

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery



NEWSLETTER NO.20: OCTOBER 1994

Price 50 pence

Free to Members

Chairman's Report - Bob Flanagan

There is again little to report as regards progress on implementing the Consistory Court judgement. A hearing for directions was held in August with the aim of setting a timetable for agreeing and implementing the various faculties needed to regularise Lambeth's operations in the cemetery, for the reinstatement of the three missing listed memorials and, hopefully, for the repair of the other listed memorials damaged since 1987. We are pressing for the outstanding matters to be resolved and await developments. One item raised at the hearing does give cause for concern, however. Counsel for Lambeth said that he planned to contest the Chancellor's judgement in respect of the use of unused space in existing private graves for new burials - this same Counsel had previously agreed in open Court that this practice was and is wholly illegal!

As part of the manoeuvring before the Court hearing in August, a revised Draft Land Management Strategy for the Cemetery was produced. Nicholas Long and I were dismayed by this. Firstly the amendments which had been agreed before Nicholas and I spoke in favour the Strategy at various Lambeth committees last year were omitted. Secondly the effect of many of the important rulings in the Chancellor's judgement were totally ignored. Thus in effect this latest version of the Strategy is a regression from the position reached last November! Indeed, Nicholas and I found more than 50 points which required correction or clarification (a popular sentiment at the moment...). We again await developments.

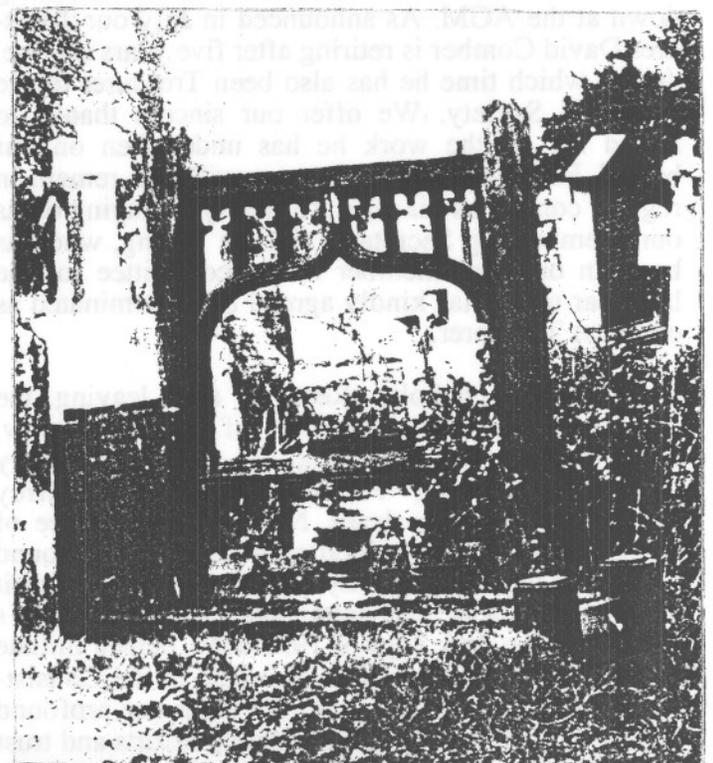
Finally, and as reported in the July Newsletter, we still await the first meeting of the Cemetery Advisory Committee promised last November. Councillor John Whelan has suggested that we organise a meeting of the Environment spokespersons of the three parties now jointly managing the Council's affairs together with a local councillor in order to try to get things moving. This we hope to do in the near future.

The Missing Listed Memorials

As regards reinstating the missing listed memorials, we now have details of two of them. We already had a photograph of Sir William Cubitt's tombstone (square 36). This was a brick vault capped with a flat Yorkstone slab which was inscribed:

SIR WILLIAM CUBITT
K^{NT},
Died 13th October 1861,
Aged 76 Years.

The brick vault is still there and accurate reinstatement of this monument should be straightforward. Secondly, I am pleased to report that Mr Mackay, Cemetery Superintendent, has now kindly provided a photograph of the wooden Gothic monument to John Garrett (d. 1881). This photograph, which is reproduced below, should facilitate accurate reinstatement of this monument as well (square 18).



We are still searching for a photograph or sketch of the tombstone of William Grane (d. 1856). The base of this monument (no. 20 in Geoffrey Manning's booklet) still exists. According to the listing description (where it is mistakenly referred to as the Crane monument) the base was once 'surmounted by a tall cross of pink granite with foliated arms and continuous vine trails to the stem. A bronze inscription tablet names the members of the family in classic trajanic lettering'. If anyone has photographs taken before 1987 or thereabouts in squares 34, 48 or adjacent squares then please look closely to see if you have accidentally photographed this memorial!

The FOWNC AGM

And so to other matters. The AGM approaches once again and it is a pleasure to record that our finances remain healthy and that our membership stands at over 265. Thank-you all for your help and support. Without you, the members, we would not have made such progress in our efforts to save what remains of the cemetery.

I am especially grateful to Nicholas Long, Paul Graham, Jill Dudman, Rosemary Comber, Celia Smith, George Young, Margaret Jackman, Tom Easton and Rosemary Dawson for their hard work during the year. The work of Nicholas and Paul on the legal and conservation side has been invaluable, whilst Jill and Rosemary Comber have undertaken their appointed tasks with great efficiency and yet have still found time to cope with frequent requests for more information about so-and-so's grave.

Two founder members of the committee are standing down at the AGM. As announced in July our Treasurer David Comber is retiring after five years service, during which time he has also been Treasurer of the Norwood Society. We offer our sincere thanks to David for all the work he has undertaken on our behalf. Fortunately we know we will still remain in regular contact as his wife Rosemary is staying on as our Membership Secretary. George Young, who has been an ordinary member of the committee for the last year or so, has kindly agreed to be nominated as our next Treasurer.

Our founder Nicholas Reed is also leaving the committee this year. As most of you will know, Nicholas had the foresight to see that the cemetery desperately needed Friends following Geoffrey Manning's untimely death. Nicholas' experience of conservation bodies helped start us off on a sound footing. More importantly, his indefatigable spirit when faced with the intransigence of Lambeth's officers in the dark days of 1990-1991 helped initiate the train of events which culminated in the Consistory Court hearings this year. We offer our profound thanks to Nicholas for his pioneering efforts and trust that he will continue to take an interest in our work.

Fortunately, David Comber excepted, all your officers have agreed to stand for election for a further term as outlined below. We anticipate that there will be several vacancies on the committee, however, and it is hoped that new committee members will come forward in due course. Several of us have served since 1989 and an infusion of 'new-blood' onto the committee is needed if FOWNC is to continue to develop. In this context may I also enter a plea for more members to participate in the open sessions scheduled at the end of the November, January, February and March meetings. A further thought is to organise a social event in order that your committee could be available to get to know more members and to hear your views. Please let me know what you think to this suggestion. It is probably too late to do this in time for Xmas but such an event could probably be organised for early in the New Year.

Proposed FOWNC Officers - 1994-5

Chairman & Publications Officer:

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

Vice-Chairman:

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

General Secretary:

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

Hon. Treasurer:

George Young, 12 Swinburne Court, London SE5 8EP
(Tel: 071 274 5267)

[Membership Secretary:

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

Conservation Coordinator:

Paul Graham, Flat 4, 9 St Andrews Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4DT (Tel: 081 390 0182)]

[Newsletter Editorial Board:

Bob Flanagan and Jill Dudman]

Additional nominations for the above posts will be accepted at the AGM if accompanied by a statement that the nominee is willing to serve if elected.

CONSERVATION NEWS - Paul Graham

As announced in Newsletter No. 18, the Thomas Schuster Gallery has donated 4 monochrome lithographic half plates of works by David Roberts R.A. (1796-1864) (Grave 5,930) (Square 38) to the FOWNC for us to auction. The proceeds will go towards replacing the original badly weathered headstone of Roberts on which the inscription is illegible, with one in pristine condition.

The auction will take place at our meeting on 15 October, after the talk on the artist Samuel Prout by Richard Lockett and before the AGM. With such a triple attraction, this is one event that no self-respecting Friend can afford to miss.

The plates to be auctioned were all executed in 1839 and are from the first edition of Roberts' "Holy Land" published between 1842 and 1849. They are:

Temple on Gebel Garabe, called Surabit el Khadem; Excavated Mansions of Petra; Conference in the Wady Moosa; and Tomb of St. James, Valley of Jehosaphat, Jerusalem.

The style and contents of the plates will be familiar to all who attended Peter Clayton's illustrated talk to the Friends on Roberts' life and art late last year. All are very attractive and would grace any home. They would also make ideal Christmas presents. Each comes complete with a typed inscription of the title; date; and brief description, which can be stuck on the back of the lithographs after framing. As a guide for potential bidders, the usual minimum price for such plates is in the region of £40.

Make a note of the date in your diary; come along and join in the fun; and perhaps walk away as the proud owner of a plate depicting the work of one of Britain's finest nineteenth century artists, whilst helping to ensure a more appropriate and permanent memorial to his fame in the cemetery.

The FOWNC wish to express their gratitude to Thomas Schuster and the Schuster Gallery for their generosity in donating these lithographs.

Additionally, we shall be including in the auction a very fine Doulton bird sculpture, generously donated to us by Royal Doulton. The current value of this piece is estimated at around £70-£80, and we shall be looking for bids of this order, failing which the item will be withdrawn.

In the event that potential bidders are unable to come to the auction (and of course some of our members live very far distant), we shall accept postal bids. These should be sent to Bob Flanagan (address on page 2), to arrive by 15 October.

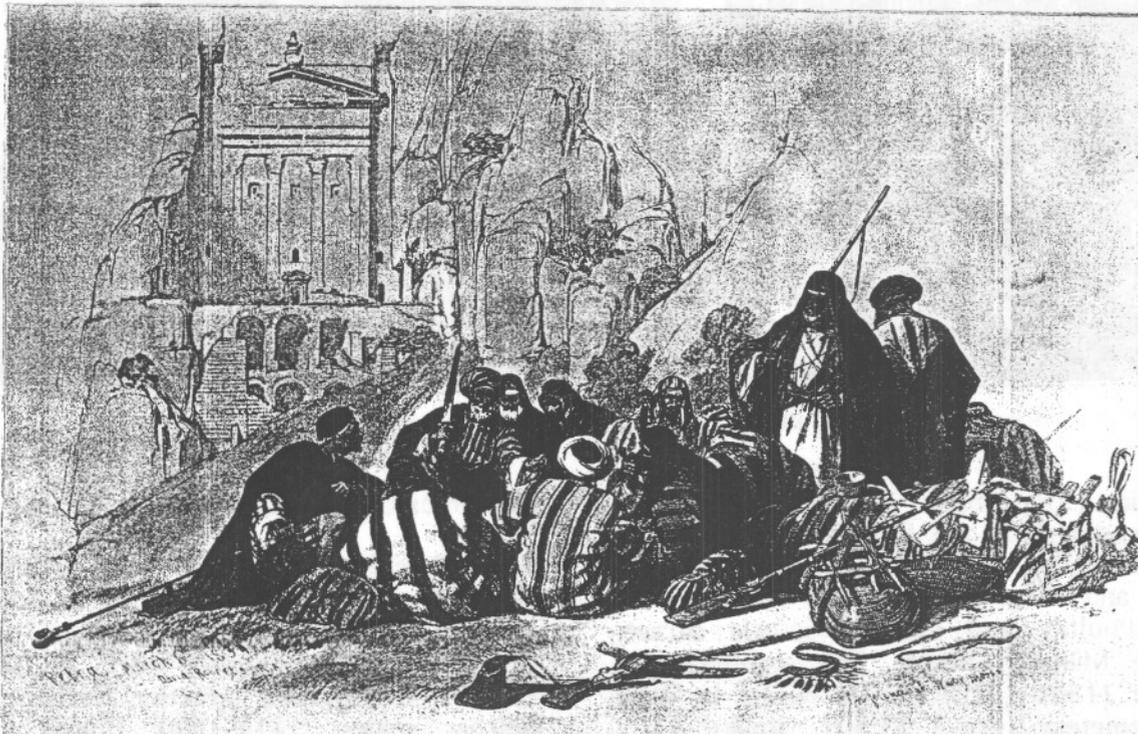
And talking of Christmas presents...

Don't forget that the FOWNC bookstall will be at our forthcoming meetings on 15 October and 19 November, with a wide range of publications relating to the Cemetery - books, postcards, etc. Start your Christmas shopping early! If you are unable to come to either of these, the FOWNC bookstall will also be at the Local History Book Fair on Saturday 22 October at Vauxhall St. Peter's Heritage Centre, Tyers Street, Kennington Lane, SE11.

Special advance notice for your diary

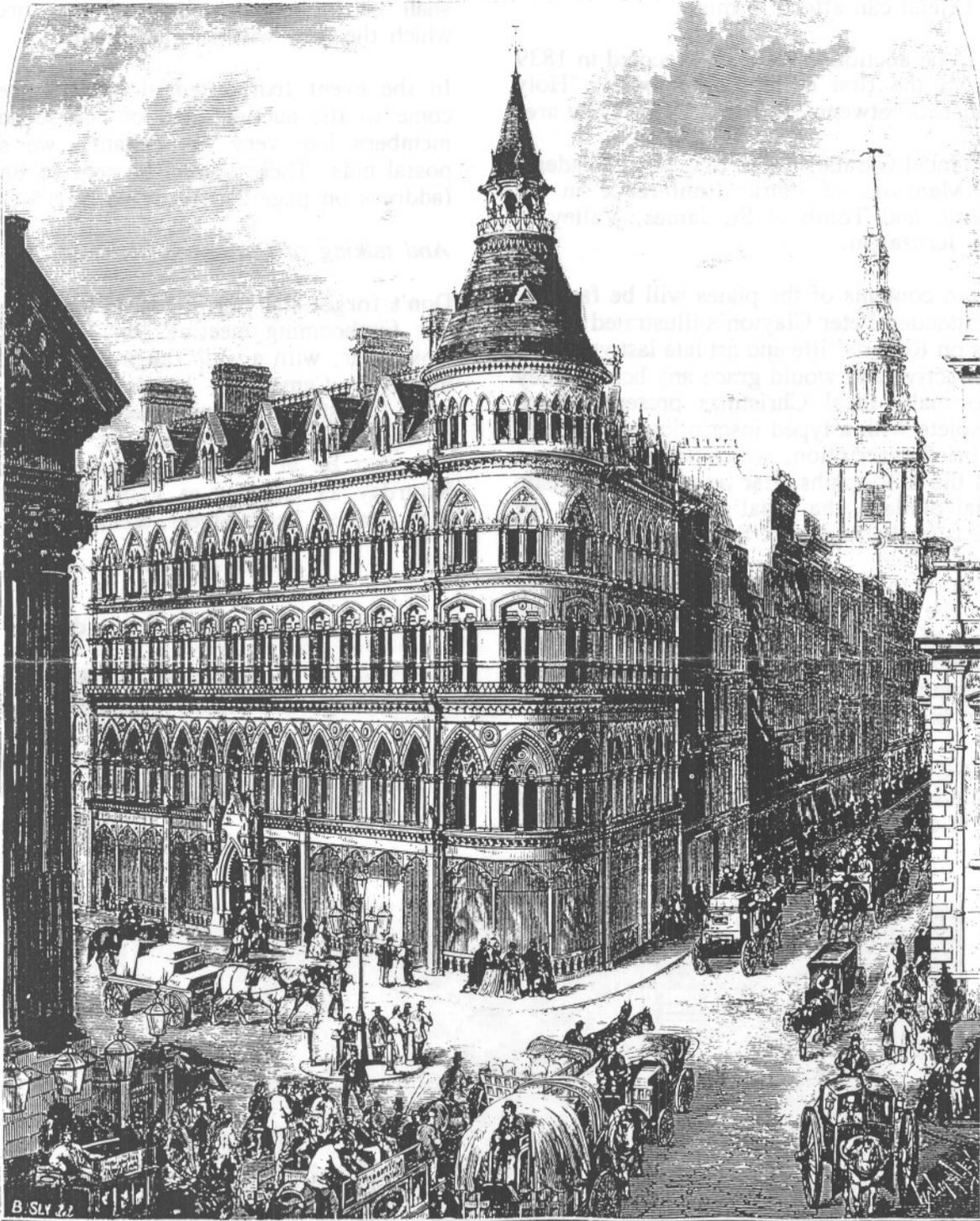
Saturday 21 January 1995, 14.30: Talk - *George Myers: Pugin's Builder* - Patricia Spencer-Silver

More details, as well as the full 1995 programme of events, will appear in the January Newsletter.



THE DEMOLITION OF JOHN BELCHER'S MAPPIN & WEBB BUILDING

by George Young



MANSION-HOUSE BUILDINGS, LONDON.— MESSRS. JOHN & JOHN BELCHER, ARCHITECTS.

The illustration (*The Builder*, 1 July 1871) shows a well-loved landmark in the City of London which has just been pulled down. This building was the office block and shop for Mappin & Webb on the corner of Poultry and Queen Victoria Street, opposite the Mansion House. The architect was John Belcher (1841-1913) who is buried in West Norwood Cemetery (grave 33,607, square 93 -

his tombstone is still extant).

John Belcher was born near Trinity Square, Newington, and lived all his life in South London (either in Newington, Walworth, Brixton or Camberwell). He started work in 1857 in his father's architectural practice (father being John Belcher senior, 1819-1890, buried in Nunhead

Cemetery). This was followed by a short period with another architect to gain experience, and a year studying French architecture in Paris. Father and son went into partnership as John & John Belcher, 5 Adelaide Place, London Bridge, EC, and, by the late 1860s, John Belcher junior was the partnership's chief designer. At this period, he was under the influence of the Gothic movement, and followed the example of George Edmund Street and William Burges.

The lease of the site in question was purchased by James Wheeler of Wheeler & Co., glovers, in Poultry. Messrs. Jackson & Shaw were the building contractors, submitting a tender of £16,552. Work started in 1870 and it took under two years to complete. The building comprised a basement, shops on the ground floor and four storeys of offices, plus the very distinctive circular tower. Within a few years of opening, the firm of Mappin & Webb, silversmiths and cutlers, became the principal shop in the block.

Mappin and Webb

There were four Mappin brothers who ran the firm of Mappin Brothers, cutlers, up to 1859, when a partnership disagreement caused two of the brothers to leave the firm. Frederick Thorpe Mappin (1821-1910), the eldest, left to concentrate his efforts on large-scale steel production in Sheffield. Edward Mappin (1826-1875) and Joseph Charles Mappin (1828-1901) carried on the business of Mappin Brothers, with premises at King William Street in the City, and Regent Street in the West End. John Newton Mappin (1835-1913), the youngest brother, left to start Mappin & Webb with his father-in-law, George Webb (d.1881), at premises initially at Cornhill in the City, but later at Mansion House Buildings, and at Oxford Street in the West End. Mappin Brothers and Mappin & Webb competed with one another until 1908, when they merged.

Edward Mappin of Mappin Brothers is buried at West Norwood (grave 15,036, square 54). He died at Whorncliffe House, Kings Road, Clapham Park on 11 January 1875, just three weeks after the death of his wife.

John Belcher and his later partner John James Joass (1868-1952) redesigned the Oxford Street Mappin & Webb shop in 1907. The building is no longer Mappin & Webb, but it is a building of quality, worthy of at least a glance if you are passing that way. (It is on the corner of Winsley Street immediately opposite the Oxford Circus Marks & Spencers.) J. J. Joass also designed the famous Mappin Terraces at the London Zoo in 1913, paid for by John Newton Mappin.

Number One Poultry

The new development, now known as Mansion House Square or Number One Poultry, comprises the demolition of eight Grade II listed buildings in the heart of the City's Conservation Area, of which the Mappin & Webb building was the most prominent. It first hit the headline news about 1984-85, when developer Peter Palumbo's rectilinear tower block designed by the late German modernist, Mies van der Rohe, was rejected by former environment minister Patrick Jenkin.

By 1988-89, the site had new proposals with designs by the late James Stirling. These designs had many opponents at the time (e.g. English Heritage, SAVE, the City of London, the Victorian Society and Prince Charles) and criticisms such as "unacceptably monumental", "outrageous breach" of government policies, and "looks like a 1930s wireless" were bandied about. However, supporters of the scheme, who included the RIBA and the Royal Fine Arts Commission, were equally eloquent, with arguments such as "It is wrong to attempt to freeze the character of the City for all time". The DOE inspector took the view that the existing Mansion House Square buildings were only Grade II listed in an area surrounded by Grade I listed buildings. He also added that the Mappin & Webb building was not one of John Belcher's most important works (Belcher was only 29 when he designed it). The report states that "The prominence which Belcher was to achieve later in his career does not add significantly to the importance of this building". Hence, environment minister Nicholas Ridley approved the new James Stirling development.

But then came the recession and nothing happened, until this year. The old shops and offices were vacated on Lady Day (25 March) and demolition took place between May and July. Archaeological excavations should take less than a year. Completion of the new buildings, value £50 million to £80 million, is expected in 1996 at the earliest.

John Belcher's three principal buildings that are still extant in the locality include: the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Great Swan Alley, Moorgate (built 1890-93); Electra House (now School of Business Studies, London Guildhall University), 84 Moorgate (built 1900-03); and the Royal London Friendly Society's Buildings (now an empty office block next to Triton Court), 12 Finsbury Square (built 1904).

The illustration is reproduced by kind permission of *Building Magazine*.

Review of FOWNC Events - Summer 1994

All three of this summer's special tours enjoyed quite fine weather, and each attracted about 25 people. On 17 July FOWNC member and author Patricia Spencer-Silver led a rather unusual tour, not following our normal well-trodden route. She talked about the building contractor George Myers and some of his friends and relations whilst visiting their graves, starting with Myers himself (tombstone now gone, alas - only a small marker stone remains on the lawn outside the Crematorium) and ending with his builder son-in-law Sir John Jackson. On the way we learned more about such luminaries as City architect Sir Horace Jones, Sir William Tite (architect of the Cemetery and interred in the Catacombs), building contractor Thomas Cubitt and interior decorator John Gregory Crace. His years of association with Pugin earned Myers the epithet "Pugin's Builder", and it was apt that the tour coincided with the Pugin exhibition at the V&A. A notable collaboration was the Medieval Court at the 1851 Great Exhibition, designed by Pugin, built by Myers, with interior work by Crace. Another timely connection was Tower Bridge, designed by Jones, with piers and abutments built by Jackson, and celebrating its centenary on 30 June. Patricia's biography of Myers is available from the FOWNC bookstall, and we are very pleased that she will be opening our 1995 season of lectures with a talk about him.

On 21 August visitors were treated to the fruits of Bob Flanagan's research into people with all sorts of military connections who are buried at Norwood. Apart from naval and army officers, some of whose tombstones have very fine coats of arms carved on them, and at least one survivor of the Charge of the Light Brigade, Bob's work has covered people who made a scientific or technical contribution to warfare. These include Sir Hiram Maxim and his machine gun, Robert Mallet and his mortar, Augustus Siebe and his diving suit, Col. John Porte and his flying boats, Joshua Field who helped to build the first mass-production machinery, for making ships' pulley blocks for the Royal Navy at Portsmouth Dockyard, and Sir Henry Bessemer whose experiments to make a stronger metal than cast iron for gun barrels led to the first bulk production of steel. Women have not been forgotten - a notable personality here is Sister Eliza Roberts, Florence Nightingale's principal nursing assistant in the Crimea.

Not unnaturally, many of these characters were featured again in the tour of scientists, engineers and doctors on 18 September led jointly by Jill Dudman and Bob Flanagan. One of the pleasures of this regular tour each year is to note the advances made in the restoration of the tomb of dinosaur

discoverer Dr. Gideon Mantell - the reconstructed stone now has railings around it, and the young ginkgo tree seems to have survived the summer. This is also the last opportunity of each year to gain access to the Catacombs and study the fascinating hydraulic coffin lift. However, since we have been running this tour every September for several years, we may give it a rest next year so that we can fit new tours into the programme.

Finally, the theme of science and warfare was taken up again by Bob in his interesting talk at the Lambeth Archives Open Day. It is striking how often improvements in technology have been brought about by military demands.

Forthcoming FOWNC Events - Oct-Dec 1994

General tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month (2 October, 6 November and 4 December), starting at the Cemetery main gate off Norwood Road and lasting 1½-2 hours. The October tour starts at 14.30 and the winter tours start at 11.00. There is no formal charge but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) towards conservation projects.

Talks will be held as detailed below in Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way, SE27, starting at 14.30. Chatsworth Way leads off Norwood Road, but the entrance to the meeting room is at the side of the Church in Idmiston Road. Again, we welcome donations to help cover costs.

Saturday 15 October: Lecture - Samuel Prout (1783-1852) by Richard Lockett

After his friend David Roberts RA, Samuel Prout is perhaps the best-known artist buried at West Norwood. He became one of the first artists to specialize in continental views, and George IV appointed him "Painter in Water-Colours in Ordinary" in 1829. Richard Lockett wrote the monograph on Prout that we stock on the FOWNC bookstall, and is Senior Assistant Director of the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

This talk will be followed by the auction and AGM as detailed elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Saturday 19 November: Lecture - The Mysterious Death of Charles Bravo by Nicholas Reed

Charles Delauney Turner Bravo (1846-1876) was the victim of one of the most notorious unpunished Victorian murder mysteries. Bravo married young widow Florence Ricardo in 1875. However, he died suddenly, possibly from poisoning with tartar emetic, at The Priory, Balham on 21 April 1876. His headstone at Norwood is now lying flat on the ground. Nicholas Reed will elaborate....