

Friends of West Norwood CEMETERY

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Chairman's Report

by Bob Flanagan

Progress continues with projects in the Cemetery. The temporary roof over the Catacombs is in place. Plans are under consideration for upgrading the Rose Garden in the NE corner, and also the buildings used by the cemetery workforce. The architects took account of comments made at the Management Advisory Group in January and produced a revised, much improved plan which was endorsed subsequently by the Scheme of Management Committee. Hopefully implementation of the plan will bring about much needed improvement to this neglected part of the cemetery. Further progress in that a landscape historical survey has been completed by David Lambert – he has promised a summary for the Newsletter. He is to be congratulated on a very thorough piece of work.

On the downside, the urgent work on the roadways and drains in the Eastern part of the cemetery has been put on hold because the tenders submitted were so far above the estimate provided by the consultants who undertook the Land Management Survey as to be unaffordable. However, work on identifying some further key and/or unsafe monuments for repair continues.

Unfortunately too all hope of getting support for extending the cemetery onto the derelict site on Vale Street seems to have gone for the moment. The revised UDP dismisses the suggestion out-of-hand, although on the positive side it seems that the Council have decided not to release the land for

housing at present after all. Finally, making a start on drafting the lottery bid has fallen to me – I'll try to progress this over the summer...

FOWNC News

If any members wish to send me e-mail addresses it may be feasible to set up an e-mail circulation list, depending on demand of course. Our own website continues to attract interest from all around the world as evidenced by the article about the Best family in this issue.

Jill Dudman is making progress with the long awaited new guide. Don Bianco and I are working on two historical/architectural leaflets, one on the cemetery itself and the other on the Greek section. We hope to have all these items ready soon. The delay in getting these items done is because of the pressures to do other things (Newsletters, Advisory Group, etc.).

Finally, as noted in the January Newsletter, there will be a short rededication ceremony at the restored Jerrold memorial (grave 5,452, square 97) at 14.00 on 21 May. Members of the committee will be on hand to give details of other conservation achievements and to discuss other issues if required.

News of Other Groups

This year the AGM of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends is being hosted by the Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol. Don Bianco, Pam Gray, and I plan to represent FOWNC. More details of the National Federation are to be found on their website (<http://www.cemeteryfriends.fsnet.co.uk/index.html>). There are links to other Friends' websites giving details of their summer events.

The Association for Significant Cemeteries in Europe (<http://www.significantcemeteries.net/>) is sponsoring a week for discovering cemeteries on May 30-June 5. Unfortunately we have not planned any events as we have been concentrating on the new Guidebook and other tasks, but we hope the event is as successful as it was last year.

There is to be a conference entitled 'Urban Burial Culture from the Enlightenment to the early 20th Century' called by the German national committee of ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) and to be held in Munich in early November 2005, which aims to examine important cemetery reforms and new foundations of that period with special reference to the great city cemeteries of Europe. More details from their website: <http://www.international.icomos.org/home.htm>.

The Association for Gravestone Studies (<http://www.gravestonestudies.org>), based in Massachusetts, send out a regular e-newsletter that has lots of interesting articles. They cite a Quick Link to a site called Grave Addiction (which does not work, but sounds all too plausible, having been doing this job for over 15 years now!).

The Mausolea and Monuments Trust (<http://www.mausolea-monuments.org.uk/>) are looking for new members. More details from their website. MMT are currently

maintaining/repairing 5 monuments: the part-collapsed Guise Mausoleum at Elmore, Gloucs. of c. 1736; the Neo-classical Nash Mausoleum of c. 1775 at Farningham, Kent; the neat brick Heathcote Mausoleum at Hursley, Hants. of c. 1800; the massive, sunken Wynn-Ellis Mausoleum at Whitstable, Kent by Charles Barry Jnr of c. 1872; and Bodley's ornate Gothic Sacheverell-Bateman Mausoleum at Morley, Derbyshire of c. 1895.

Listed Structures at Norwood

From 1 April English Heritage became responsible for the administration of the listing system. New notification and consultation procedures for owners and local authorities will be introduced, as well as clearer documentation for list entries (see: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/default.asp?wci=MainFrame&URL1=http%3A//www.english-heritage.org.uk/default.asp%3Fwci%3DNode%26wce%3D8975>). Further changes are to be made to the listing system, including the introduction of new information packs for owners of listed structures.

The intention is to make the heritage protection system simpler, more transparent, and easier for everyone to use. Hopefully this will also remove the anomaly we encountered at Norwood whereby Lambeth, owners in law of the listed tombs, demolished some of them without asking themselves for listed building consent. Don Bianco also tells me that the Grade II listing is being abolished, all previous Grade II and II* structures now being upgraded to Grade II* and I, respectively. Thus we will now have 7 Grade I listed tombs at Norwood! It's not just a cosmetic change according to Don – the statutory protection previously applied to Grade II* and Grade I structures is still there.



Found on the Skip

I was handed the porcelain plaque illustrated left after the Scheme of Management Committee meeting in January. It had been rescued from a skip in the cemetery in the 1980s when Lambeth were proceeding full-tilt with 'lawn conversion'. I know it's unlikely we will ever find out who it is, but one can but hope. Is he wearing a uniform or a smoking jacket?

John (Jack) Burke - The Irish Lad (1861-1897)

I wrote a short article about the prizefighter Jack Burke (grave 27,515, square 120) some years ago (Newsletter 29, May 1997). The back numbers of the Newsletter now being on the web, a relative who did not know he was buried at Norwood, has kindly provided the photograph reproduced right. Her great-grandfather Dave Burke was his brother, and photos had been passed down the family. She has also sent me a chronology of his fights, all 517 of them!! They made them tough in those days!



Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward (1791-1868)

by Brent Elliott

Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward was born in London in 1791, and died at St Leonard's, Sussex, on 4 June 1868. His father, Stephen Smith Ward, was a medical doctor, and encouraged his son's interest in natural history, sending him on a voyage to Jamaica at the age of thirteen. While training at the London Hospital as a physician, he spent much time studying at the Chelsea Physic Garden. He took over his father's practice at Wellclose Square, Whitechapel, but continued his botanical activities. He became a Fellow of the Linnean Society in 1817.

Ward, first in Wellclose Square and then, after retiring from practice, in Clapham, developed two well-known gardens in the trying conditions of urban air pollution. He invited scientific friends for evening gatherings, frequently centering on microscopy, and the Microscopical Society (founded 1840) arose out of these meetings. From 1836 to 1854 he was examiner in botany to the Society of Apothecaries and became Master of this Society in 1853. He was also a member of the Chelsea Physic Garden's board. After their financial disaster of the 1850s, he played a large role in redeveloping the Garden, and became the Society's Treasurer. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1852. He arranged the transfer of the herbaria of Ray, Dale and Rand to the British Museum in 1863. In May 1868 he moved to St Leonard's, but died there on 4 June.

His grave at Norwood (grave 4,870, square 48), although recorded in the burial register, is not marked on the cemetery map. There is no surviving monument in the square or in the immediately adjacent areas. His son Dr Stephen Henry Ward (1818/9-1880) is also buried in the grave. He graduated MB, London in 1843 (MD 1844, FRCP 1870). He was President of the Hunterian Society, Physician to the Seaman's Hospital at Greenwich, the City of London Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, and the Life Association of Scotland. He died at 28 Finsbury Circus, 10 July 1880.

Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward's major innovation was the invention of what became known as the Wardian case. In 1829, he placed a moth chrysalis together with some mould in a sealed glass bottle, in order to obtain an adult specimen. He found later that fern and grass seeds contained in the mould had germinated and were growing well. After a few years of experiment, he devised a glazed case in which plants could be placed with sufficient soil and water, and would thereafter grow satisfactorily. Water would evaporate in the day, but condense again at night, and as long as it could not escape, the plant's environment within the case remained stable. Ward saw the possibilities of using his case for transporting plants; some people, like John Reeves in Canton, had already used miniature greenhouses for sending plants to England, but the fragility of glass, and the need for regular watering and other maintenance en route, still caused problems. Ward's stoutly constructed cases resolved the first problem, and the close

glazing resolved the second. In 1833, the Hackney nurseryman George Loddiges successfully used Wardian cases for shipping plants from Australia, and found ‘whereas I used formerly to lose nineteen out of the twenty of the plants I imported during the voyage, nineteen out of the twenty is now the average of those that survive’. The Horticultural Society, of which Loddiges was a Vice-President, began equipping its collectors with Wardian cases from the mid-1830s, and their use had become general by the time Ward published a book on the subject, *On the Growth of Plants in Closely Glazed Cases*, in 1842 (second edition 1852).

Ward was not the only person making similar experiments, but was the first to publicise and market the results. By the 1840s he was promoting the use of glazed cases for growing plants indoors, and experimenting with their possibilities for housing small animals. During the late 1840s and 1850s decoratively designed Wardian cases became popular fixtures for windows; along with terraria, they helped to transform domestic interiors and - possibly - inspire public interest in natural history.

During the 1850s, Ward attempted to popularise a design for greenhouses as demonstrated in his Clapham garden, using the principles of the Wardian case. His claim was rebutted by John Lindley in the *Gardeners’ Chronicle*, on the grounds that ‘when it is opened and shut from day to day, it has no more right to the name [of Wardian case] than a common greenhouse’. The resulting controversy estranged Ward and Lindley, the latter criticising Ward in print for inordinate vanity and a desire to be ‘recognised [as] a second Newton’.

Further reading

Allen DE. *The Victorian Fern Craze*. London: Hutchinson, 1969.

Allen DE. *The Naturalist in Britain - A Social History*. London: Allen Lane, 1976.

Desmond R. The problems of transporting plants. In *The Garden: a Celebration of One Thousand Years of British Gardening*. Harris J ed. London, 1979, pp. 99-104.

Hooker JD. Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, FRS, FLS. *Gardeners’ Chronicle*, 1868, pp. 655-6.

Minter S. *The Apothecaries’ Garden: a History of the Chelsea Physic Garden*. London, 2002.

Dr. Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, 1866 photograph by Maull & Polyblank, London (Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library)



Footnotes

1. Ward has received more than one mention on television in recent months. Both Alan Titchmarsh and Diarmuid Gavin, presenting programmes on historical aspects of gardening, have referred to the crucial importance of the Wardian case for transporting, in good condition, specimens of new plants discovered in remote foreign locations by notable hunters such as Joseph Hooker. More on this subject can be found on an excellent website, www.plantexplorers.com.

2. From *The Victorian Fern Craze*, pp. 8-9:

‘Ward, despite universal statements to the contrary, was not in fact the first inventor of the glass plant-cases with which his name has become so indelibly associated. In view of the very simplicity of the notion this is not, on reflection, all that surprising; perhaps the only cause for wonder is that the discovery was not in fact made much earlier still. Some of the 18th century naturalists must, indeed, have come remarkably near to it. Ward himself pointed out a vague anticipation of his main idea in some suggestions for improving the transport of plants by sea made by John Ellis, a London merchant and naturalist with an extensive correspondence abroad (which included Linnaeus), in 1771. William Withering, the Birmingham physician who first introduced the use of digitalis in medicine, and whose *Botanical Arrangement* (1776) became the leading manual for a whole generation of British field botanists, appears to have come closer still. For, some time before 1782, when JE Smith gave the fact passing mention in a lecture to some fellow-students of his at Edinburgh, it seems that he had devised a method for keeping specimens collected for the herbarium fresh for some days, by placing their stalks in a small jar of water which in turn was set inside a larger jar ‘closed to prevent the access of air’. It is a pity that Withering, a ‘gadget man’ by inclination, never followed up this discovery. Had he realized its implications, he would surely have given it quite as much publicity as he gave to the screw-down plant-press and the collecting-tin (or vasculum), both of which he was the first to introduce to the majority of botanists as desirable items of equipment.

‘Unlike these, the invention of a Scottish botanist, AA Maconochie, about whom unfortunately next to nothing seems to be known, anticipated Ward with quite astonishing exactness. About 1825, inspired on the one hand, according to his account, by some experiments of the Swiss scientist de Saussure (in 1780) that showed that plants improve the atmosphere by robbing it of the gases most harmful to animal life, and on the other by the discovery by Baron von Humboldt, the great German explorer, of seaweeds at an immense depth in the ocean, growing in almost complete gloom and yet preserving their natural colour, Maconochie decided that plants accustomed in their natural habitats to fairly dense shade might well thrive in a confined atmosphere and ‘in a light more or less decomposed by the refraction of two surfaces of window glass’. He proceeded to experiment with several exotic ferns and club-mosses, obtained from Glasgow Botanic Garden, which were planted in peaty soil inside a large glass vessel previously used for goldfish. This was so successful that he had a glazed case or ‘miniature greenhouse’ made to his requirements by a country carpenter, and in this he

grew in his window for many years not only ferns but also orchids and cacti. But though his friends were familiar with it, he never troubled to make his discovery public until 1839, by which time Ward's cases had become known in Scotland; and with praiseworthy magnanimity, unusual in such matters, he conceded to Ward all the credit for this outstandingly beneficial invention.'

3. From *The Naturalist in Britain - A Social History*, pp. 135-6:

'As early as 1836, in one of the first published notes on his original discovery, Ward had suggested that his cases might also be useful for bringing examples of the lower orders of animals to Britain from the tropics, as it was reasonable to expect them to confer the same immunity to external changes of temperature on living creatures as they had been shown to do on plants. Five years later he duly confirmed this hunch, proving that his principle, the vital interdependence of plant and animal life, had almost equally far-reaching implications for zoology. He did this by putting a number of ornamental fish into a large tank standing in his fern-house (for his original small cases had given rise to some of quite massive dimensions) and showing that they flourished, without any change of water, thanks to the presence of the various aquatic plants that he also had growing in it. A robin, likewise, trapped by accident in the fern-house, furnished proof of the principle by living there quite happily for a period of six months. Later he introduced a chameleon and a Jersey toad; and both, once again, proved to thrive, the latter for as long as ten or eleven years, till it ended up by becoming quite a pet.

'The resulting version of his case, specially designed for housing animals, came to be known as the 'vivarium' and numbers of people were using this, especially for keeping snakes and amphibians, by the fifties - while its counterpart for water creatures was termed the 'aqua-vivarium', soon abbreviated to the simpler 'aquarium' (both terms, 'vivarium' and 'aquarium', had actually long been in use already, but in a generalized sense only, for collections of plants or fish). One of Ward's great friends, the microscopist JS Bowerbank, borrowed his idea and proceeded to create what appears to have been the first ordinary-sized aquarium (complete with a piece of glass on top, to make it closely glazed) designed in accordance with a proper comprehension of the underlying principle. Unfortunately its date has never been disclosed. All we know is that it was this jar of Bowerbank's that attracted the attention of the Secretary of the



Zoological Society and gave him the idea for the large aquarium that was eventually opened in 1853 in the Gardens in Regent's Park.

Continued on page 16

***A classic Wardian case -
The Victorian Fern Craze
by DE Allen
(Hutchinson, 1969)***

William Robert Best (1802-1847) and Charles Best (1842-1902)

by Alan Best

William Robert Best was a straw hat manufacturer of Camberwell, who moved his flourishing business to 155-159 Newington Causeway sometime prior to his death in 1847. His widow Emma was also a milliner and took over the business after his demise. Their son Edwin took over when Emma retired.

I do not know exactly how many children they had, but I do know of six: Julia (b.1832), Robert (b. 1833), Eliza (b. 1834, m. John Treadwell), Edwin (b. 1838, m. Caroline), Alfred (1839-1899, m. Eleanor Sinclair) and my great-grandfather Charles (1842-1902, m. Ann ‘Nancy’ Houghton, 1847-1888). Emma Best (née Dickeson, 1802-1884) lived with her daughter and son-in-law Eliza & John Treadwell until her death.

Charles Best was perhaps the most successful. He was apprenticed as a publican and eventually came to own several breweries and West End establishments, including the Crown at Holborn, the Leicester Lounge in Leicester Square, and the Horseshoe on Tottenham Court Road, as well as the White Lion Hotel in Guildford and a brewery at Larkhill Rise. The Horseshoe, designed by his nephew Henry Treadwell and now a Burger King next to the Dominion Theatre, was from all accounts quite splendid - Best is credited with bringing Victorian opulence and respectability to pubs, a feature which is discernable to this day.

He and his wife Nancy lived at 33 Bedford Square and had eleven children, six of whom survived infancy. Those that lived were: Leonard, Lillian, Geoffry, Violet (m. Joseph Faulks), Edgar, and my grandfather Victor (1885-1979). Nancy died of viral meningitis in 1888. Victor’s godfather was James Buchanan of Buchanan’s (Black & White) Whisky - a great friend and business colleague of Charles Best.

Victor Charles Best trained as a brewer in Germany, met my grandmother (a missionary) on a boat to India in 1905, where he worked for the Murree Brewery in Quetta (now in Pakistan, still in business).



*William Robert Best (1802-1847).
Daguerreotype taken at Worth Studios,
46 Newington Causeway ca. 1845*

They returned to London for the births of their first two sons, then moved to Chicago, where he trained as a veterinarian and had two more sons, then Calgary, and finally the Gulf Islands of British Columbia, where my father was born in 1915.

I am in touch with my nine surviving first-cousins and a handful of second cousins descended from Leonard and from Violet. I did once have a brief phone conversation with Edgar's son Ronald Best (1915-1998), who told me that I could not possibly exist as his Uncle Victor had had no children!

William Robert Best's tombstone at Norwood (grave 1,837, square 101) still survives although the landing and railings have gone. Charles Best's tombstone (grave 22,326, square 101/102), to the rear and right of his father's, also still survives although not only the landing and railings, but also its granite obelisk, have gone.



*The Crown Public House
Holborn c1900*



Best family tombs at Norwood, April 2005. Those commemorated on the monument in the foreground are: William Robert Best (d. 13 November 1847 aged 43), Emma Best (wife, d. 12.4.1884 aged 82), William Best Carpenter (grandchild, 15.11.1850-12.4.1852), Benjamin Charles Beare (son-in-law, d. 31.12.1855 aged 29), and Edwin Best (third son of William Robert Best, d. 20.6.1889 aged 51). On the second monument the names of Nancy Best (wife of Charles Best, d. 16.4.1888 aged 42), their children Little Kate (d. 25.4.1867 aged 3 months), Norah Blanche (d. 22.7.1872 aged 8 months), Dudley Charles (d. 28.6.1877 aged 1 month), Daisy Winifred (d. 4.10.1880 aged 1 month), Christopher Charles (d. 27.1.1882 aged 5 weeks), and Charles Best himself (d. 4.7.1902 aged 60) are recorded.

Thomas Miller (1807-1874)

Our Old Town's Famous Son

by Darron E Childs

Thomas Miller was brought up single handed in a cramped yard off Bridge Street in Gainsborough. Yet it was only to be a matter of time before he would be rubbing shoulders with the likes of Disraeli, Turner and Dickens. For one moment in time he became one of the capital's most celebrated successes and in the process he created for his townsfolk an emotional, informative and moving autobiographical novel of Gainsborough that he immortalized in a simple three word title: *Our Old Town*. Yet Thomas Miller faded into obscurity quicker than the many years it took him to achieve his dreams. He was buried in Norwood cemetery in an unmarked grave and for 190 years no memorial existed in Gainsborough for Our Old Town's most famous son.

Thomas Miller was born in Sailor's Alley Yard in Gainsborough on 31 August 1807. His father, George Miller, a Wharfinger, disappeared on the morning of the Burdett Riots, 6 April 1810, whilst on a visit to London and was never heard of again. Raised on adventurous stories and tales of long ago, Miller's vivid imagination ran wild. Back then, the struggles of living forged special friendships. One such friendship was made with his yard-neighbour, Thomas Cooper (1805-1892), who later went on to become a noted Chartist.

Whilst growing up in extreme poverty, both Miller and Cooper dreamed of seeing more of life, of writing for the people and of becoming 'a someone', who carved a name out for themselves. In the early nineteenth century, in the squalor of Gainsborough's slums nothing probably seemed more impossible than those two youngsters' pipedreams. However, in later life, Thomas Cooper made vivid recollections of his early years, always with a fond memory towards his special childhood friend. After many struggles, Miller eventually settled on the trade of an apprentice to a basket-maker, but his burning desire remained that of becoming a successful writer.

In 1831 Miller left Gainsborough to live and work in Nottingham. He was married and worked for a Mr Watts, Basket-Maker, of Bromley House. Whilst in Nottingham, Miller made the acquaintance of Mr Thomas Bailey, then editing *The Good Citizen*. It was through the encouragement of Bailey, that led Miller to publish his first works, *Songs of the Sea Nymphs*, in 1832. This work brought Miller many literary friends, and which allowed him to end his employment with Mr Watts and set up as basket-maker on his own account. His business premises were located at Swan's Yard, Long Row, whilst Miller resided off Coalpit Lane, in the Meadow Platt's. Miller now had a wife and family, and also took a stall on Market days, the stall being generally situated on the corner of the Exchange, towards the South Parade, near the shop 'Pearson Nurseryman'.

Spencer Hall, who later went on to become a famed local poet, was drawn to Miller, and describes him as kind natured, wearing a tasteful cap, always with a cigar, and of

having a tuneful voice for the lady passing. Miller's ambition to further his writing led him in 1835 to pack up and leave Nottingham and head for the bright lights of London. However, there was nothing glamorous about Miller's migration to the metropolis. He arrived on his own and found meagre lodgings in Southwark, where he took up his trade in Elliotts Row. Whilst there, Miller sent some fancy baskets containing some of his poems to The Countess of Blessington, who very much appreciated the verses, and who further encouraged and guided Thomas Miller through introductions to several influential people. Miller found himself suddenly orbiting in the midst of a social elite, which introduced him to some of the most famous names in Victorian England. From that moment in time Miller's success was assured and consequently he became one of the most prolific writers of the day.

Under Lady Blessington's patronage he wrote three novels, more poetry, and did reviews. He also wrote short stories for the most popular cheap magazine of the day *The London Journal*, which serialised his *Gideon Giles*, and *Godfrey Malvern* novels. His popularity as a novelist, short story writer and poet was quickly spotted by one of his newer London social friends, Samuel Rogers, the Banker, who in 1841 set Miller up in business at 9 Newgate St, as a Bookseller and Publisher, allowing him freedom to spend on his writing. However, the venture failed financially which led Miller to move on to Ludgate Hill. He then concentrated his efforts on writing stories for children, and of course, his life long love, that of the countryside. In fact Miller was outspoken in his condemnation of the destruction of England's rural beauty as the population and town sizes swelled, and which was especially highlighted by the public's newly found obsession with the steam train. In 1868, Thomas Chambers visited Miller, who was living in extreme hardship with his two daughters at Rose Cottage, where eleven years earlier he had written the timeless classic and his masterpiece, *Our Old Town*. This contains a collection of stories from his youth and many tales which had been handed down for generations. It was this work that inspired me to write 'The Tales of Tom Miller'.

On 25 and 26 November 1872, Miller returned to his native Gainsborough to give readings from *Our Old Town*, at the Temperance Hall. Unfortunately, Gainsborough had changed virtually beyond recognition, and interest in Miller's readings failed to capture any real attention, which was a sad closing to one of the most underestimated geniuses of his day. In 1873, Lord Alfred Tennyson amongst others, heard of Miller's now, terrible plight and aided Prime Minister Disraeli, who recalled Miller from his more youthful days, to grant Thomas Miller a £100 a year pension. On 24 October 1874, Thomas Miller died at 23 New Park Street, Kennington Park Road. He was buried in a common grave (grave 2,921, square 7). The Chartist Thomas Cooper (1805-1892) attended Miller's funeral. Unaware how poor Miller had become, he immediately added weight behind the fund that was established to help Miller's daughters.

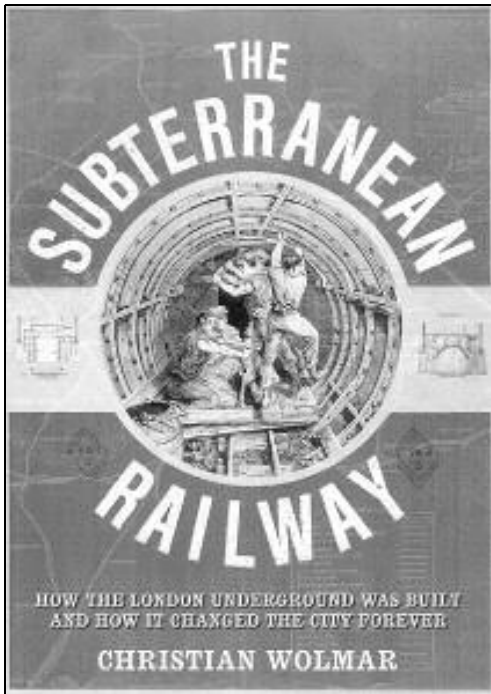
This biography was provided courtesy of Darron Childs and The Delters, an independent local history group for Gainsborough. Thomas Miller was finally honoured 190 years after he was born in Sailor's Alley Yard. A commemorative plaque was erected by The Delters to celebrate his life. We have never managed to locate a portrait of Miller.

Book Review

by Paul Graham

The Subterranean Railway: How the London Underground was built and how it changed the city forever. Christian Wolmar. Atlantic Books, 2004. Hardback, 351 pp, £17.99. ISBN 1 84354 022 3.

The first chapter of this survey of the history of London's underground railway system is entitled 'Midwife to the Underground'. This is a tribute to Charles Pearson (1793-1862) (grave 5,534, square 52) who is recognised as having 'by far the best claim' to having first conceived of the notion of an underground railway. As City of London solicitor from 1839, he first set out his idea for a railway running down the Fleet valley to Farringdon in a pamphlet of 1845. He envisioned it as protected by a glass envelope and drawn by atmospheric power, thus avoiding smoke from steam engines. This proved to be the kernel of the idea that manifested itself two decades later in the Metropolitan Railway, which followed a broadly similar route. More practically, Pearson masterminded the financing of the Metropolitan, and thereby saved it at the eleventh hour, by persuading the Corporation to invest in it (against prevailing *laissez faire* assumptions) when its directors were on the verge of winding up the business.



The claim is made that, 'without him, London might not have pioneered a transport system that transformed urban living'. This may seem exaggerated but as Mr Wolmar makes clear, the wisdom of digging a huge hole in a major city, with all the disruption and mess that entailed, for the sake of a railway tunnel, only became obvious with hindsight. Pearson was 'a visionary and an idealist' who wanted to transform the city and improve the lot of the labouring masses by allowing them to live in decent conditions outside the towns in which they worked. Pearson's vision therefore went beyond transport to include the improvement of social conditions.

Pearson is sympathetically described as 'a serial but heroic British failure' who first set out his idea of 'trains

in drains' when standing, unsuccessfully, in a by-election in Lambeth. His political ambitions may have ended in failure, but Mr Wolmar is adamant that Pearson should be remembered as 'the man who gave us the underground railway'. The world's first subterranean passenger railway opened on 9 January 1863 between Bishop's Road, Paddington and Farringdon Street. A toast was drunk at the celebratory banquet to the memory of Pearson who, sadly, had died in September 1862 and thus never lived to see his dream become a reality. The grateful shareholders of the Metropolitan voted his widow a £250 annuity per annum in 1863.

Pearson is one of the 'pantheon of Underground heroes' identified by the author. The others are Charles Tyson Yerkes, 'the dodgy American' who gained control of much of the network in the 1900s and greatly expanded it; Frank Pick, the 'administrative genius' behind London Transport; and Lord Ashfield, the 'far sighted and politically astute chairman' who pursued the goal of an integrated system.

Two other Norwood notables get honourable mentions. Christopher Pond (1826-1881, grave 18,718, square 88) whose company, Spiers & Pond, provided 'the excellent refreshment bars' at underground stations, and James Greathead (1844-1896, grave 27,103, square 83), who designed a shield that cut through London clay with ease and allowed layers of concrete to be poured to prevent collapse of the tunnels. By 1890, when the Bakerloo line was being dug: 'the Greathead shield method...had now become standard'.

This book is a very readable survey of the birth and development of London's tube network. It explains why London was the first city to construct such a system and how the rivalries between the various companies, and the personal animosity between their chiefs, served to ensure that its expansion proceeded in a haphazard, rather than in a rational, way. The illustrations in the book include photographs of Pearson and of the Greathead shield in operation.



James Henry Greathead 1844-1896



Recent FOWNC Events

by Jill Dudman

We often have talks on famous personalities buried at Norwood, but Robert Holden (himself a long-time FOWNC member) spoke on 19 February about someone who is not so well known, but nevertheless had a very interesting life. His grandmother, Elizabeth Matilda Halston (née Dunkley, born 1881 in Tottenham) was left a widow with three children after her husband, another Robert, died in 1922. In order to support herself and her family, she trained to be a midwife, and then embarked on a 22-year career. The presence of several serving and retired midwives and nurses in the audience added to the sense of occasion.



Elizabeth Halston

Reasonably well-to-do families in those days who were expecting a baby would hire a midwife to stay with them for some weeks before and after the birth, and this provided Elizabeth, working in Streatham and nearby areas, with a living. On the outbreak of the Second World War, she was employed as a domiciliary midwife by the London County Council, and was provided with a flat and a clinic in Clapham. In war-torn Lambeth and Wandsworth, she delivered hundreds of babies to women in their own homes - often at some danger to herself, having to walk through the streets in an air-raid to a house where a birth was imminent. Her grandson regards her as an unsung heroine of the war. She died in 1975 and was cremated at Norwood. Robert included with his talk a display of artefacts such as her case of midwifery equipment and a baby's gas mask.

Most members are probably familiar with the London Necropolis Railway to Brookwood Cemetery, but much less well-known is a short-lived service that ran from King's Cross to the Great Northern London Cemetery near Southgate. We are therefore grateful to Martin Dawes, railway enthusiast and Methodist minister, for making the journey from his home in Biggleswade on 19 March to speak to us about it. The service ran from a specially built funeral station a little to the north of the main King's Cross station, and commenced in 1861, but was never financially successful, and only operated for a couple of years. Ian Simpson, who was in the audience, has written up the talk, and his article will appear in the September newsletter. Martin Dawes's illustrated and very detailed book on the subject is available from FOWNC, price £7.50 (contact Jill Dudman, details on p.16).



Forthcoming FOWNC Events

May - August 2005

General tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month (1 May, 5 June, 3 July and 7 August). All tours start at 14.30, at the Cemetery main gate off Norwood Road, and last for about 2 hours. There is no formal charge but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) towards conservation projects.

Saturday 21 May, 14.00:

Jerrold memorial rededication ceremony

This short ceremony will take place at the recently restored memorial of Douglas Jerrold and family (grave 5,452, square 97) which is on the southern side of the cemetery, beside the curving uphill roadway.



Top: Douglas Jerrold line drawing by Don Bianco

Bottom: Restored Jerrold Memorial

Other forthcoming events

Saturday 21 May, 11.00-17.00: Nunhead Cemetery open day

Nunhead Cemetery, Linden Grove, SE15. A long-established and well-attended event run by FONC, with attractions ranging from historic hearses to beekeepers, falconers and woodworkers.

Continued from page 7

'Before this happened, however, two further people had discovered the principle, each quite independently, and had begun to publicize it on a far more extensive scale than the self-effacing Ward had ever contemplated - though he did at least make known his original experiment in no less a place than the official catalogue of the 1851 Exhibition. The first of these was a chemist, Robert Warrington, who started on a thorough and extensive series of experiments in 1849. The other was Philip Henry Gosse, who wrote on natural history for a living and is best known today as the appalling parent portrayed in that masterpiece of autobiography, *Father and Son*. In 1850 Gosse had noticed the strikingly beneficial effects that the proximity of certain aquatic plants had on freshwater Rotifera; and two years later, driven down to Devon by a bout of nervous dyspepsia, he took the opportunity of confirming that this also held true for species of salt water. As a result he devised a small marine aquarium.'

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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