

Friends of West Norwood CEMETERY

Newsletter No. 64 - January 2009

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Chairman's Report

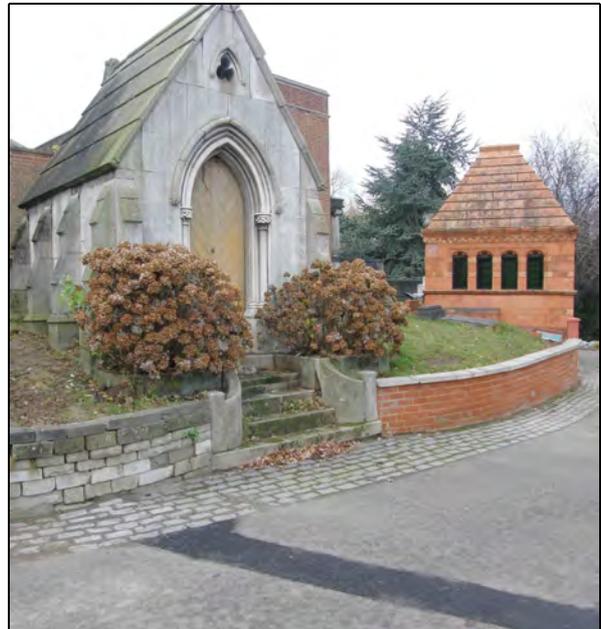
by Bob Flanagan

After the high point of the opening of the new Memorial Garden in June, as reported in the September Newsletter, it's been a depressing 6 months. Firstly, the installation of new cremator equipment in the crematorium seems to have required the erection of some sort of above ground heat exchanger. It is not clear if it is intended to be temporary or permanent. What is clear, however, is that it is ugly, it has been erected over graves (30,278 and 32,036, square 51) and that planning permission has not been obtained. The Management Advisory Group was not even notified, let alone consulted. Added to this, the cremator required an enhanced electricity supply. A new cable has been laid in a trench dug right through the middle of the newly-reinstated roadway, all the way from the crematorium to the boundary wall adjacent to the Robson Road Industrial Estate. It passes over graves (14,335 and 10,428, square 24) on the slope down from the Crematorium to the lower roadway.



The new addition to the crematorium (square 51)

Did Lambeth know that the crematorium refurbishment was planned when the roadway was reinstated? Yes – when we queried the high specification of the new road surface we were told it was to enable it to take the load of the new cremator equipment! Could the cable have been laid as part of the roadway works? Yes! Would it have been better to do this? Yes! The result is an ugly scar in the new roadway that will erode more quickly than the proper surface. Again, no consultation – if there had been we would have raised (and possibly funded) the introduction of a junction box near to the Greek Chapel in the event that electricity supply to this important building were possible in future.



The Great Scar of Norwood (Square 38)

There is more bad news. Firstly, Lambeth have resorted to using the area of consecrated ground near to the Grade II listed Gilbert memorial (grave 8,659, square 115) as a rubbish dump yet again. This ground is full of graves, although the headstones were swept away in the clearances. Of course the Council preferred to sell off the adjacent Vale Street depot area for housing rather than plan for the future of the cemetery. In this context, the recent heavy rain has emphasized the continuing problem of drainage in the south-east corner the cemetery, with the pathway by the St Mary-at-Hill plot becoming impassable yet again and surface water standing over adjacent graves. These problems will now be a permanent feature of the area since a large reinforced steel and concrete retaining wall has been built to protect the new development – *inter alia* this also further restricts drainage in this corner of the cemetery.

Meanwhile, the crematorium has now reopened and the reinstatement of roadways leading to the crematorium from the main gate is going ahead. To be fair this seems to be being done carefully so far. However, there is yet more bad news in that an important monument in the consecrated area of the cemetery (grave 1,425, square 66) has been demolished. I remember cutting down a strong growth of ivy on this prominent monument some 15 years ago! A modern (1998) monument was also flattened – this alone has now been reinstated. Clearly it must have been a large-scale impact to have caused such destruction. I have no idea what happened, save that Lambeth say reinstatement will be covered by insurance.



***Monument destruction
(grave 1,425, square 66)***



Roadway work next to the Gilbert memorial (square 115)

Land Management Plan

Most worrying of all is that the Council seems intent on not only assuming powers to remove monuments and exhume human remains for reburial ('grave re-use'), but also on maintaining that the function of the cemetery is only to provide a service to the bereaved. A legal opinion obtained in the summer as noted in the last Newsletter asserted that Lambeth could do what they liked in the cemetery as regards graves that had not been disturbed for 75 years subject only to Faculty jurisdiction in the consecrated areas of the cemetery and perhaps planning (Conservation Area) legislation as regards the cemetery as a whole. In essence the effect of this would be to overturn Chancellor Gray's 1994 judgement and nullify all the hard work we have put in trying to work with Lambeth in the intervening years. As repeatedly stated we have no objection *per se* to grave re-use, it's just that I especially don't trust the Council to honour their words. Their attitude to planning permission, for example, is clearly shown by the works done without any such permission in conjunction with the crematorium refurbishment... In fact the whole atmosphere of the last few months is reminiscent of that when FOWNC was founded 20 years ago, when all we asked for was permission to record monuments before the Council took them away!

Correspondence

Firstly, John Harbold, who kindly gave us permission to reproduce watercolours by William Collingwood Smith (Newsletter 63, September 2008), has written to make clear that he collects original material by Smith. Secondly, James Birkett of Nobleboro, Maine writes to express his long-standing interest in the early history of sea water distillation and desalination and the work of Alphonse de Normandy (see Newsletter 46, January 2003). Apparently de Normandy's 1862 seawater distillation plant on Key West, Florida still exists. Finally, Bob Starling has written to say that the image provided to accompany the article on James Arndell Youl (Newsletter 63) was in fact a picture of his son Cecil James Youl. The portrait of Sir James Arndell Youl reproduced here commemorates his award of CMG for the part he played in bringing about the transportation of the salmon and trout ova from England to Australia. Cecil James Youl was born in Clapham Park, London on 7 October 1857. He migrated to Tasmania in 1873, where he became a pastoralist and later moved to Sydney in 1898. He died on 28 November 1916 at Sydney and is buried at the South Head Sydney Cemetery. He was survived by his wife Mary Dinah, who moved back to England where she died on 6 January 1931 at Little Coat, Martock, Somerset.



James Arndell Youl, ca. 1874 from a ceramic portrait (courtesy of John Lawrie, a relative through the marriage of his grandfather to Clara Adel Youl, daughter of Harry Youl, son of James Arndell Youl)

Conservation News

by Colin Fenn

Reinstatement of the 50 metre section of wall that was demolished by London & Quadrant's builders in Vale Street has commenced. The wall had been leaning badly, and the builders had partially demolished it in order to work safely beneath it. We have not been able to ascertain whether Lambeth Council gave consent, or whether it was done unilaterally. After active support from Councillor Andrew Gibson, and Lambeth's Building Control and Planning Control teams, we now have a commitment for repairs to be undertaken using matching materials that are tied back properly into the remaining sections.

Secondly, although it seems that the temporary roof above the catacombs has been effective in its principal purpose of drying them out, we do not yet have definitive measurements of what has been achieved. Clearly the roof will still be required for some time yet provided that an extension to temporary planning permission can be obtained.



Memorials to the forensic scientist Sir Thomas Stevenson and the pension reformer and statistician Sir Edward Brabrook FSA (1839-1930) and his two wives

As to practical conservation in the cemetery, the efforts of our volunteer helpers are much appreciated and more are welcome. We meet one Saturday morning per month – further information from my wife Rose (contact details page 16). There have been three sessions this autumn. The first was in the area around the memorial to the forensic scientist Sir Thomas Stevenson (grave 26,543, square 95; see Newsletter 61, January 2008). Also revealed was the colonnaded memorial to the pension reformer and statistician Sir Edward Brabrook FSA (1839-1930) and his two wives (sisters) (graves 26,637 and 27,067, square 83). Curiously inscriptions on the sides of the memorials note that Stevenson and Brabrook each lost a pair of family members through drowning.

Work around the Grade II listed Pond Mausoleum (grave 18,718, square 88) revealed a large slab covering the grave of Charles Cooper Doggett (grave 1,872, square 88), who died aged 11 in 1846, and other members of the Doggett family. Could these be descendants of Thomas Doggett, Irish comedian and joint manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, who in 1721 provided for a prize of a coat and silver badge to be rowed for annually by six watermen within a year of completing their apprenticeships (the oldest annual sporting event in Britain)? The work also exposed a vista to the well-proportioned granite obelisk of William Holland, distiller, of Deptford Bridge and of Perry Hill, Sydenham (grave 16,461, square 88) who died 23 March 1877 aged 76. Initial research suggests that he owned *Clare Lodge*, Sydenham. In addition to making *Hollands Gin*, he owned a string of public houses across London.



Memorial to William Holland, distiller, of Deptford Bridge

The session around Captain Wimble's Grade II listed tomb (grave 2,952, square 76) revealed again the nautical carvings on this monument. Amongst the other monuments that emerged from the undergrowth was that to Henry Dawkins (1773-1857; grave , square 76), 'interdicted by Parliament from mingling his ashes with those of his wife and family who lie buried in St Margaret's Westminster graveyard'.



The Oakey Family (1813-1963), Sandpaper manufacturers

by Janet Weeks

John Oakey 1813-1887

Two adjacent vaults (graves 18,925 and 18,926, square 120) and another grave close by (grave 23,474, square 124) mark the resting places of three generations of the Oakey family in Norwood Cemetery. The first Oakey to be buried at Norwood was Emily, wife of John and mother of five of his children.

John was the founder, in 1833, of John Oakey & Sons, a company that was to be run by four generations of the family during its 125 years in England. He set up the company after finding a method of making sand

or powdered glass adhere more strongly to paper. He had been apprenticed to a piano manufacturer and given the task of preparing abrasive paper for use in producing a smooth finish on wood. His abrasive paper improved on the traditional craftsman's method of pasting powdered glass from port or stout bottles onto sheets of old ledger paper.

John Oakey, born in Hoxton, East London in 1813, was 20 when he set up his business and married Emily. He started production in Walworth and soon expanded into other buildings in the area. In 1848, he moved factory and family to Blackfriars Road, Southwark. The need for even more space prompted the final move to Lambeth, when he bought the site vacated by the Royal Female Asylum at the junction of Westminster Bridge Road and Kennington Road. There, a large factory – Wellington Mills – was built in 1872. It remained in production for 98 years, until John Oakey & Sons Ltd was taken over and manufacture was set up in India.

Although the company had been created to supply abrasive products, such as sand and glass paper and emery cloth for industrial use, it was not long before John Oakey introduced a range of household polishes. For cleaning iron grates and stoves there was black lead sold loose or compressed into blocks; for polishing silver and other metals and glass there was silversmith's soap. 'Wellington' knife polish became very popular after its launch in 1858, being advertised extensively in newspapers and on horse-drawn, and then motorised, omnibuses. From the firm's early days, 'Wellington' had been adopted, together with a picture of the Duke of Wellington, as the trade mark. Medals were awarded to Oakey products in Philadelphia and Boston. A gold medal was won by the company at the Crystal Palace International and Universal Exhibition in 1876.



Oakey monuments at Norwood (square 120). Grave 18,925: Emily Oakey (1882); John Oakey (1887); Sophia Oakey (1891); Ernest John Oakey (1891); and Nancy Frieze Oakey (1924). Grave 18,926: John Oakey Junior (1882); Agnes Mary Carr (1891); Eliza Oakey (1918); Eliza Jessie Oakey (1930); Charles George Oakey (1955); and Alice Matilda Oakey (1955)

Emily, the first member of the family to be buried at Norwood, died in 1860 aged 49 (grave 7,029, square 47). Her remains were exhumed in 1882 and reburied (grave 18,925, square 120). A few days later, her second son, John jnr, was interred in grave 18,926 (square 120). John jnr had lived with his wife, Eliza, in Brixton – first in Overton Road and then on Brixton Hill. They had two sons (John William and Charles George) and three daughters (Agnes Mary, Eliza and Florence). Like his elder and younger brothers, John jnr had worked for his father's firm since leaving school.

John Oakey snr moved with his unmarried children to Surbiton and in 1869 he remarried – his new wife Sophia was 25 years his junior. She bore him three children: Ernest John, Godfrey and Sophia. When he died in 1887 aged 73 he was buried with his first wife. Four years later, his second wife was interred with him, as was his fourth son Ernest John, who died aged 21. The last burial in that grave was Godfrey's widow, Nancy Frieze Oakey (1924).

John snr was succeeded in the company by Herbert, his third son, aged 36, the eldest son, Joseph, having died in Clapham in 1884. After his marriage to Fanny Eliza, Herbert moved from Surbiton to Church Road (now Norwood Road) where they had a daughter, Dorothea. A son, Philip Herbert, and another daughter, Josephine, were born when they lived on Brixton Hill, near Brixton Water Lane. Their final home was Caton Lodge, 13 Streatham High Road. There, a second son, John Martin, was born. A third daughter, Barbara Mary, survived for only a few months in 1890 and was buried in a further Norwood grave (grave 23,474, square 124).

In 1893, Herbert converted his firm into a public company, John Oakey & Sons Ltd. Herbert was both chairman and managing director. The younger son of John jnr, Charles George, who had been working in the company for some years, became deputy managing director. Charles's elder brother, John William, was given the same title four years later, and they became joint managing directors in 1908 when their uncle Herbert retired. Herbert's elder son, Philip Herbert, joined the board in 1910.

Herbert had a second home in Eastbourne and died there in 1916. Three years later Philip became chairman of the company, with his cousin Charles as deputy chairman and deputy managing director. They were joined on the board by Philip's younger brother, John Martin Oakey MC, aged 30. John Martin was a barrister who had served as a captain in the Royal Engineers during World War I. Later, he became an Alderman on Wandsworth Council. In 1936, he was elected to the London County Council, having stood as the Conservative candidate for Streatham. He was also a JP.

Herbert's eldest daughter, Dorothea, was married to Major-General Charles Foulkes. He was elected to the board in 1931. When Charles Arthur Oakey, the son of Charles George and a great-grandson of the founder, became deputy managing director in 1940, the company's board for the first time consisted of all family members – five Oakeys and General Foulkes.

As in the 1914-18 war, production of abrasive materials had to be increased during World War II because they were vital to armaments manufacture. However, output was affected by bombing, which demolished one block of Wellington Mills.

After the war, John Martin became chairman of the company and two more of the founder's great-grandsons joined the board. Philip Herbert died in 1947 and John Martin in 1963; the latter was the last member of the Oakey family to be buried at Norwood.



Oakey monument at Norwood (grave 23,474, square 124): Barbara Mary Oakey (1890); Herbert Oakey (1916); Fanny Eliza Oakey (1929); Philip Herbert Oakey (1947); and John Martin Oakey (1963)

All of Herbert's immediate family are remembered on his gravestone. His wife, baby Barbara, Philip Herbert and John Martin are interred with him. The names of the two married daughters and a son-in-law – Josephine Whittingham, and Dorothea and Charles Foulkes are engraved in the stone. This grave has its original low iron fence intact.

His wife, Eliza, and three of his five children are interred with John Oakey jnr. Eliza outlived him by 36 years. The first daughter to be buried with him was Agnes Mary, who had married Benjamin W. Carr, but died in 1891 aged 25. Her younger sister, Eliza Jessie Oakey, died in 1930. Charles George Oakey and his wife Alice both died in 1955 and are buried together.

Janet's booklet on this subject, produced by Local History Publications, is available from FOWNC, price £1.

Future Norwood Regeneration

by Colin Fenn

Lambeth has now refined its proposals for redevelopment of the centre of West Norwood. They have reacted to more than 800 responses to their questionnaires and meetings, and are now homing in on a dozen 'development opportunities' in the area between Tulse Hill and West Norwood railway stations (see under 'Environment' at www.lambeth.gov.uk).

On the plus side, they have acknowledged our representations and have shown a lot of interest in improvements to the 'cultural hub' in front of the cemetery gates, and have held preliminary discussions about the potential for a visitor centre. They have dropped the suggestion to open up new gates and paths in the cemetery – not only were there substantial legal issues, but there was little popular support. There was positive feedback for widening the pavement around Norwood High Street between the railway station and the cemetery, to slow down traffic and provide more public space. However, they also advocate major redevelopment of West Norwood library to be funded through building 30+ housing units above it, construction that would inevitably be detrimental to the nature and character of the conservation area.

Their consultants are also firming up other proposals outside the immediate area of the cemetery, including an ecology park nearby alongside the railway line by East Place and Norwood Park. They expect to produce a 'masterplan' by February 2009. We will monitor progress and continue to participate in the consultations.

David Williams Wire (1801-1860), Lord Mayor of London

by Morag Wire

When I first saw a scroll dating from 1894 containing ‘The Pedigree of the Family of Weir or Wire’ and read on it that a distant forebear, David Williams Wire, was Lord Mayor of London 1858-9, I determined to learn more about this first cousin, four times removed. The search took me to Colchester, his birthplace; to the archives at the City of London, Guildhall; to the Newspaper Library at Colindale; to that Aladdin’s Cave of information, the internet; and finally to the house in Lewisham where he died. I was keen to know what sort of man he was, and what sort of society he lived in.

David Williams Wire was born on 17 August 1801, the son of Samson Wire, a Colchester baker and Strict Baptist. The family was staunchly non-conformist and actively supported the Liberal Party. These influences strongly affected David throughout his career, as I was to discover.

David was a self-made man. The story goes that he was sweeping floors in a solicitor’s office in Colchester when he was spotted by the solicitor Daniel Whittle Harvey, Radical MP and founder of the *Sunday Times*, who promoted him to the position of clerk. His uncle, Chignell Wire, was Harvey’s election agent, and this created a family connection that David was to benefit from in various ways. Harvey recognised David Wire’s potential and arranged for him at the age of 18 to be articled to a London solicitor, John Dixon, where he was quick to learn. He studied at the newly-founded University College of London’s law faculty in 1826, and went on to become Dixon’s junior partner.

After Dixon’s death in 1830, David Wire practiced alone at St Swithin’s Lane in the City until he formed a partnership with Henry Child in 1837. He practiced as Wire & Child at 9 St Swithin's Lane, 1837-56, and at Turnwheel Lane, Cannon Street, from 1856 right up to his death. He specialised in the law relating to licensed victuallers, and became solicitor to the Licensed Victuallers’ Association, the charitable arm of the Worshipful Company of Innholders. This role was not without its problems as his natural inclination as a non-conformist was to speak out against the evils of drink! He must have found a way of overcoming this dilemma as he was granted freedom of the Company of Innholders, prior to achieving freedom of the City of London in 1831 during the mayoralty of Sir John Key (1794-1858), another Norwood Lord Mayor (grave 5,641, square 33), for the princely sum of 46 shillings and 8 pence (i.e. £2.33).

I wanted to remind myself about the conditions in London over this period (1833-1860) as background to understanding of David Wire’s career as Common Councilman, Alderman, Sheriff (1853-4), and Lord Mayor. This was, of course, Dickensian London and I feel sure David Wire knew Charles Dickens and shared his concerns for the working man – whether education, living standards, prison conditions, or whatever. This period saw the cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1849, the coronation of Victoria in 1837,

the arrival of commuter trains and omnibuses, the Great Exhibition of 1851, the end of the Crimean War in 1856, plus the foundation of so many of the established institutions we know today – hospitals, asylums, prisons, churches, schools, museums, the sewerage system – to handle the doubling of London’s population over this period.

Public service

In 1833 David Williams Wire was elected Common Councilman of the Ward of Walbrook. He was a popular choice and represented the ward in this capacity for 17 years. It was during this period that he chaired the committee that commissioned Holloway Prison in the Camden Road. The foundation stone was laid in 1849 for a building that was modeled on Warwick Castle, and for obvious reasons nicknamed ‘Camden Castle’ by the locals! An even more momentous role at this time was Honorary Secretary to the committee formed to organise the City’s contribution to the 1851 Great Exhibition. He was rewarded with a trip to Paris for himself and his wife and other Corporation dignitaries at the invitation of French exhibitors, who hoped to stage their own international exhibition in 1855.

The nineteenth century was a time when non-conformists played an important role, especially in education, and David Wire, a devout Christian, was very much part of that scene. He was accepted into the Congregational church of King’s Weigh House Church, Fish Street Hill, and was subsequently elected by the congregation to represent them in the Protestant lobby group known as the ‘Dissenting Deputies’, which defended the civil rights of non-conformists. His involvement with such bodies as the Ragged School movement and the Sunday School Union was very important to him. He often preached, gave up Sunday breakfast-time to teach bible studies to young men, and, when his name became well known, was always willing to officiate at the opening of new Congregational and Baptist churches. In 1859, shortly before his death, he founded a new Congregational church in his own neighbourhood of Lewisham, the spire of which can still be seen today.



*David Williams Wire (1801-1860)
(Illustrated London News,
6 November 1858)*

David’s religious and political beliefs were closely inter-related. His fundamental belief in the right of individuals to determine their own choice of religion without loss of civil rights brought him into the Chartist movement and into electoral reform, and from there it was a logical step to support the civil rights of non-Christians. He made good friends with a leading member of British Jewry, Sir Moses Montefiore and his wife Judith, one-time neighbours in St Swithin’s Lane. Not only was he invited to become Sir Moses’ Under-Sheriff but, more significantly, to join Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore on their expedition of 1840-41 to the Near East to seek justice for Jews in Damascus accused of murdering a Catholic priest.

With the arrival of his second child, Judith Montefiore Wire, in 1842, David Wire moved his family, including his wife, Harriet, née Briant, and son, Travers Barton Wire, from St Swithin's Lane to *Stone House*, Lewisham. This was an 18C villa in 6 acres of land, built by George Gibson the Younger for his own use and occupied in the 1820s by David Wire's mentor, Daniel Whittle Harvey. There was an interesting anecdote in one of the contemporary newspapers about *Stone House* being robbed in 1849 by a young lad whom the police suspected of being the 'boy Jones', the infamous intruder in Queen Victoria's bedchamber of some years previously!

In February 1851 David was elected to the role of Alderman and magistrate. One of his supporters was a life-long Liberal and neighbour in St Swithin's Lane, John Ingram Travers - David had honoured that friendship by naming his son after the Travers family.

Election uproar

In May 1851, in spite of the commitments of his role as Alderman, including court hearings as a magistrate, and those of his own solicitors' business, David stood as Liberal parliamentary candidate for Boston, Lincolnshire. He had already suffered defeat at the hands of the electors in 1847, fighting on a non-conformist ticket, and again in 1849 as a free-trader. By 1851 the mood of the public had changed and free trade was seen as a risk to the domestic economy. This outweighed the support he received for his campaign to extend political reform and, as he was not prepared to budge on his principles, he chose to withdraw. However, his supporters carried on without him and the vote went ahead! Boston became the scene of mass demonstrations, egged on by outside agitators, with volleys of potatoes and stones discharged and blazing tar-barrels processed around the town. Famously, the Riot Act was read and the Dragoon Guards called to quell the disturbance. Wire lost by 268 votes to 251.

Today our welfare state has a level of central and local government involvement that was unheard of in Victorian times. We owe so much to the diligence and generosity of noble and well-to-do members of that society who saw it as their duty to contribute to the welfare of those less fortunate than themselves. This was certainly true of City of London dignitaries. In the 1840s and 1850s David Wire was particularly active. When proposed for the office of Alderman, his supporter boasted of his life governorship of 50 charities! The chief examples were those charities David remembered in his will: the Licensed Victuallers' School in Kennington Lane, and their Asylum in the Old Kent Road; the Asylum for Fatherless Children, Stamford Hill; the Asylum for Idiots, Earlswood, Surrey; and The Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney.

Lord Mayor of London

In 1858, David Wire was elected Lord Mayor of London, 'chief magistrate of the greatest city, not only of this empire, but of the world', as the *Illustrated News of the World* put it. In November his inaugural ceremony was accompanied by all the traditional trappings that we are familiar with today. He commissioned a new carriage for his wife, described by the *Morning Chronicle* as a noble vehicle: 'upon the body, which is painted of a beautiful deep blue, is emblazoned the civic arms, those of the Innholders' Company, and also the

private arms of his Lordship, surmounted by the crest – a demi-horse rampant, and supported by the motto *Vincet qui patitur* ('who endures wins')

The sun shone that day and the spectators were out. *The Illustrated News of the World* described the scene: 'available spots were occupied by companies of tumblers, Ethiopian serenaders, Punch and Judies, brass bands, bagpipe players, and other itinerant candidates for popular favour'. After he had been presented to the Lord Chancellor as Queen Victoria's representative, he hosted a sumptuous banquet at the Mansion House of 'turtle soup, sherbet, fish, boiled turkeys and oysters, pullets, capons, pigeon pie, hot and cold meats, asparagus, mashed potatoes, shellfish, jellies, blancmanges, almond pastries, Chantilly baskets, mince pies, salads. The removes included: roast turkey, leverets, pheasant, geese, peafowl. Dessert included: pineapple, grapes, apples, pears, Savoy cakes, walnuts, dried fruit, preserved ginger'. Not a meal for anyone on a diet!

After such excitement it is not altogether surprising that he became ill. *The Times* of 11 December 1858 announced that he had been seized by 'a fit of paralysis' that affected his right hand. Luckily he recovered and resumed his duties less than a fortnight later. After such a fright, he was the ideal person to be approached by Johanna Chandler and family who were looking for a way of caring for an elderly relative incapacitated by a stroke. Through his sponsorship money was raised through public subscription to establish the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptics, now known as the National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery, Queen Square WC1. He also knew Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) (grave 24,395, square 38). He attended a meeting on 16 August 1859 to lay the foundation stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant & Castle.

Sadly, however, his stroke had weakened him and, only a year after completing his term of office as Lord Mayor, he had a second stroke. He died on 9 November 1860 at his home in Lewisham, aged 59. He was buried at Norwood (grave 7,259, square 52) – the grave is immediately behind that of Sir Thomas Gabriel (1811-1891) (grave 5,534, square 52), who was also Lord Mayor (1866-7). His wife Harriet (d. September 1880) is also buried in the Wire grave. Adjacent graves include the Grade II listed monument of Christopher Trowel Gabriel (grave 2,689, square 52) and the monument to the builder William Higgs (1824-1883) and family (grave 8,520, square 52).

What sort of man was Wire? Contemporary accounts were mixed. *The Belfast Newsletter* called him 'a sharp bustling little attorney'; the *Caledonian Mercury* said he was 'not much more than five feet high and, having large goggle eyes, profuse drab whickers, and light



**Wire grave - centre; Higgs grave - left rear;
and C Gabriel grave - right**

eyebrows, looks when gowned, furred and ruffled, exceedingly like an owl'. His portrait is a lot kinder. *The Illustrated News of the World* summed him up as 'a thoroughly honest and upright citizen, an intelligent and able lawyer, a sound and practical philanthropist, and an active and conscientious magistrate'. I like to think the words of the friend who proposed him for the role of Alderman provide a fitting epitaph: 'a benevolent man', 'a man who would do all his duty – one who would temper justice with mercy', 'no man more valuable or more sincere in his friendships than he was'. *Continued on page 16*



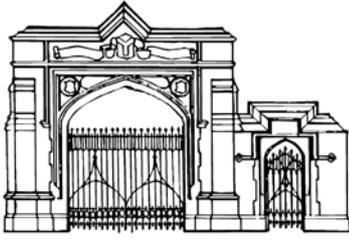
Recent FOWNC Events

by Jill Dudman

We made our usual contribution to Open House London Weekend on 21 September. Some 60 visitors attended the series of tours of the notable monuments, finishing at the Greek Chapel, which was open for viewing. The FOWNC bookstall was open all afternoon in the Maddick mausoleum. Thanks to everyone who helped with leading the tours and staffing the bookstall.

After our AGM on 18 October, we welcomed Brian Parsons with a presentation on the development of cemeteries and crematoria in London during the 20th century. Perhaps the most notable buildings shown were those for Golders Green Crematorium, designed by Streatham architect Sir Ernest George (1902). A very curious anecdote related to Kingsbury Lawn Cemetery, the land for which was purchased near Brent Reservoir by the Borough of Willesden in 1929 – they built gates and railings and a chapel and a lodge, but then abandoned the site. The local authority merged with that of Wembley in 1965 to form the London Borough of Brent, who decided that they already had sufficient burial space in a recently-founded cemetery, and thus Kingsbury has remained unused and is now home to a nature reserve and a garden centre. Brian has just helped produce Edition 4 of Hugh Meller's classic work *London Cemeteries: an Illustrated Guide and Gazetteer* (see review in FOWNC Newsletter 63, September 2008).

On 22 November, Robert Stephenson spoke on the fate of some notable corpses over the last thousand years. He began with William the Conqueror, who died in 1087 in France. His servants stole his valuables and abandoned his body. Later a funeral was arranged, and after interruption by a fire, the pallbearers tried to cram William's obese corpse into a small sarcophagus, but the body exploded, the smell sending mourners running from the church! Most fascinating was the story of Oliver Cromwell's head. Cromwell died in 1658 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, but following the Restoration, his body was disinterred, taken to Tyburn, hanged from the gallows, and the head was severed and mounted on top of Westminster Hall. It then passed from owner to owner, on display in various museums, and was finally buried in 1960 at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Robert concluded with Albert Einstein, who died in 1955 and was cremated, but a pathologist first removed his brain in the hope of discovering what made Einstein so intelligent.



Forthcoming FOWNC Events

January - April 2009

General tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month. Tours on 4 January, 1 February and 1 March start at 11.00, and the tour on 5 April starts at 14.30, at the cemetery main gate off Norwood Road. Tours last for 1½-2 hours. There is no formal charge, but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) towards conservation projects. The new cemetery guidebook that is designed to accompany these tours will be on sale (£2.50).

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 room hire.



Saturday 21 February: Lecture - Dickens Connections at Norwood - Paul Graham

Norwood is the final resting place of numerous people connected to Charles Dickens. They include one relative, his uncle John Barrow, who taught him shorthand; playwrights Douglas Jerrold and Sir Thomas Talfourd, and artist George Cattermole, all three of whose funerals he attended; and his publishers Richard Bentley and William Bradbury, as well as many other writers and actors. Paul's book on this subject is still available from FOWNC (£2.95).

Saturday 21 March: Lecture - Sir Thomas Stevenson (1838-1908) - Bob Flanagan

2008 marked the centenary of the death of the leading forensic scientist and toxicologist of his day Sir Thomas Stevenson. This talk discusses Stevenson in the context of the development of not only forensic science, but also biochemistry and medical science. Other Norwood connections feature in the talk, and there are a few surprises.



David Wire Barton

Continued from page 14.

Wire had a family friend, Samuel Barton, originally from Colchester. He was born in 1813, became an outfitter, and later came to London where he had an establishment in the Strand. He was one of the executors of David Wire's will. He was one of the friends whose name was given to David Wire's son, Travers Barton Wire. On a reciprocal basis, Samuel gave David Wire's name to one of his sons, David Wire Barton (1838-1904). Unfortunately the latter's grave at Norwood, an elegant white marble ledger (grave 11,062, square 52), was removed by Lambeth in their clearance operations. His wife Fanny (1836-1911) and children Walter (1867-1867), Percy (1873-1873), Harriet (1874-1874), Ernest (1878-1878), Fanny (1865-1925) and Alice (1871-1951) were also commemorated on the tombstone – a graphic illustration of infant mortality in Victorian London even amongst the relatively well-to-do.

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery

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

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