

# Friends of West Norwood Cemetery



NEWSLETTER NO 3: SEPTEMBER 1990

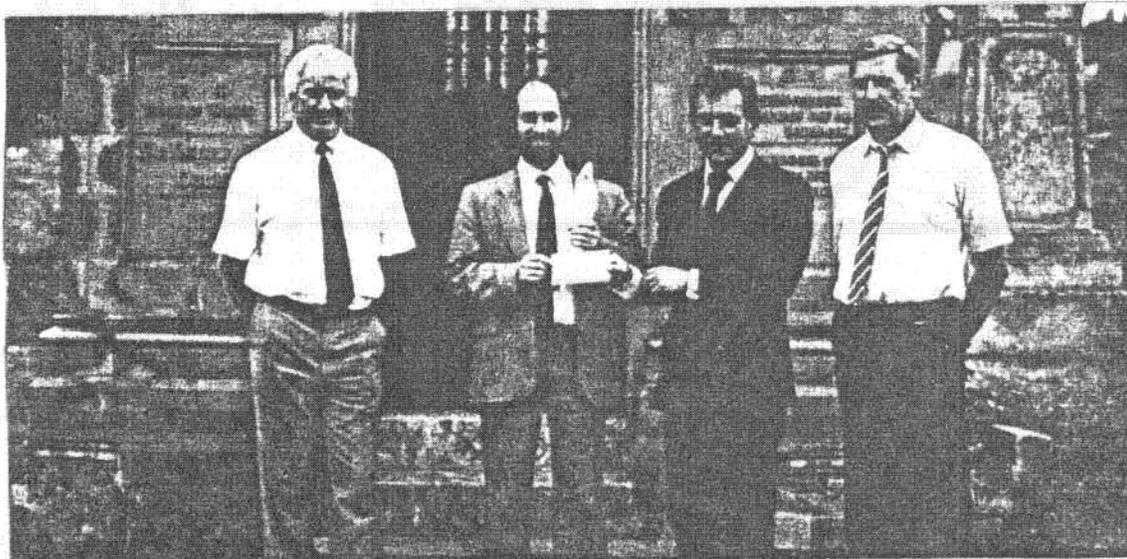
In the first few months since our inauguration in March, we have raised over £2500 towards the repair or reconstruction of historic monuments, most of which are depicted in the Norwood Society booklet written by Geoffrey Manning.

DR GIDEON MANTELL

The largest sum offered so far is for the reconstruction of the tomb of Dr Gideon Mantell, discoverer of the Iguanodon (and indeed, of four of the five types of dinosaur). His tomb, one of only seven which are Grade II Star, now lies in pieces close to the entrance. (His tomb is supposed to have been broken by a tree falling on it in 1987. But the photograph in the Norwood Society booklet (no 5) shows it still complete in 1988, next to the stump of the tree concerned!) The Geologists Association, who are holding a Conference about Dr Mantell this September, have offered £1500 towards the £2000 needed towards the restoration, and we are confident of finding the other £500.

SIR HENRY DOULTON

On 31st July 1990, we were delighted to welcome Mr Michael Doulton to the Cemetery. He is the fifth generation direct descendant of John Doulton, who founded the Doulton Potteries in Lambeth. (They are now the Royal Doulton Potteries, and have moved to Stoke on Trent.) John's son Sir Henry Doulton now lies in a splendid terracotta mausoleum built by the family firm, not far from the similar Doulton terracotta tomb erected for Sir Henry Tate (founder of the Tate Gallery). (They appear as nos 16 and 18 in the booklet.) Mr Doulton gave the Friends an attractive Doulton porcelain figure of a pelican, as well as a cheque for £250 towards the maintenance of the Doulton tombs. Doulton are also paying for a locksmith to provide a new key to the tomb, which will enable us to clean it up, and also to see properly the marvellous mosaic depicting the heavens, on the ceiling of the tomb.



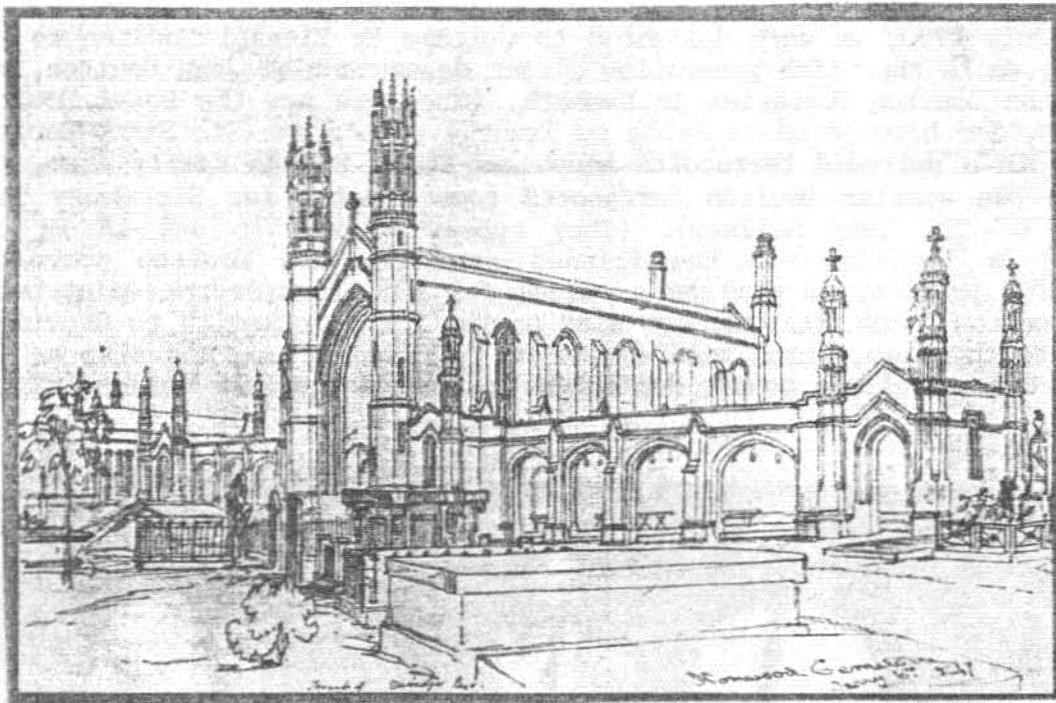
The photograph shows Mr Michael Doulton with Nicholas Reed, chairman of FOWNC, Mr R. Mackay, Cemetery Superintendent (left), and Mr John Day, Lambeth's Principal Services Officer (right).

## THE STEVENSON MAUSOLEUM

This is the tomb which we were told in March was on the point of demolition by Lambeth. They regarded it as "unsafe", because a stone column has fallen from one of the sides, as well as some of the stonework beside it. They allowed us three months grace in which to try to raise the £630 needed to repair it and make it safe. At the time, we wanted to save it simply as an attractive memorial with distinctive decoration, unusual in preserving its original slate door, and as an attractive background to the Marsden memorial. (See the photo of the latter: no 11 in the booklet).

There turn out to be eleven people buried in it, coming from the Stevenson, Grant and Hodgson families. But we later realised that the elaborate cross on one corner, and crucifix at the top of the gable, are in fact close copies of decorations which appeared on the original Chapel building beside it, which Lambeth demolished in 1960. And this chapel building was itself modelled on the Chapel of Kings College Cambridge.

We reproduce a watercolour of 1852, now in the Minet Library, which shows the original Chapel building of the Cemetery, designed by Sir William Tite, with the "foliated crosses" visible on most of its pinnacles, and now surviving on one corner of the Stevenson tomb. So this tomb is actually quite important as testimony to the major building which stood beside it. Anyway, we are happy to say that the Heritage of London Trust, to which we applied for the money to save the tomb, have kindly agreed to provide it. We have now instructed Wilsons to go ahead with the repairs.



### DR WILLIAM MARSDEN

The column to Dr Marsden (no 11 in the booklet), founder of both the Royal Free Hospital and the Royal Marsden Cancer Hospital, was originally set up by him to his wife Elizabeth, who died before him in 1846. An early description says that honeysuckle was growing up it, and in the picture reproduced, the column, and even the honeysuckle, can be seen on the far right of the picture. Also visible is the tall elegant urn which stood on the top until it was stolen some time after 1970. Both Hospitals have generously agreed to provide money from relevant trusts to clean and restore the column and its base. However, we are presently finding out if there is any clear photograph of the urn on the top, which it would be desirable to restore at the same time.

CLEARANCE AT NORWOOD CEMETERY:  
The Threat to Lambeth's Heritage

On Tuesday 5th June 1990, at Centre 70 in Christchurch Road, Tulse Hill, the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery hosted a talk by Mr John Day, Lambeth's Principal Administration and Services Officer. Speaking as the Chief Officer in charge of all Lambeth's Cemeteries, he explained Council policy in detail, and then answered our questions. But he made it clear that Lambeth's policy is still to "clear" the Cemetery of almost all graves older than 100 years.

The background, as we understand it, is this. In 1965 Lambeth bought the Cemetery for £6000, and some years later declared it as "closed". This would have kept it as a historic attraction, and with no further burials. Historic it certainly is, with its 44 Grade 2 listed memorials: more than twice as many as any other cemetery in London.

But in 1972 Government legislation changed, and allowed any Council to remove tombs or tombstones more than 100 years old, provided they followed the appropriate procedures. These were the insertion of a notice in the local paper, and writing to the last known address of the owners of the tomb. This was duly done. Needless to say, if one writes to the owners of a memorial at an address valid at least fifty years earlier, one can expect few replies. Nor are there many avid readers of the Public Notice sections of their local press. The Council, having thus received very few replies, then started on their massive "clearance". Vehement protests started flooding in (at one time at the rate of ten a day!) from relatives outraged at seeing their family memorials smashed up and removed. Lambeth simply pointed out that they had followed the procedures laid down.

However, Mr Day admitted that they were over-zealous in carrying out that policy. He finally he raised the matter with the relevant Committee, and a new policy was evolved. This means keeping the headstones of "significant" memorials, or those where relatives request it. They then remove the kerbstones, which enables easier maintenance of their "lawn conversion" policy, as removal of kerbs means they can use a strimmer to cut the grass around the headstones. This policy of clearance thus gives them a great opportunity to make many new burials, and collect the burial revenues, in the areas cleared.

But how will Lambeth decide which memorials are "significant"? Let us take three examples of graves which were cleared in the area next to the Cemetery offices. One memorial was to Sir Joseph Whittaker, FSA, founder of "Whittaker's Almanac". Another was to Arthur Woodington, RA, the sculptor of the monumental head of Joseph Paxton at the Crystal Palace, as well as the grand lion which stands on Westminster Bridge. Lambeth's most famous pottery was what is now Royal Doulton, and their most famous potter was George Tinworth. It was he who carved the reliefs on Sir Henry Doulton's mausoleum, and whose other work is now regularly sold for thousands of pounds. Had Doulton known about the intended clearance of this grave, they would undoubtedly have objected. All three highly important graves: all three destroyed without trace. But ten years ago, none of these graves were realised as significant. And it is only by doing very detailed research, of the sort the Friends and others have only just started on, that the importance of particular graves will be realised.

Yet now the threat is even greater. Up till now, only graves at least 100 years old can be removed: i.e. those from 1890 or earlier. (Mind you, most of the eminent Victorians we are concerned with died before that date, so the Council has already

taken the powers to remove any of those they wish.) But in 1977 new legislation was passed, allowing Councils to take powers to remove graves over 75 years old. Mr Day told us that Lambeth intends to take such powers later this year. After that, any grave earlier than 1915 could be removed, unless a relative happens to hear about it and objects in time. Because now the Council has followed the procedures it need do nothing more: it already has the powers to remove any grave before 1890, and will shortly be able to remove any before 1915 (and next year, any before 1916, and so on).

There is simply no way of telling which graves will in the future be regarded as "significant". For example, how many prominent suffragettes are buried in Norwood? We have no idea, but our guess is there are several. But unless some organisation does the research very quickly, the chances are such tombs will go: their significance not realised at the time. How much more does this apply in every other field? Are specialists in every subject going to list for us all the "significant" people in their field, all within the next three months, before further graves are destroyed? Of course not. This Cemetery is one of the few which has been declared an official Conservation Area: surely this should put a brake on such clearance? One would think so: and in the case of listed monuments, it does: these cannot legally be cleared without the consent of English Heritage: and we trust it will not be forthcoming! But with any other grave, the owners: Lambeth in this case, simply have to apply to: the local Council, Lambeth. All very convenient!

Two other points emerged from the talk. We asked why, when stones are removed, they are deliberately smashed up, and taken to a dump in Dartford. Why not, for example, place them round the perimeter, as they do in many churchyards? The reason, we were told, is that they might be reused, and Lambeth does not want that. It comes to something when a Council which says it believes in recycling and conservation of resources, still smashes up tombstones, each of which must be worth well over £200, just so they cannot be reused!

As it happens, Lambeth owns two other cemeteries, at Tooting and at Streatham, comprising 77 acres in all: twice the area of Norwood. They have virtually nothing historic in them: indeed, Hugh Meller hardly mentions them in his book on London Cemeteries, and large areas of them have been cleared already. Given the historic nature of Norwood, it would be far better for these other two to be used for burials from now on. But no. According to Mr Day, they are not as central as Norwood, and public transport to them is not quite so good. So Norwood is used for preference.

For our part, we see no objection to the continued use of Norwood Cemetery for cremations. Indeed, in this country cremation is now a much more popular form of disposal of the dead than burial, except amongst the ethnic minorities. At Norwood at the moment there are some 750 cremations a year, compared with 500 burials. After a cremation, attractive small plaques are placed where they do not intrude on the more substantial graves, and the continued use of cremation at Norwood would ensure that the Cemetery stays well maintained. But we can see no reason why Lambeth should not shift the majority of burials to both Streatham and Tooting cemeteries. At our June meeting, we heard from a relative very upset at having to walk over recently dug graves in order to tend the grave of her relatives. We also heard that several headstones had been flattened recently to allow access for the mechanical diggers to make new graves. This is not good enough. If burials are to continue in Norwood, they should be placed in one of the several large areas already completely cleared, and not immediately next to major historic monuments. Further burial should be done more sensitively, and with greater respect to those already buried at Norwood.

### STOP PRESS: CLEARANCE RESTARTED!

On 17th August your Chairman was down at the Cemetery to take photographs of the Stevenson memorial before it was repaired. He was then astonished to notice that large areas in the SW corner were being bulldozed flat. He then found, near the top of the hill, a pile of memorial stones, including at least five headstones and several large carved and decorated stones, newly smashed into about 100 pieces! He was then told that all these pieces would shortly be removed to Dartford, and two minutes later, they were loaded up into a lorry and driven away. Four of the five headstones had completely clear inscriptions, and one dated from 1944!

A few days later our Vice-Chairman Bob Flanagan noticed that further areas had been cleared. This included the area next to what Hugh Meller describes as "unquestionably the finest iron memorial in any British cemetery": that to Mrs Anne Farrow, number 17 in the booklet. It is one of the Grade II Listed Memorials: but it appears that the headstone to it, which we saw lying face down on our tour on 1st July, has now been removed.

The legislation on the matter is clear. The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 stipulates that if clearance is to be carried out, the burial authority shall "display a notice of their intention to do so in conspicuous positions at the entrances to the cemetery and if the powers are to be exercised only in any area of the cemetery, in conspicuous positions in or adjoining such area." It also says that not less than three months notice must be given before such clearance can commence. This has clearly not occurred. Nor is there any power to remove headstones as late as 1944. Your officers have already brought these apparent breaches of the law to Lambeth's attention. But since all this clearance has been taking place during working hours during the week, we should be most grateful if members could please keep their eyes open and let us know of further clearance as or when it occurs.

### THE MINET LIBRARY

The Archives at the Minet are probably the finest local history collection in South London. (For example, it holds some unique photographs and watercolours showing the Cemetery in Victorian times.) But in view of its great importance, it is a shame that the Archives are only open on three days a week: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday (plus some impossibly limited hours on certain Saturdays). However, we have found that not even this limited schedule is being kept to: sometimes there is only an Ansaphone replying on one of those days. Please let us know if you have similar difficulties: in view of its limited opening times, it is all the more important that it should be open on at least those days. Visits are by appointment only.

### ERIC SMITH

Members will be sorry to hear of the death of Eric Smith, who wrote the excellent 1979 article on the Cemetery, listing over a hundred of the eminent people he had discovered buried at Norwood. His literary executor, and successor as Secretary of the Clapham Antiquarian Society, is Nicholas Long, one of our members who has a family tomb at Norwood. Nicholas has generously offered to let the Friends have all the research material which Eric collected on the Cemetery. This includes Eric's transcriptions of many, if not most, of the inscriptions still visible in the 1960s and 70s. We are most grateful to Nicholas, and the material we have already seen will undoubtedly be invaluable when it comes to finding out what has already been destroyed in the Cemetery.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Your Committee have decided to hold monthly tours of the Cemetery, on the first Sunday of the month, in the afternoon in summer and morning in winter, starting from outside the Cemetery office near the entrance. These tours will mainly cover the principal listed memorials in the Cemetery, but will sometimes be the type of specialised tour described below. We shall charge £1 for most tours, whether or not people are members: we are sure you will agree this is going to a good cause!

2.30 pm Sunday 2nd September

Monthly Tour of most of the listed tombs, led by our very knowledgeable Membership Secretary, Rosemary Comber, who has led such tours for the Norwood Society for several years.

2.30 pm Sunday 16th September

TOUR OF CRYSTAL PALACE WORTHIES. Arranged jointly with the Crystal Palace Foundation, so the £1 charge will be split between our two organisations. We have found an encouragingly large number of people with Crystal Palace connections, buried at Norwood. So this tour will be quite different from the usual tour, and is strongly recommended!

10 am to 4 pm, Saturday 29th August

OPEN DAY at Lambeth Archives Department, Minet Library, 52 Knatchbull Road, Camberwell SE5 9QY (071-733 3279)

This annual event is an excellent opportunity to see some of the treasures stored in the Minet Library. We shall have a stall and exhibition there, as well as a large collection of relevant literature, so come along to support us. (If you can spare the time to help on the stall, please let us know.)

In addition, from 11 to 12.30 there will be a workshop on family history, and from 1.30 to 3 another on the history of buildings and streets.



2.30 pm Sunday 7th October

Monthly Tour, but this time given by Patricia Jenkyns, who will be repeating her tour of Artists and Artistic Connections in the Cemetery.

7.45 pm Tuesday 9th October at St. Philip and St. James Church Hall, Poplar Walk, SE24. Nicholas Reed talks to the Herne Hill Society about Some Temporary and Permanent Residents of Norwood.

11 am (note different time) Sunday 4th November: Monthly tour

11 am Sunday 2nd December: Monthly Tour

### CEMETERY OPENING HOURS

For the benefit of those who wish to take their friends on their own conducted tour, the opening hours are as follows: April to October:

8-6 weekdays, 10-6 weekends; November to March: 8-4 weekdays, 10-4 weekends

### FOWNC OFFICERS:

Chairman and Newsletter Editor: Nicholas Reed, 26 Hichisson Road, SE15 3AL; tel: 071 732 7778.

Vice-Chairman: Bob Flanagan, 79 Durban Road, SE27 9RW; tel: 081-670 3265

Membership Secretary: Rosemary Comber, 170 Knights Hill, SE27 OSR;

tel: 081-761 3996. Rosemary's husband David is our Treasurer, but the Annual Subscription of £2 should be sent to Rosemary.