWNC members helping on the day either by guiding tours or with catering will have free access to the events as space permits. Other FOWNC members may attend as delegates if they wish, space permitting - please write to Bob Flanagan to signify your interest. There is a £4 delegate registration fee.

NFCF 1994 AGM - Programme

09.30-10.30 Coffee/Setting up exhibits/Welcome
10.30-11.00 Talk: A Brief History of the South Metropolitan Cemetery, West Norwood - Bob Flanagan
11.00-12.30 Tour of Cemetery - Bob Flanagan and others
12.30-14.00 Lunch

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In addition to these individual/corporate donations, applications are being submitted to English Heritage for grant-aid for all these projects. That for Roberts has been rejected on the grounds that we intend to replace, not restore, the original monument. We are hopeful that the other applications will succeed and provide 25% of the total costs in each case.

Members will have read Bob Flanagan’s report of the judgement in the Consistory Court, which held that Lambeth are responsible for the maintenance of the monuments. It follows therefore that they should, at the very least, contribute to the projects we have in hand. Developments are awaited.

In addition to a donation towards the maintenance of the Doulton Mausoleum, Royal Doulton have kindly donated a Doulton vase which we will auction at the same time. More information on this exciting event will follow nearer the day.

The FOWNC wish to express their gratitude to all those whose generosity has enabled these projects to advance.

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14.00-16.00 Parallel Sessions:

1. National Federation AGM - Delegates only - Chair: Peter Salter
2. Workshop: Cemeteries and the Law - Paul Barber (Counsel to Southwark Diocese in the recent Consistory Court case).

16.00-17.00 Tea/coffee and depart

Funny Old World - Chinese ‘Cookery’

We could not resist the following clip (Weekly World News, 5/10/93 via Private Eye):

'I first became suspicious when long queues began forming outside the Singing Sun restaurant hours before it opened' public health official Huang Shumin told a Beijing district court. 'And when the investigators began joining the queue themselves on their days off, I knew the time had come to take swift action.'

Huang Shumin continued: 'His squid with oyster sauce was the worst I have eaten in 37 years of public service, and yet I found myself booking lunch there every day for a fortnight.' Another witness, Li Hao, concurred: 'His donkey was tough, his sauces greasy, and I always left the Singing Sun telling them that their food tasted like dog's dirt. Yet somehow I always went back there next day.'

Interrogated by health officials, Chen Tai-si, proprietor of the restaurant, eventually broke down and confessed how he managed to boost trade. 'After somebody threw their dinner through the window, I decided to begin adding my special seasoning to every dish. Soon the customers were pouring in and begging for more.'

Under analysis, the ‘special seasoning’ turned out to be pure opium paste. Asking the court for leniency, Chen Tai-si declared: 'They do such things as a matter of course in the West. I got the idea from a chef called Mrs Beeton. I was doing my countrymen a service. I am an innovator not a criminal.' He was sentenced to 23 years in prison for opium distribution.

[Much searching through Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management (1861) has failed to locate a recipe using opium. An index entry “Opium and its preparations” leads only to a paragraph on the symptoms and treatment of opium poisoning!]
THOMAS MILLER (1807-1874)

On page 5 of the last FOWNC newsletter (No.17) there appeared an unattributed illustration entitled "Rural Cemeteries". Members may be interested to know that it came from the book "Pictures of Country Life and Summer Rambles in Green and Shady Places" by Thomas Miller (Grave 2,921, square 7). The book is a series of prose sketches by Miller on rural topics. The attractive illustration depicts a funeral cortege wending its way through the elaborate monuments of a vast cemetery towards, what appears to be, a cathedral on a distant height. The illustration bears a startling resemblance to an earlier one accompanying an article by another Norwood "resident" Laman Blanchard (1804-45) (square 97) entitled "A Visit to the General Cemetery at Kensal Green", which appeared in Ainsworth's Magazine for 1842. Miller's anonymous artist appears to have modelled his illustration on its popular predecessor.

Another of the essays in Miller's book records his rambles around London, including those in villages such as Sydenham and Dulwich. Miller recalls visiting Norwood and having a "glass of ale and a crust of bread and cheese at the Woodman." Later he visits the local gypsies in the surrounding lane and woods. He calls them the "ancient Fatalists of Norwood."

Thomas Miller hailed from Gainsborough and was known as the "Basket Maker poet" because of the trade he followed. He attracted the attention of his patron, Lady Blessington, by sending her one of his poems in one of his baskets. Her patronage did not save Miller from the financial distress that usually accompanied the attempt of working-class men to earn their livelihood by literature. By the time of his death on 24 October 1874 at his home in New Street, Kennington Park Road, Miller had received more than £365 in grants from the Royal Literary Fund, more than any other author. Miller published about fifty titles, achieving local celebrity as a poet, attracting more widespread attention through novels such as "Gideon Giles the Roper" (1842) and "Godfrey Malvern" (1843), before declining into the life of a penny-a-line hack dependent upon charitable hand-outs.

PG
Review of FOWNC Events – Winter 1994

This year’s programme of events was opened by a talk about one of the richest people buried in the Cemetery, John Lawson Johnston, the inventor of Bovril. On 15th January Professor John Armstrong, from Thames Valley University, spoke to us about his research into the history of the Bovril Company, a task made rather difficult by the loss of many records due to wartime bombing. He outlined the chronology of Johnston’s founding of the company and its subsequent changing of hands, and talked about later members of his family, who in fact remained associated with the company for many years; Johnston’s son in particular was a major figure. Professor Armstrong, who specialises in Business Studies, concluded by describing the various sources of information that he used and the methodology for such a research project. A popular feature of the meeting was the provision of cups of Bovril as an alternative to tea!

On 19th February Brian Bloice gave a copiously illustrated lecture, to his usual superb standard that members of South London local history groups and classes will be familiar with, about the various pottery firms of Lambeth, most notably Doultons. Beginning with an outline of the introduction of pottery manufacture into this country and into South London, the first half of the talk gave a summary of the minor but no less interesting Lambeth potters buried at Norwood, such as James Stiff, Henry Millichamp and Stephen Green – the latter being also the originator of golden eye ointment. Several of them lost their factory premises when the Albert Embankment was constructed. After the tea break, the second half of the talk concentrated solely on the Doulton family and their firm, which eventually took over most of the other Lambeth potters before departing the area. Brian also spoke about some of those who worked for Doultons, the most important being the sculptor George Tinworth, whose tombstone sadly is one of the “disappeared”.

Finally, on 19th March Fiona Talbott, Assistant Keeper of the Cuming Museum, gave a talk about Richard and Henry Cuming, father and son, and their lifelong enthusiasm for collecting (their vault is quite near Sir Henry Doulton’s mausoleum). She described the types of things they liked to collect and the sources from which they obtained them; it seems that Richard specialised in scientific and natural history items, whilst Henry collected almost anything. This massive hoard was donated to Southwark Council, but no professional museum curator was appointed until about 30 years ago, when many items not specifically relating to local history were dispersed to other museums. Most of the documents and drawings are now held at the Southwark Local Studies Library, the Cuming Museum primarily concerning itself with three-dimensional artifacts. The present staff are working to improve the museum displays and to compile a proper inventory of their holdings. Ms. Talbott showed us many slides of interesting exhibits at the museum, including the model for a Shakespeare memorial (never built) by George Tinworth (postcard available from the FOWNC bookstall, 30p).

Our winter lectures have been attracting audiences of between 20 and 30 – there is space for more, the room at Chatsworth is comfortable and warm and handy for public transport or car parking, tea is provided – do come along when we start again in the autumn!

JD


A welcome return of this standard reference work. The out-of-print Second Edition has for some time been the subject of much searching in second-hand book shops (it was said that every funeral director in London wanted a copy). The new volume is to a large extent a reprint of the previous edition with updating footnotes where necessary. The principal additions are a new preface, which lists Bob Flanagan and Nicholas Reed among the acknowledgements; a whole new chapter entitled Decay and development 1981-1992, which reviews the work of FOWNC and other Cemetery Friends groups and the actions of some cemetery owners, notably Westminster Council; and a list of notable people newly discovered by Meller. Presumably it would have involved too much new typesetting to insert these names into the original lists under each cemetery heading in the Gazetteer, but the new discoveries, running to 22 pages in a continuous alphabetical sequence at the end of the book, might perhaps have been more helpfully grouped by cemetery – a minor quibble, though, for this indispensable item on the bookshelf of anyone interested in London’s cemeteries. Available from the FOWNC bookstall.

JD
Forthcoming FOWNC Events - April-June 1994

General tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month (3 April, 1 May, 5 June) and Special tours will be held on Sunday 17 April and Sunday 15 May. All tours start at 14.30 at the Cemetery main gate off Norwood Road and last 2 hours or so. There is no formal charge but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) to help cover costs.

Sunday 17 April: Special Tour of Cemetery - Art and Architecture at West Norwood by Brent Elliott

Despite the destruction of some 40% of the cemetery over the last 20 years, Norwood boasts the largest number of listed monuments (should be 64) of any cemetery and is still held by some to contain the finest collection of Victorian funerary architecture in the country. It is hoped to include the Catacombs in this tour.

Sunday 15 May: Special Tour of Cemetery - The Greek Cemetery by Don Bianco

Burial rights in a section at Norwood were purchased in 1842 by the Greek Community in London. Subsequently enlarged, this section now contains 17 listed structures. The tour will concentrate on the architecture of these outstanding tombs and will include access to St Stephen’s Chapel. Don Bianco is an architect and has a special interest in Norwood.

Forthcoming Events of Other Societies

Wednesday 20 April, 19.30: Golders Green Crematorium (West Chapel), Hoop Lane, NW11. Concert: The Abbey Academy Ensemble present *Glamorous Night*, featuring the music of Edward German, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Ivor Novello. Concessionary tickets to members of Cemetery Friends groups: £4 in advance – the ticket price includes a guided tour of the Crematorium at 18.30 and refreshments. For bookings and further information, contact the Friends of Golders Green, 081-670 3265.

Sunday 1 May, 14.30: Mortlake Station (Booking Hall), Sheen Lane, SW14. Tour of the Mortlake Cemeteries (RC and Anglican) by Mary Grimwade, local historian. The tour will include the famous "tent" tomb of Sir Richard Burton. Admission £2. Those who wish will be meeting at The Pig and Whistle, 86 Sheen Lane for a pub lunch from 13.00 onwards. (London Cemeteries Group.)

Saturday 7 May, 14.30: West Norwood Cemetery (Main Gate). General Tour organised for the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery. We hope to include the catacombs and St. Stephen’s (Greek) Chapel in this tour. FOWNC members are welcome to join in.

Saturday 21 May, 11.00-17.00: Nunhead Cemetery, Linden Grove, SE15. Friends of Nunhead Cemetery Open Day.

Tuesday 24 May, 20.00: All Saints' Parish Rooms, Beulah Hill, SE19. Lecture - *Dickens and Two Norwood Friends* - Alan Watts (Past President of the Dickens Fellowship). The two people referred to are the publisher Richard Bentley and the dramatist and journalist Douglas Jerrold, both buried at Norwood and familiar to FOWNC members from our own talks and tours. (Norwood Society.)

Saturday 2 July, 12.00 onwards: Kensal Green Cemetery, Harrow Road, NW10. Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery Open Day.


Saturday 24 September, 10.00-16.00: Minet Library, Knatchbull Road, SE5. Lambeth Archives Open Day.

The theme this year is ‘Lambeth at War’. Bob Flanagan will talk on ‘Science and Warfare, 1800-1918’. The lecture will be illustrated by reference to the achievements of Joshua Field, Joseph Maudslay, Augustus Siebe, Robert Mallet, Sir Henry Bessemer, Sir Hiram Maxim, Alexander Muirhead, and Colonel John Porte, all of whom lie at Norwood. This talk will complement our ‘Military Connections’ tour on Sunday 21 August.

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