Chairman’s Report
by Bob Flanagan

Those of you who attended our AGM in October will recall my comments concerning the machinations within Lambeth which resulted in the departure of Jane Warren and Ray Swetman (Newsletters passim), the advent of both of whom had led us to hope that the era of indecision, inaction and illegality concerning Lambeth’s cemetery operations were at last coming to a close. It seemed to me that the changes were aimed simply at furthering the careers of the beneficiaries of the ‘reorganisations’ rather than any concern over efficient use of public funds. Well, on the one hand I am pleased, indeed relieved, to report that an apparent principal beneficiary of the changes, Mr Niall Bolger, has left Lambeth to go to, I think, Maidstone. Good. But the indecision and inaction reinitiated during his tenure at Lambeth have meant that there has been virtually no progress as regards capital works, scrub clearance, furtherance of the Land Management Strategy, applications for external funding, etc. in this financial year.

New ‘Bereavement Services’ Manager

In line with the apathy engendered by the structural changes discussed above, attendance at the Management Advisory Group (MAG) amongst Officers and Members has dropped to an all-time low, and indeed I have just found that the Group meeting scheduled for 2 January has had to be postponed for a week because no Officers were available to attend. Well, we will try again.
One hopeful sign has been the appointment of a new cemetery superintendent-equivalent, Mr Ken Dry - neither the MAG or the Scheme of Management Committee were consulted over this appointment, but we trust that the post has been filled in line with the Land Management Survey recommendations as to the appointment of suitably-qualified persons, etc. as regards overseeing cemetery operations. Be this as it may, we welcome Mr Dry and will do our best to work with him to try to regain some momentum as regards the cemetery.

Sale of Vale Street Depot

One consequence of the internal machinations within Lambeth is that we have received no support over the suggestion that at least part of the vacant Vale Street Depot could be incorporated into the cemetery to give much needed space for new burials and also an area for the storage of the spoil dumps, cemetery vehicles, etc. No support was forthcoming from any other group (local residents, political parties, etc.) either. However, it now looks as if planning changes mean that sale of the land in question may be two or so years down the line giving time for the overview of burial options within Lambeth we have asked for. A major reason that no support for our suggestion was forthcoming from within the Council seems to, understandably, have been financial (the old depot is very much a ‘brown field’ site with contamination from diesel, salt, and possibly other toxic substances). However, it was never my intention that Council residents would have to shoulder the burden alone, but rather that, had even tentative support from the Cemetery and site owners (the Council) been forthcoming, then applications could have been made for external funds to support the scheme to which we could perhaps have added some of our own funds. Perhaps now this further delay will give time for this message to sink in.

FOWNC Matters

Thanks as always for your continued support of FOWNC - our membership remains stable at some 250. Thanks also to the committee members and welcome to Rumi Kidwai who has offered to join the committee and perhaps to help further in due course. We do need someone with some political ‘clout’ to champion the cemetery though - the local MP is uninterested, and although Streatham MP Keith Hill is a long-time member and supporter, his time is limited. Any ideas/suggestions to me, please.

On the historical side, Norwood continues to offer surprises and last month I received an e-mail concerning the burial of William Allan, a ‘founding father’ of the TUC (see article on p. 3). Sadly his monument (grave 11,488, square 88), which was recorded by the late Eric Smith, appears to have been demolished during the reign of John Day some 15 years or so ago like so many other important pre-1900 monuments, but there may be interest in reinstating a monument to this very important figure in Trade Union history - more details about him are to be found on the TUC website.

Bob Flanagan
William Allan
(1813-1874)
by William M. Dunlop - Part 1*

A footnote (p. 216) in the great pioneering work by Sidney & Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism*, published in 1894, has intrigued me for many years:

‘William Allan was born of Scotch parents at Carrickfergus, Ulster, in 1813. His father, who was manager of a cotton-spinning mill, removed to a mill near Glasgow, and William became in 1825 a piecer in a cotton factory at Gateside. Three years later he left the mill to be bound apprentice to Messrs Holdsworth, a large engineering firm at Anderston, Glasgow. At the age of nineteen, before his apprenticeship was completed, he married the niece of one of the partners. In 1835 he went to work as a journeyman engineer at Liverpool, moving thence, with the railway works, to their new centre at Crewe, where he joined his Union. On the imprisonment of Selsby, in 1847, he became its general secretary, retaining this office when, in 1851, the society became merged in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. For over twenty years he was annually re-elected secretary of this vast organization, dying at last in office in 1874.’

If one person were to be nominated as the founding father of modern British trade unionism, that person would have to be William Allan. His trade union career is well documented, notably in *The Story of the Engineers* by JB Jefferys, published for the Amalgamated Engineering Union in 1945. Occasional enquiries over the years have failed to elicit further information on Allan’s early life.

Allan’s first recorded involvement in trade unionism was when he joined the Journeymen Steam Engine and Machine Makers’ Friendly Society (the ‘Old Mechanics’) on his arrival in Crewe in 1843. This society, with headquarters in Manchester and nearly 3,000 members, was formed in 1838 by the amalgamation of the Yorkshire Mechanics’ Friendly Union Institution (founded 1822) with the Manchester based Friendly Union of Mechanics (founded 1826).

Although the main function of these and similar societies was, as their names indicate, mutual aid - the payment of benefits to their members in sickness, unemployment and old age - they would, if pushed, indulge in what we would term as industrial action. Most ‘friendly societies’ were local and could never acquire sufficient funds to make them viable over a long period. When the workers were forced into industrial action to protect even the poor conditions that they had, these societies could not sustain the action and were usually shattered.
The first half of the 19th century were troubled times. Booms and slumps were normal and there was no welfare state to provide support to those in distress. A government frightened by events in France had passed the Combination Acts of 1779-80, which outlawed the combining together of two or more people to obtain improvements in their working conditions. Repeal of these Acts in 1824 led to an outbreak of strikes. In response, an Amending Act of 1825 maintained the right of combination, but made it subject to the common law in regard to conspiracies in restraint of trade. With the vagaries of common law as interpreted by judges, strikers could be given a hard time.

Bad harvests in the later 1820s caused serious problems for many. In 1830 there were sporadic disturbances by agricultural labourers in southern England over their inability to obtain a living wage. Only one man was killed by the Yeomanry, but the labourers were tried by special government commissions and nine men or boys were hanged (six for arson), about 450 were sentenced to transportation (almost 200 for life), and 400 were imprisoned (Woodward, p. 76). Widespread agitation in 1834 over the transportation of the six agricultural labourers sentenced for administering ‘illegal oaths’ in the formation of a trade union, led to the return of these ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs’ a couple of years later, but it was some time before trade union leaders were invited to tea in Downing Street.

In the growing industrial sector, strikes were seldom in pursuit of higher wages, but usually in opposition to wage cuts. There was also unrest about hours of work and the employment of non-journeymen on machines. When employers had orders they expected their employees to work almost round the clock. When orders tailed off the workers were thrown on to the streets. That was the System that made Britain great. Long hours of work allied with poor housing were destructive to health and family. The Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices, which had regulated the entry of masters and apprentices into the crafts, had fallen into disuse before it was repealed, but its standards for the induction of apprentices were remembered.

A major weakness of the trade unions was their local character, which made them vulnerable in disputes with large employers. In 1829 a young Irishman, John Doherty, who had been building up a union of cotton spinners in the Manchester area, organized a conference in the Isle of Man at which a Grand General Union of the Operative Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland was set up (Pelling, p. 37). In the following year he played a major role in the establishment of a general union, the National Association for the Protection of Labour. Both these unions had short lives, succumbing to the effects of strikes against cuts in wages by the master spinners. A conference in London in 1834 decided to form a Grand National Consolidated Trade Union, which rapidly acquired something approaching half a million members, few of whom paid their union dues, and in spite of support by the great reformer, Robert Owen, the union failed because it could not provide adequate support for sections of its membership who were on strike (ibid, p. 41). In 1842 a Miners Association of Great Britain and Ireland was formed and two years later could claim to represent 70,000 miners, but after a bitter four-months strike in Northumberland and Durham the union gradually lost ground and collapsed altogether in the economic slump of 1847-8 (ibid, p. 46-7).
In England and parts of Europe, as well as in Ireland, the 1840s were the ‘hungry forties’. The responsibility of parishes to look after their destitute had changed with the Poor Law of 1834, with union workhouses replacing outdoor relief. The workhouses entailed the breaking up of homes and families, with husbands and wives being housed separately and in many cases not being allowed to see their children. The mutual aid benefits of the trade societies would have been minimal, but were often sufficient to keep recipients out of the poorhouse. The Chartist agitation in Britain during the 1840s and the revolutions of Europe in 1848 did nothing to soften attitudes of Government and employers towards trade unions, although most unions kept aloof from the Chartist movement, as involvement would have put their funds and their existence at risk. During Allan’s first years with the Journeymen Steam Engine and Machine Makers’ Friendly Society there was agitation directed against systematic overtime and the Society was involved in the London movement for the shortening of the hours of labour. A delegate conference in 1845 instructed the Executive Council to take early action on the employment of labourers on machines, also on the ‘piece master’ system and systematic overtime. In the following year many branches attempted to enforce these rules and at Belfast, Rochdale, and Newton-le-Willows this led to legal action by the employers.

The Society did not give direct financial support to the strike in August 1846 at the Viaduct Works of Messrs Jones & Potts, locomotive builders, at Newton-le-Willows, but it issued the usual appeals for voluntary contributions to assist the men. On November 26 warrants were issued against 27 strikers for ‘unlawfully conspiring, confederating and agreeing to oppress John Jones and Arthur Potts’.

A letter from Henry Selsby, General Secretary of the ‘Old Mechanics’, was found in the pocket of one of the arrested men. It enclosed £10 for the strikers, the result of a voluntary collection. The letter led to the arrest the following day of Selsby himself and the ransacking of the Society office by the police.

Meetings were held up and down the country to raise funds to defend the men. When they were tried at the Liverpool Assizes in March 1847 the indictment was 57 yards long, had 4914 counts, and occupied 990 folio pages. Eight members, including Selsby, were found guilty and imprisoned. The convictions were quashed on appeal before the Queen’s Bench, but this brush with the law had shaken the members and doubt had been cast once more on the freedom of association of the workers.

In 1848, at the age of 35 and within five years of joining the Society, William Allan was appointed to the post of General Secretary on the resignation of Selsby. He was chosen from 19 candidates, a tribute to his ability and his activity on behalf of the Society. Allan was a firm advocate of advance through amalgamation rather than retreat to isolated local friendly societies, and his election showed support for that approach. The introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 and the expansion of the railway network in the 1840s made communication and thus amalgamation much easier than it had been before. It was becoming clear to many that although strikes and lockouts were much disliked they nevertheless occurred, and efforts would regularly be made
by the employers to crush the Society. To Allan and his supporters the way forward was by increased unity and strength among the engineers.

Also very active in the union was William Newton, secretary of the Society in London, an enthusiastic advocate of amalgamation and a persuasive orator and writer, if less able as an administrator. Newton had been a member of the Old Mechanics since 1840, when he was 18, and represented London at the Delegate Meetings from 1843-48, but it seems that he was never a paid official of the Society. While the Newton-Ie-Willows case was before the courts Newton had formed a united committee of the London societies to assist the men in the North. He lost his job as foreman in a major London engineering works in 1848 because of his involvement with the Society. Allan and Newton became firm friends and an effective team, with Allan mainly occupied in minding the shop and Newton out front.

Newton became host of a pub near the union headquarters and continued to be a member of the Executive for some years. In 1852 he was the first trade unionist to stand for Parliament and he did this on a number of occasions. He also became editor and later proprietor of a prosperous local London newspaper and this was his main interest until his death in 1876, but he remained a member of the Society and continued to give it support.

In January 1850 the Executive unanimously decided to invite the Executive Councils of other engineering unions to discuss amalgamation. In the spring of that year a conference at Warrington was attended by representatives of some of the unions and draft proposals drawn up. A second conference in Birmingham in September was chaired by William Allan and 60 delegates from 7 societies attended. The conference lasted 17 days and a provisional committee, with Allan as secretary, was given the responsibility of drawing up rules and taking the preliminary steps for the formation of a new amalgamated society at the beginning of 1851.

Some societies and branches, including a section of the 'Old Mechanics', refused to ratify the agreement, fearing loss of autonomy and the effects of proposed rules that included the establishment of a trade protection fund (strike fund). When the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Machinists, Smiths, Millwrights and Patternmakers (ASE) was launched on 6 January 1851, the membership was only 5,000 - smaller than the 'Old Mechanics' in 1850. Allan was appointed General Secretary of the new Society, which was based in London, and aided by William Newton he immediately set to work to build up its strength. By February there were 7,000 members in 82 branches and in June there were 10,000 members (100 branches). In 1867 the Society had 33,000 members and its financial resources amounted to £40,000 and at Allan's death in 1874 the membership stood at 43,150 (377 branches).

Members were keen to rectify some longstanding grievances. Three main demands were made to employers: systematic overtime and piecework should cease and labourers should not be employed on certain machines. Concessions were obtained on overtime and piecework and a large firm, Messrs Hibbert & Platt of Oldham, agreed to the withdrawal of labourers from machines by Christmas that year.
The engineering employers in Lancashire and London formed The Central Association of Employers of Operative Engineers pledged to a sympathetic lock-out if workers in London or Manchester stopped work. On 1st January 1852, although Hibbard & Platt had not withdrawn the labourers, the Society members went to work as usual, but refused to work overtime. On January 10, although the workers had not gone on strike the Lancashire and London employers closed their works, locking out about 3,000 members, also other journeymen and labourers estimated at three times that number, and managed to portray the action as a strike against the employment of labourers on machines. The battle to break the ASE was on.

The Society undertook to support not only the 3,500 of its own members and the 1,500 mechanics who were out, but also the 10,000 labourers who had been made idle. Public subscriptions to the fighting fund amounted to £4,000 and £5,000 was received from other unions, but after three months there wasn’t much in the kitty. During April most of the men resumed work on the masters’ terms, which included the signing of the ‘document’ foreshewing trade union membership. The ASE Executive took the view that ‘every man who unwillingly puts his hand to that detestable document which is forced upon us to be much destitute of that power of choice which would precede a contract as if a pistol were at his head and he had to choose between death and degradation’ (Webbs, p. 197). The Union took no action against those who returned to work in these circumstances and after an unsettled period the men ignored the document.

There was no doubt that a major defeat had been inflicted on the new union. As Allan said, ‘It would be foolish and unavailing to deny that we have been defeated’. But the employers had not achieved their primary aim, the destruction of the ASE. Membership began to increase in July after the heavy fall early in 1852. As soon as the strike was over, Newton was active in urging the adoption of his plans for co-operative workshops, but the more cautious Allan gradually built up the funds on conservative lines. In the course of the 1850s the ASE gradually won recognition from the employers and the membership figures once more rapidly increased. At the time when regional loyalties were still very strong it was impressive that the Lancashire men and Scots could accept leadership from London (Pelling, p. 51). The attempt to crush the ASE had failed. Although the lockout ended in a paper victory for the employers, it was their organization that disintegrated and was not revived until the 1870s, while the Society went from strength to strength. As the Webbs said (p. 198):

‘It was the dramatic events of 1852 which made the establishment of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers a turning-point in the history of the Trade Union Movement. From 1852 to 1889 the elaborate constitution of the Amalgamated Society served as a model for all new national trade Societies, while old organizations found themselves gradually incorporating its leading features.’

The name Punshon Memorial commemorates the Wesleyan minister Dr William Morley Punshon (1824-1881).

In 1859, when the population of Bournemouth was less than 1,000, preachers from the Poole Wesleyan Methodist Circuit started services in rooms over workshops in Orchard Street. The cause prospered and the new Society found it necessary to move to the larger Belle Vue Assembly Rooms that stood on the site now occupied by the Pavilion. By 1863 a committee had been appointed to secure a piece of land on which to build a chapel and some three years later a small temporary building was opened for worship in Old Christchurch Road adjoining the Tregonwell Arms.

Bournemouth became a separate station (circuit) in 1873 and, as the town grew and became a popular holiday resort, a larger, more permanent church was obviously needed. The new church was opened on 30 June 1886 on Richmond Hill and named Punshon Memorial.

The church became the centre of an expanding Circuit life and its pulpit was often occupied by notable visiting preachers. Innumerable holiday-makers from all parts of the country visited Punshon Memorial every year and queues of those waiting to worship could stretch across the square. Punshon had had a concern for the increasing numbers going to the new 'watering places' for whom there was little provision for worship.

The Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, meeting in Camborne in 1862, accepted his offer to raise a sum of £10,000 over five years for a fund for making grants 'to aid the erection of chapels in those places of public resort'. By his great personal effort in obtaining subscriptions and by giving public lectures the sum was raised.

Dr Punshon then went to Canada in order to marry his dead wife's sister (see FOWNC Newsletter 23, July 1995) where he was elected President of the Canadian Conference for five
successive years. During this time he took part in important discussions relating to church union in Canada. On his return he was elected President of Conference and after his year of office became Missionary Secretary, a post he held until his death in 1881 at the age of 57. His memorial at Norwood (grave 18,582, square 60) is listed Grade II.

A grant from the 'Watering Places Fund' had been made for the building of the church in Richmond Hill, but a closer association with his family made the choice of name especially appropriate. After his death his widow made her home in Bournemouth and took a generous interest in the church. Their eldest son had died in Bournemouth just three months before his father and the chancel window was given in his memory by Mrs Morley Punshon and Mr and Mrs TFC May, who were great family friends for many years.

At noon on Sunday 23 May 1943 the town suffered its most severe air raid of the war - 77 people were killed and 196 were injured. The Memorial Church, where the morning service had not long finished, was destroyed along with Beales Department Store, West's Cinema, and the Metropole and Central hotels. If it was not 'business as usual' the life of the church went on with mid-week activities in the Hive Hotel and Sunday worship in the Waterford Hotel. In 1948 the ground floor of the Vale Royal Hotel was converted into a chapel with vestries and a lecture hall.

By the early 1950s it was possible to plan to make good the war damage and on 23 July 1955, the Hive and Waterford hotels, having been demolished the first foundation stone of the present church was laid on the cleared site. The cross was placed in position on the spire on 2 September 1958 and finally on Wednesday 17 December 1958 the premises were opened by Mrs E Howard May and the church dedicated by The Reverend Leslie D Weatherhead, a former President of Conference.

The new church was designed by Ronald A Sims, ARIBA, and the main contractors were Cooper & Rowe of Bournemouth. The church was built in a contemporary style for which an RIBA Bronze Award was made. It was, and indeed still is, a showpiece. Many of the design features that were in vogue at the time were employed and good use made of the sloping site. The use of new materials and construction methods resulted, however, in some water penetration problems made
worse by the church’s exposed position on the coast. Some 40 years on with better materials at hand it has been possible to overcome these problems, but at no little expense.

Punshon Memorial is one of the few remaining large Methodist churches on the south coast and although its seating capacity has been reduced to create more space in front of the communion rail it will still seat some 600 people. The building is nonetheless not overpowering and retains a feeling of warmth. It is light and open and has good acoustics both for worship and for concerts.

The dominant interior design feature is the Triptych which for most of the liturgical year symbolizes ‘Christ the King’. However after Holy Communion on Ash Wednesday the Triptych is closed and the church’s central feature is then a simple cross that remains the focus of worship during Lent. It is opened at the first communion of Easter Day.

The windows in the Baptistry were renovated recently restoring their colour. Represented is the Crown of Thorns, along with spear, hammer and nails. At the lower, car park, level there is a chapel known as the ‘Little Church’ that provides a setting for smaller gatherings. The Minister’s and Stewards’ vestries are also on this level.

The organ is older than the church having originally been built in Gloucester in the Shire Hall in 1910. Fundraising at that time was supported by recitals given by Dr Herbert Brewer, then organist of Gloucester Cathedral and friend of the composer Edward Elgar whom he assisted at the Three Choirs Festival. Dr Brewer also gave recitals on this organ in the Shire Hall. The organ was moved to Punshon Memorial in 1958. It has three manuals, 61 speaking stops (about 7,500 pipes) and a full pedal board.

On the upper level of the church are the ‘Waterford Room’, the church office and gallery seating. On the concourse leading to these areas are to be found the communion table and a number of matching chairs salvaged from the bombed church. There is also a display case that contains memorabilia connected with the life of William Morley Punshon.

Acknowledgement: I thank the Revd Michael Feast for permission to quote from the Visitor’s Guide to the present Punshon Memorial Church.
This book gives the history of the Roupell family, culminating in the rise and fall of William Roupell, MP for Lambeth 1857-62. He was one of four illegitimate children of Richard Palmer Roupell, a wealthy land-owner who developed Roupell Street, SE1 and Christchurch and Palace Roads, Streatham Hill, in the mid 1800s. William Roupell lived in Aspen House, a mansion on Brixton Hill, and became MP aged 27 after an election campaign described as one of the most corrupt in London’s history. By 1862 he was on the verge of bankruptcy, having squandered a vast sum and lost most of the land it had taken his father and grandfather 50 years to acquire. At trials in 1862 and 1863 he confessed to destroying his father’s will at his death-bed and forging a new one and was sent to prison for 14 years.

The Roupells of Lambeth - Politics, Property and Peculation in Victorian London by Judy Harris is published by The Streatham Society, and is available from the FOWNC bookstall, price £7.99 plus £1 postage and packing.
Book Review

The London Way of Death

by John W Brown


The history of London’s funeral industry is beautifully illustrated in this book. Through some 200 photographs the story of the deceased’s journey to their final resting place in the capital’s leading cemeteries and crematoria is chronicled. For those seeking photographs of black plumed horses and top-hatted funeral directors, this book contains a fine collection. Illustrations of all of London’s major cemeteries are also included, with Norwood being represented by a view of the Anglican Chapel and justly described as ‘south London’s most distinguished cemetery’.

Brian Parsons is to be congratulated on the comprehensive collection of views he has assembled which provide a well-balanced depiction of the funeral industry in London. It is refreshing to see the latter half of the twentieth century equally as well illustrated as the first 50 years so that the reader can follow the progress of the industry through to modern times.

The book begins with the pomp and pageantry of the State funerals of members of the Royal family from Queen Victoria’s through to Diana, Princess of Wales. Among the evocative photographs is one showing King Edward VII on his death-bed in Buckingham Palace. Wearing a nightshirt and stripped of the normal trappings of royal office, we get a glimpse of Edward the man, at peace with his maker, reminiscent of a much loved grandfather or favourite uncle, rather than Emperor and Monarch.

Numerous funeral parades of the rich and famous are depicted, including that of Dan Leno, ‘The King’s Jester and the King of Jesters’, who was buried at Lambeth Cemetery, Blackshaw Road in November 1904. There is a remarkable photograph,
misty with age, showing the thousands of people who lined Balham High Road to bid farewell to this much loved music hall and pantomime performer, who was billed in his day as ‘the funniest man on earth’. But it is not only the rich and famous which are featured in this book. The burial of another performer of more humbler origins is depicted in the touching grave-side scene at Streatham Park Cemetery where William ‘Jock’ McKeown, an itinerant busker, was interred in 1938. Standing by the side of Jock’s grave is a ‘band’ of fellow street musicians holding their violins, trumpets and banjos in homage to their departed friend.

As well as showing the traditional public face of funerals, the book contains a fascinating chapter revealing a glimpse of life ‘behind the scenes’ of the undertaking business. Various stages in the production of coffins are depicted, as well as the wide range of material from which these are made, including a hand-made wicker coffin, not dissimilar in appearance to a large, long, laundry basket, and a lightweight cardboard coffin made by Compakta Ltd.

As one would expect from such a remarkably comprehensive title, a wide diversity of funeral vehicles are also featured, from a simple wheeled bier, through to the most ornate of horse-drawn hearses and a luxurious Rolls-Royce hearse owned by F A Albin & Sons of Bermondsey.

It is fitting that the final chapter of the book should follow the history of the well-known south-west London undertakers Frederick Paine of Kingston-upon-Thames. The business was founded in 1884 as an adjunct to an Estate Agents and house furnishing enterprise, and continued under family ownership until Frederick’s death in 1945. It was subsequently acquired by Alliance Property Holdings Ltd, and then passed through numerous corporate hands until 1994, when its 12 offices were purchased by the giant American company SCI - Services Corporation International. Although the company still trades under the Paine family name, like many of the independent family firms which were once the backbone of the British funeral industry, it is now a small part of a multinational funeral enterprise, the size of which would be beyond the imagination of the firm’s founder.
Our contribution to London Open House Weekend is now rather less spectacular than it used to be, with the catacombs closed, and we decided therefore to take part on only one day, Sunday 23 September. We provided a series of tours of the most notable monuments during the afternoon, with access to the Greek chapel (which, incidentally, is in a severely deteriorating state inside, with much rain damage to ceilings, etc). Considering the limited special attractions, and dull damp weather, the fact that around 75 visitors turned up in the space of a couple of hours was deemed a success. Of particular note were the family from Rutland who had made a day trip to London specifically to visit as many as possible of the Open House venues in Lambeth (yes, really!).

Over 30 members attended the AGM on Saturday 20 October and were treated to a most entertaining talk by Dr Julian Litten, leading light of the Victorian Society and renowned scholar of historic cemeteries. He gave a comprehensive survey of the foundation of the commercial cemeteries of London (Kensal Green, Norwood, Highgate, Nunhead, Abney Park, Brompton) in the 1830s and early 1840s, copiously illustrated with slides of notable monuments. The talk continued with a review of the, in many cases rather sad, fate that has befallen these once prestigious cemeteries, nowhere better exemplified than at Norwood of course.

On Saturday 17 November we were pleased to welcome once again our long time friend Professor Michael Slater, leading authority on Charles Dickens and his circle. His theme this time was Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, author, playwright, barrister, MP and judge, and his son Frank, also a barrister and playwright, and the talk concentrated on the aspect of father and son’s contributions to 19th century theatre. In the earlier period the emphasis was on serious drama, and it was essential to write five-act blank-verse tragedies, Talfourd senior’s greatest success being of this genre. Later, however, burlesques became very popular, and Frank wrote many witty works of this type. Brief biographies of both men can be found in Paul Graham’s West Norwood Cemetery - the Dickens Connection, now available to members at £2.25.
Forthcoming FOWNC Events
January - April 2002

General tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month (6 January, 3 February, 3 March and 7 April). January to March tours start at 11.00, and the April tour starts at 14.30, at the Cemetery main gate off Norwood Road, and they last for up to 2 hours, depending on weather. There is no formal charge but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) towards conservation projects.

Spring Lectures

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.

Saturday 9 February: Lecture - William Roupell: property peculator, politician and forger - Judy Harris

(N.B. Not the third Saturday). Judy has considerably extended her research into the Roupell family, and the events leading up to William's conviction and imprisonment, since she last spoke on this subject in the early 1990s. She has also written up her work as a book (see review on page 11), which will be on sale at the meeting.

Saturday 16 March: Lecture - Days in the life of an undertaker - Tony Rowland

The firm of Rowland Brothers have been involved in a number of recent tomb restoration projects in the Cemetery, and Tony Rowland will be giving a talk (laced with some amusing anecdotes!) on the work of an undertaker.

Other forthcoming events

Monday 11 February, 19.00: London's burial grounds: conserving our urban spaces.

Saturday 2 March, 11.00-15.30: Celebration in black: the customs and costume of mourning.

Southern Counties Costume Society study day at Winchester School of Art. £8.50 (students £4.00). Sarah Howard, Hampshire Museum Service, Chilcomb House, Chilcomb Lane, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8RD (01962 846304).

Saturday 23 March, 10.30-16.30: British death customs from prehistory to the Victorians.

Illustrated day school by Robert Stephenson. £21.00 (concessions £10.50). The City Lit, Stukeley Street, Drury Lane, London WC2B 5LJ (020 7831 7831).


Julie Rugg, Cemetery Research Group, University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD (01904 433689) Website: http://www.york.ac.uk/org/chp/crg. Deadline for abstracts (250 words) 31 March.

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery

The annual subscription to the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery is £3. For further information please contact the Membership Secretary.

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