

FRIENDS OF WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY

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Chairman's Report by Bob Flanagan

Progress on repair/conservation projects in the cemetery continues thanks to money provided by the Council in the current financial year. We will give more details in the next edition of the Newsletter.

I'm sure that we have now turned the corner in our dealings with the Council and that progress will continue into the new Millenium. However, the Council's Land Management Strategy for the Cemetery remains in draft and can't be finalised until the problem of the re-use of private graves, a judged illegal by the Consistory Court, but to be again challenged by Lambeth, has been settled.

Agreement over the Land Management Strategy will be the key to major long-term conservation projects, and thus the possibility of grant aid, but until this is achieved the setting up of two Conservation Priority Areas within the cemetery has been proposed.

One is the Greek Cemetery (the most important area in the cemetery as regards listed memorials), and the other is the area traversed by the Ship Path - the area around the Pond mausoleum is the only part of the consecrated ground which has not suffered some removal of memorials by Lambeth over the years and is thus of especial historical importance when taken as a whole. In addition to the mausoleum itself, the Bessemer, Jones, Wimble, Berens and Grissell monuments are also listed. I hope members approve of these proposals.

FOWNC News

The October 1999 AGM agreed the proposed annual subscription increase to £3 from 1 January 2000 with other rates being changed in proportion. Thanks to all of you who have renewed already. At the AGM I also proposed going back to quarterly Newsletters as I was embarrassed by the delay in publishing the seemingly continuous flow of new articles. Of course no sooner said than the supply has dried up, so we may stick with 3 issues per year unless some of the promised articles start to appear in the next few weeks! I hope members will understand. I am pleased with our achievement as regards the Newsletter which is not only a forum for current news about the cemetery and FOWNC, but also provides a permanent record of the research of FOWNC members and other friends.

James Greathead Blue Plaque

In this context, Rob Cartwright, whose article on James Greathead was published in FOWNC Newsletter 30 (September 1997), reports that the English Heritage Blue Plaque commemorating Greathead will be installed on his former home (then named

Birchwood) at 3 St. Mary's Grove, Barnes, SW13. The ceremony will be on Friday 18 February at 12.00, and the plaque will be unveiled by his grandson, also James Henry Greathead. It is hoped that representatives from London Underground will be present, as well as James Butler RA, sculptor of the statue of Greathead at Cornhill in the City. The organisers would be very pleased if some FOWNC members could attend.



*James Henry Greathead
(1844-1896)*

Finally, I am pleased to draw attention to this year's AGM on 21 October. Vivien Knight, Curator of the newly re-opened Guildhall Art Gallery, has kindly agreed to give an illustrated talk on "Alfred Temple, Charles Gassiot and the Origins of the Guildhall Art Gallery" after the AGM itself. George Young's article on this very topic was published in FOWNC Newsletter 31 (January 1998).

Bob Flanagan

Revd Samuel Wainwright

(1824-1899)

by M. E. Brian

Samuel Wainwright, who died on 19 December 1899, was born in Manchester on 28 January 1824, the son of a warehouseman who had opened an "academy" in what is now the Manchester suburb of Chorlton-upon-Medlock. Possibly after education by his father, and two years at Manchester Grammar School, he worked in the counting house of a local firm of merchants and commission agents for some 7 years. Brought up at Grosvenor Street Wesleyan Church in Chorlton, in 1848 he commenced training to become a Wesleyan schoolmaster at Mr Stow's Normal Seminary in Glasgow.

After two years at a school in County Durham, he was appointed to the prestigious Methodist Kingsdown School in Bath, but left after less than a year to train as a Church of England clergyman at St Bees College in Cumberland. No reason for this change of direction is apparent, but it may have been connected with his father's origins as a warehouseman, and the supposed greater respectability of an Anglican parson over a Dissenting schoolmaster. Ordained by Archbishop Musgrave of York in 1855, and licenced as Curate to the ancient church of Holy Trinity, Micklegate, York, Samuel became Vicar of that church in 1860, and retained this position until 1869.

Little is known of his time in York except for the publication of the first two of his eight books, one of which was written in opposition to the views recently expressed by the writers of *Essays*



Samuel Wainwright

(reproduced from A Goodly Heritage, The Story of One Hundred Years at St Stephen's, Clapham Park. St Stephen's Parochial Church Council, 1967).

and Reviews, a book as much misunderstood and vilified then as David Jenkins, the former Bishop of Durham, was a few years ago. Wainwright was very much opposed to Roman Catholicism, and the growing influence of the Anglo-Catholic or Ritualist party within the Church of England, and at the end of 1867 he was appointed as Editor of the thrice-weekly church newspaper *The Record* and as Secretary of the Islington Protestant Institute.

Leaving Holy Trinity in the care of a curate, he moved to London, and quickly made a name for himself as a religious controversialist, upsetting moderate readers and hearers alike for his uncompromising Protestant tone. He lectured widely, and assisted the Church Association in their attempts to halt the spread of Anglo-Catholic practices in the Church of England, notably the prosecution and imprisonment of Revd Richard Enraght of Bordesly Green, Birmingham.

He also produced four more books, three against Roman and Anglo-Catholicism, and one, *Scientific Sophisms*, described as *A Review of current theories concerning Atoms, Apes and Men*, which, not surprisingly, sought to ridicule many of the new scientific theories of his day.

From about 1874 he suddenly came to be referred to as Dr Wainwright, with the letters DD appearing after his name. There is no evidence that this doctorate was authentic, and it seems that either he fell victim to one of the many "agents" who, according to Crockford's *Clerical Directory* in 1876, claimed to be able to "procure learned degrees in absentia for dupes in any and every profession, that they might have the pleasure of writing some letters after their name and wearing fancy hoods". Alternatively, conscious of his lowly background and lack of formal qualifications, he may have "awarded" the DD to himself.

In 1881 Wainwright stood for election as Chaplain to St Saviour's Church, Southwark (now Southwark Cathedral). The Chaplaincy was roughly the equivalent of Vicar or Rector, but the advowson lay not with the Bishop or similar, but in the hands of the electors of the parish. The election campaign seems to have been an undignified affair, and although Wainwright received well short of a third of the votes cast, there were accusations by his supporters of irregularities and the Bishop of Rochester, in whose diocese St Saviour's then was, felt compelled to withhold a licence from the successful candidate (Revd William Thompson) until he had investigated the matter. No fault was found and Thompson took up his new position in July 1880.

At the end of 1884 Wainwright was appointed to the temporary church of St Paul, Elmfield Rd, Balham, whose congregation had broken away from St Mary's, Balham because of the Puseyite (High Church) practices of Revd Thomas Bates, the new Vicar. The St Paul's appointment was short lived, however, because Wainwright was called to take charge of nearby St Stephen's, Clapham Park, and when he moved there in mid-1886, St Paul's closed down, many of its congregation going to St Stephen's with their minister.

At St Stephen's, Wainwright seems largely to have retired from the arena of anti-Catholic and anti-Ritualist controversy and carried on a more pastoral ministry in a district then declining from its overall early 19th century gentility. He produced two more books, one of which was a defence of the traditional Christological teaching against the then more modern suggestions of Charles Gore and others.

Wainwright died at *Penmorfa*, Clapham Park on 14 December 1899, apparently as a result of a chill caught after a drawing-room Bible Class, and was buried at Norwood five days later (grave 28,850, square 20). Four years to the day after his death, his widow Martha also died - she was buried with him in due course.

Wainwright's memorial, transferred to the rebuilt St Stephen's Church in 1974, describes him as "Conversant with Modern Science and with the Wonders of the Physical World [who] expounded God's Word in the light of His Works. A man of understanding, set for the Defence of the Gospel". More recent researches have found that he had another side, which today's Christians, except the most extreme Protestants, would find less laudable.

Leaving aside the question of whether or not his "Doctorate" was genuine, his anti-Catholic (Roman and Anglo) fanaticism and the general bitter and mocking tone of his polemical writing, even though once fairly commonplace in Victorian England, are, in these more ecumenical days, quite unacceptable. They do however show how deeply rooted such feelings are, and how their origins are as much, if not more, political than theological.



*Wainwright's tombstone at Norwood
(line drawing by Don Bianco)*

William Skeen (1812-1873)

by Philip Somervail

William Skeen was born on 11 January 1812, in the village of Tweedmouth, North Durham, the ninth child and youngest son of William Skeen (1773-1855). William Skeen senior was a Salmon fisherman who earned his living on the sea-shore or at the rocks off the mouth of the River Tweed. His ancestors had lived near Elgin in Morayshire for many generations; but his father, Robert Skeen (1727-1800), had left the paternal home and migrated to the north of England, where he married Esther Thompson (1732-1811), and lived to the age of 73 before dying in Tweedmouth "highly respected by all who knew him". Could it be that Robert Skeen fled to England in the aftermath of the '45 Rebellion? Whatever the reason for his move south, he established a family in Tweedmouth whose descendants may still be found in the area today.

William Skeen senior married Margaret Nesbit (1774-1846), the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. They had six sons and four daughters; Robert (1797-1879), the eldest, commented that "to maintain so many was a severe struggle, on the scanty and precarious earnings of a fisherman. But we never suffered actual want". All the children were baptised at United Presbyterian Church, Spittal, with William's date of baptism being 19 January 1812. As Robert went on to observe in his autobiography:

"It was the great desire of our parents to give us as good an education as the village schools could bestow; and this they accomplished. We were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. It was a good foundation on which to build... The Bible was the great school-book".

In due course, the sons were "... ushered into the printing-office of Mr Lochhead, of Berwick-on-Tweed. He was rather a harsh man... Our hours of business were long - from about 6 am to 8 pm." Mr Lochhead's office stood in High Street [Marygate], Berwick.

His days in Mr Lochhead's employment put William Skeen in good stead, for it formed the basis of his career initially as a printer, and later in journalism. All four sons of William Skeen senior who reached adulthood eventually made their way to London, where two, Robert and Alexander, were printers, and John, the second eldest, was a painter and decorator.

Family legend has it that, in about 1832, whilst still living in Tweedmouth, William eloped with Ann Atchison (ca. 1814-1864), although to date it has proved impossible to verify his theory. Ann was also from Tweedmouth. The village was very near to Scotland so one may speculate that, for whatever reason, they may have decided to cross the border in order to marry. What is known, however, is that they moved to

Edinburgh, where the first of their children, another William, was born in 1833. The baptismal record in St Cuthbert's Church records:

31 July 1833

SKEEN William Skeen Printer West Arthur Place and Ann Atchison
his spouse, had a Son Born to them on the fourteenth day of July
current... Named William.

Robert Skeen alluded in his autobiography to visiting "several relatives" in Edinburgh whilst in search of employment. Perhaps this gives us an indication as to why William moved to the city. He found work there as a printer, and as the family grew they lived in a series of addresses in the area east of Nicolson Street^[Note 1].



*Sarah Makins Calder (nee Skeen) (1835-96)
and her grand-daughter Sara Vavasour Macleod (1893-1973).
No portrait of William Skeen or his wife survives.*

In 1836, by then working as a reporter for the *Courant* in Edinburgh, William and family received a visit from Robert, fresh from a visit to old familiar haunts in Tweedmouth. Robert recalled being welcomed joyfully by his brother and spending two or three days with the family before taking his leave at Leith on the steamer *Pegasus*, bound for Hull. However, off Northumberland near Newton-by-the-Sea, the *Pegasus* struck rock, "with great force", and the hold filled with five feet of water. A fishing-boat came to the rescue after sighting the distress signal and her master skillfully ran the *Pegasus* on shore between two ledges of rock. Within 24 hours the damage to the ship's bows had been made good and the vessel, with Robert Skeen on board, completed her journey to Hull - and he continued from there to London in another vessel.

The first few years of William's career as a reporter were spent in Edinburgh, where he was connected with the *Scotsman*, and afterwards with the *Witness*. By August 1839 he had moved with his family to a (presumably) larger home in Salisbury Street, where they lived for several years.

William came to London in about 1845 to join the parliamentary staff of the *Morning Post*, and he was in the gallery of the House of Commons with very brief intervals from 1845 until the close of the 1872 Parliamentary session. During his 27 years of London press work he served on the reporting staff of the *Post*; the *Chronicle*, on which he rose to the position of leader; and when that journal ceased publication he became associated with the *Standard*.

For many years he was Parliamentary correspondent of the *Freeman*. His obituary in the *Freeman* records that the *London Letter* which he wrote for Hugh Miller's *Witness*, "like the correspondence which he contributed to our own columns, was characterised with much shrewd insight into public men and affairs". Another obituary noted that his *London Letter* in the *Edinburgh Witness*, "was much esteemed in the North".

Meanwhile, William and Ann's family continued to burgeon. They lived in various addresses in north Surrey^[Note 2], eventually making a home in St Ann's Road (now Southey Road), Brixton. They had 12 children, of whom the youngest was only ten years old when their mother died on 7 June 1864 aged just 50 years. She was buried at Norwood on 11 June 1864 (grave 2326, square 9). The officiating minister was James Baldwin Brown (1820-84)^[Note 3].

William carried on working for the remaining 8½ years of his life but, after suffering for some time, he died suddenly on his 61st birthday, 11 January 1873. *The Standard's* obituarist recounted what happened:

"Mr Skeen died literally in harness. He was taken ill when reporting a meeting in Camden Town on Saturday afternoon. Brought home unconscious in a cab, he only rallied into partial consciousness, and breathed his last a few minutes before midnight on Saturday."

There were many tributes. *The Standard* recorded that:

“Mr Skeen was one of that able group of parliamentary reporters still, we are glad to say, represented in the Gallery, who bring to their duties a political knowledge and ability in no degree inferior to that of the more prominent and influential of the politicians whose speeches they report. He was a man of simple and unaffected piety, of great information, always at the service of those who sought his assistance, and a writer of much ability, as, in addition to the articles that he contributed to this and other journals, some magazine and review articles testify... He was generally esteemed and respected, and his death is sincerely deplored by a large circle of friends.”

The *Daily News*:

“Although Mr Skeen deservedly had a high reputation as an accurate and intelligent Parliamentary reporter, it is worthy of note that he had no knowledge of shorthand, but so powerful was his memory that he could reproduce the longest and most rapidly-spoken speech by the aid of a few long-hand notes. Mr Skeen’s original writing had considerable merit. In private life, he was a most winning and amiable character. Very widely read, he conversed with a culture, a fertility of illustrative anecdote, and a quaint subtlety of quiet humour, at once rare and delightful. None knew him who did not love him, no man ever left a more stainless reputation behind him, and his memory will long be revered in “the gallery”, and by his friends generally.”

The *Freeman*:

“Mr Skeen merits notice at our hands on a twofold ground He was a Baptist, and for many years officiated as Parliamentary correspondent of the FREEMAN. ... He was an excellent political writer, as well as an efficient reporter; and the *London Letter* which he wrote for Hugh Miller’s journal, like the correspondence which he contributed to our own columns, was characterised with much shrewd insight into public men and affairs. He was justly held in high esteem by his professional brethren, both for his ability and character.”

Skeen was buried on 16 January 1873 at Norwood. The officiating minister was John Foster. The epitaph on his gravestone^[Note 4] read:

“Connected with the public press for 40 years as reporter and contributor... a member and officer of a Christian church and a Christian teacher of no mean power.”

Notes

[1] West Arthur Place (1833); 5 Heriot Mount (1835); 15 Brown Street (1837); South Salisbury Street (1839-43).

[2] Lambeth Square, Lambeth (1849); 14 West Square, Southwark (1851); 1 Isabel Place, Camberwell New Road, Kennington (1861); 11 St Ann's Road, Kennington (1864); 22 St Ann's Road, North Brixton (1871) [possibly '11' and '22' were the same house renumbered].

[3] Congregationalist minister of Claylands Chapel, Clapham Road, Kennington from 1846. In 1870, with the greater part of his congregation, he moved to a new and more commodious church in Brixton Road, where he remained until his death. He was a noted preacher "far beyond his own denomination". He, too, is buried at Norwood (grave 7167, square 40).

[4] Grave 2326, Square 9. The gravestone was recorded by Eric Smith, but has now been demolished. Many of William & Ann Skeen's 12 children were interred at Norwood.

William Skeen (1833-97) [Grave 21237B, Square 9];
Sarah Makins Calder (1835-96) [Grave 27073, Square 9];
James Skeen (1837-1929) [Grave 9723, Square 9];
Ann Petrie (1839-92) [Grave 24808, Square 9];
John Skeen (1845-83) [Grave 19778, Square 9]
and Henry Skeen (1853-1930) [Grave 32251, Square 9].
None of their headstones have survived.

Alexander Skeen (1846-9), Edward Skeen (1848-66), and Jane Calder Skeen (1851-2) were buried in Grave 2326, Square 9 with their parents.

Robert Skeen (1841-1857) perished at sea;

Margaret Unwin (1843-1933) and Esther Isabella Lloyd (1854-1914) are assumed to be buried elsewhere.

References

1. *The Autobiography of Robert Skeen, Printer*. London: Wyman & Sons, 1876, p 2.
2. *Standard*, 15 January 1873 (p 5, col 5)
3. *Daily News*, 15 January 1873 (p 6, col c)
4. *Freeman*, 17 January 1873 (p 35, col c, & p 36, col a)
5. *Christian World*, 17 January 1873 (p 36, col a)
6. IGI for Northumberland
7. 1861 Census entry for 1 Isabel Place, Camberwell New Road, Kennington Park, Surrey
8. Good's *Directory of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Tweedmouth & Spittal*, 1806.

The New Dictionary of National Biography

by Paul Graham

The *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) is the first recourse for anyone researching the lives of eminent Britons. For those conducting research into the illustrious dead buried or otherwise commemorated at West Norwood it has proved invaluable.

The 63 volumes of the DNB appeared punctually, every quarter, between 1886 and 1900. Three more supplementary volumes were published in 1901 to include those who had died during the course of publication. Its sponsor was the publisher George Smith (1824-1901), who therefore lived just long enough to see the project to fruition, but who lost over £50,000 by the venture.

The first two editors, Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, were both knighted for their endeavours. The original 66 volumes of the DNB contain 28,201 lives written by 696 different authors. Further supplementary volumes of the DNB have been published every succeeding decade.

The most prolific contributor to the original DNB was Thompson Cooper (1837-1904), with 1,422 articles. He was a parliamentary reporter for both *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He lived in Brixton and is buried at Norwood (grave 27,866, square 29). He is amongst the 216 people, at the latest count), who merit an entry in the DNB and who are buried in the cemetery. For further information on many of the others, see Bob Flanagan's article in Newsletter 21 (January 1995).

Thanks to funds provided by Oxford University Press and the British Academy, a new DNB is in preparation for publication (both print and CD-ROM) in 2002. The original version is being thoroughly revised and considerably extended. The new DNB will contain about 50,000 articles (some 45 million words). All those featured in the original DNB will be included in the new edition, either in a completely re-written or a greatly revised form. Sadly, the inspiration and editor of the project, Prof. Colin Matthew, died unexpectedly before Christmas - hopefully a new editor will see the project through to completion.

Amongst the thousands of new articles on previously neglected subjects will be one I have written on the journalist John Henry Barrow (grave 5,815, square 17). I was allocated a maximum of 900 words. The final submission, to be reproduced in the next edition of the FOWNC Newsletter, came in at 881 words. Apart from restrictions on length, contributors were given a comprehensive list of the various aspects of their subject's life that should be included. The opening paragraph also had to follow a given formula that excluded all possibility of literary elegance. Illustrations of some of the subjects are to appear in the new DNB. Unfortunately, no portrait of Barrow seems to exist.

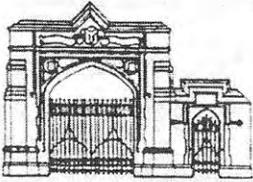
Although relatively little has been written about Barrow, it was surprising to discover how much of it is inaccurate. It would have been possible to construct an entirely fictitious biography based upon some of the claims which have appeared in print! One very scholarly article asserted that Barrow had been born in Somerset House, where his father was employed and did have a Suite of rooms, but these were not occupied until five years after John Henry's birth! Unfortunately, I accepted this version of events at face value and repeated the mistake in the entry on Barrow in my *Dickens Connections* booklet (FOWNC, 1995). In Barrow's application to the Royal Literary Fund in 1858 he made it clear that he was born in Cheapside, where we know he was christened (at St. Mary-le-Bow) and where his father was employed at the time.

Similarly, Barrow's death certificate records that he died on 29 March 1858. All the articles I encountered which gave his date of death insisted that he died a day later. In between his birth and death, Barrow did many things including visit India as correspondent for the *Daily News*. This fact is denied by Una Pope-Hennessy in her biography of Charles Dickens, where she insists, for reasons that are not readily apparent, that Barrow turned down this assignment when offered it.

One learned article attributes two plays, entitled *King Glumpus* (1837) and *The Exquisites* (1839), to Barrow. The author of the plays was in fact a younger man, a school friend of Thackeray, who also bore the name John Barrow. John Henry always used his full name professionally to avoid confusion with his literary namesake. Another article, containing the fruits of several years research into the Barrow family tree, asserted that Barrow was married to Lucina, the mother of his ten children. This would have been impossible as Barrow was already married to Kitty when he started to co-habit with Lucina. He never obtained a divorce.

The moral of this tale appears to be 'don't believe everything you read', even when published in respectable academic journals. Secondary sources are often misleading! The records of the Royal Literary Fund were very useful, however, containing as they do written submissions from both Barrow and his wife. But even there one has to be wary. Kitty Barrow's submission seems to be the original source of the belief that her husband was born in Somerset House, as that is what she states on her form. She also appears to have miscalculated her own date of birth. She claims to have been born in 1794, whilst the baptismal records retained by Portsmouth Archives Department show that she was in fact born three years earlier!

The agreement between the publishers of the new DNB and their prospective contributors stipulates that completion of an article does not necessarily mean that it will be published. If the Barrow article is included, doubtless after rigorous editing, then an edition of this Newsletter in the year 2002 will be able to boast that at least one further individual buried in the cemetery features in the new DNB. Given the massive increase in the scope of the publication, we know that there will be many more. As each entry gives the place of burial or cremation if known, it will be easy to search the CD-ROM to select the new list of "Norwood notables".



Recent FOWNC Events

Jill Dudman

London Open House Weekend

This year's contribution to London Open House Weekend (18/19 September) was more extensive and even more successful than last year's. We led several tours of the catacombs and the Greek mortuary chapel on both the Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and some 230 people were attracted by our entry in the official brochure, with the Sunday being especially busy. I should like to thank all the members who kindly volunteered to help with tour leading, bookstall minding and stewarding, particularly those who turned out on both days - it really is a quite major operation handling this many visitors.

Churchyards, Corpses, Crypts and Commerce

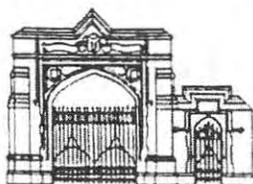
We were pleased to welcome Dr Ruth Richardson, from the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, as our guest speaker for our AGM on 16 October. Her talk dealt with the controversial issue of the disturbing of human remains, in city churchyards and burial grounds, in the course of site redevelopment. She felt very strongly that great respect must be paid to disinterred remains, and questioned even the practices of archaeologists in regarding old bones simply as a resource for research. After enthusiastically sitting through our AGM, she showered praise on the efforts of FOWNC to preserve the cemetery, and declared her intention to become a member! The meeting was well-attended, and her lecture provoked a lively discussion.

John Belcher, Architect

To round off the year, Tony Wilson gave a talk on 20 November, based on his researches into the life and work of the notable Victorian/Edwardian architect John Belcher. The content of the lecture was essentially that of his article which appeared first in the Victorian Society Journal and subsequently in FOWNC Newsletter 34 (January 1999) relating Belcher's religious beliefs to the features and motifs incorporated in his buildings. To illustrate the talk, our Treasurer George Young kindly loaned his collection of slides relating to Belcher's work. George, living as he does quite near to the architect's last home, *Redholm*, in Champion Hill, has also researched Belcher extensively.



*John Belcher Junior RA
(1841-1913)*



Forthcoming FOWNC Events January - March 2000

General tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month (2 January, 6 February and 5 March). All tours start at 11.00, at the Cemetery main gate off Norwood Road, and last for 1½-2 hours. There is no formal charge but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) towards conservation projects.

Talks will be held at Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way (off Norwood Road), SE27 (enter by second door on right in Idmiston Road) as detailed below, starting at 14.30. There is no formal charge but we welcome donations of £1 per person to help cover the hall hire.

Specialist Tours

As FOWNC has now been organising specialist tours for 10 years we have decided to repeat some of our most popular tours this year. The tours will be held on the third Sunday of each month (April-August), meeting at 14.30 at the main gate (Norwood Road), and will last about 2 hours. Details are given in the events list enclosed with this Newsletter.

Saturday 19 February

Lecture - Ljubljana's Silent City: Zale Cemetery & Jože Plečnik's Buildings in Slovenia - Nicholas Long & Nicholas Philpot

Our intrepid Balkan travellers can promise a feast of monumental architecture and discussion of local burial customs, as well as illustrations of the other work of Plečnik in Slovenia. Those members lucky enough to have attended their lecture on the World War One ossuaries and cemeteries of Northern Italy will not want to miss this talk.

Saturday 18 March

Lecture - Gardening in Lambeth - Judy Harris

Judy's earlier research on one of the cemetery's more notable criminal 'residents', the forger William Roupell, has led Judy to look at the history of the horticultural society he ran after his release, and other local gardening societies and nurserymen including John Peed, whose monument also survives albeit in pieces.

Othe Forthcoming Events

Saturday 19 February, 10.30-16.30:

Day Course - British Death Customs - Robert Stephenson

At the City Lit, Stukeley Street, Drury Lane, WC2. Tel: 0171 430 0542. Fee £18, concessions £9.

The Lanner/de Francesco Grave at West Norwood

by Andrew Lamb

Among the graves included by Bob Flanagan in his booklet *West Norwood's Music Hall (FOWNC, 1998)* is that shared by the ballet dancers Katti Lanner and Giuseppe Venuto de Francesco (grave 21,835, square 40).

Bob describes the career of Katti Lanner at some length, but concedes that it has proved extremely difficult to unravel the relationship between Katti and Giuseppe de Francesco. Some further information may help unravel the mystery.

Katti Lanner was the daughter of Viennese Court Ballet Music Director Joseph Lanner (1801-43), whose biographer Fritz Lange was a good friend of Katti's husband Alfred Geraldini. In his 1919 biography, Lange describes Geraldini as a "former ballet dancer and later proprietor of a ticket agency in Vienna", and refers to the marriage as "not one of the happiest". He describes Geraldini as "a quiet, kind and cultured man" and goes on to describe the breach of trust that turned him from "a very wealthy artist, who owned two houses in Copenhagen, with servants and horses" into a broken man, and led to his separation from his wife.

Though Geraldini and Katti Lanner thereafter lived apart for the rest of their lives, they appear to have remained on friendly terms, since he was a beneficiary of her will right up to his death in December 1904. The precise timing of their separation is unclear, but Katti Lanner danced opposite Giuseppe de Francesco in *Giselle* in New York in 1870 and in London in 1871, and they appear to have shared their lives from then until Giuseppe de Francesco's death in 1892. As Bob Flanagan reports, Katti Lanner is to be found in the 1881 census at the same address as de Francesco's mother. The latter died



Katti Lanner
(Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News,
16 June 1877)

in 1887 and is also buried in the West Norwood grave. It might be noted that Giuseppe's name is misspelled "Guiseppe" on his memorial, and thus also in the booklet. If the relationship between Katti and Giuseppe seems obvious enough, what is less clear is the relationship of the two young ladies whom Bob Flanagan refers to as making up the household. In the 1891 census they are named as Cora de Mere, aged 14 and born in Bordeaux, and Clara de Francesco, aged 9 and born in London.

Cora seems simply to have been an aspiring young ballerina whom Katti presumably knew from her time in Bordeaux in 1869. As "Mille Cora" she appeared in Empire Theatre ballets from 1891 to 1904. As for Clara, her birth certificate declares her to have been born "Clara Albertina Katie Geraldini" at 22 Thorne Road, South Lambeth on 14 September 1881. Her mother is shown as Albertina Geraldini, actress, the middle of Katti Lanner's three daughters. Evidently Clara was then brought up by her grandmother Katti and Giuseppe de Francesco, while her mother settled in Stuttgart and eventually married.

Bob Flanagan refers to Giuseppe de Francesco's will as describing "one Clara Geraldini, daughter of Katti, as his god-daughter". In fact there is no reference to Clara as Katti's daughter. She was Katti's granddaughter and, understandably in view of the close relationship, Giuseppe de Francesco's god-daughter.

FOWNC OFFICERS

Chairman & Publications Officer:

Bob Flanagan,
79 Durban Road,
London SE27 9RW
Tel: 0181 670 3265

General Secretary & Tours Organiser:

Jill Dudman,
119 Broxholm Road,
London SE27 OBJ
Tel: 0181 670 5456

Hon Treasurer:

George Young,
12 Swinburne Court,
Denmark Hill, London SE5 8EP
Tel: 0171 274 5267

Membership Secretary:

Rosemary Comber,
63 Bradley Road,
London SE19 3NT
Tel: 0181 653 2741

Conservation Coordinator:

Paul Graham,
Flat 4, 9 St. Andrew's Road,
Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4DT
Tel: 0181 287 6976

Events Officer:

Vacant

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