Chairman’s Report
Bob Flanagan

As notified in May, we were host to the National Federation of Cemetery Friends Annual General Meeting on Saturday 31 July 2010 in the Nettlefold Halls. We were pleased to welcome the Mayor of Lambeth, Cllr Dr Neeraj Patil, Lambeth Cabinet Member for Culture, Cllr Florence Nosegbe, long-term Friends Cllrs Clare Whelan and Jane Pickard, the Archdeacon of Lambeth Christopher Skilton, and of the order of 75 delegates from some 25 Cemetery Friends groups from as far away as Plymouth and Birkenhead. We were told it was the biggest AGM turnout ever. We were especially pleased to celebrate our ‘coming of age’ in this way!

In conjunction with the AGM, St Luke’s Memorial Gardens in West Norwood were reopened formally by the Mayor after a £250,000 makeover. The renovations to the Gardens include new railings across the front of the church and around the perimeter of the gardens that are almost exact copies of the original 19th century railings. The garden itself, which is of course a burial ground, has been reconstructed, with new pathways, plants, turf, and benches. The work, initiated by a steering group from Norwood Action Group and from St Luke’s chaired by former vicar Luke Wickings, was finished last year, but the reopening was delayed by bad winter weather.

In welcoming the NFCF to Lambeth, Councillor Patil paid tribute to the work of FOWNC over the last 21 years to preserve and enhance the cemetery. He noted that those buried here include Sir Henry Tate, Sir Henry Doulton, Mrs Beeton, Baron Paul de Reuter, and Dr William Marsden, founder of the Royal Free and Royal Marsden Hospitals, all household names today.
Cllr Nosegbe also spoke warmly of the work of FOWNC. She commented especially on the fact that because the origins of so many modern sports can be traced amongst those buried in the cemetery, West Norwood will be associated with events in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics, which may include a visit from the Olympic Torch. A challenge for someone – count the number of upturned torches (a symbol of life extinguished) that remain in the cemetery!

The morning AGM session was devoted largely to updating delegates as to the current state of play vis-à-vis Lambeth and conservation issues. Has there really been much change after 21 years? After I had given a general introduction, FOWNC vice-chair Colin Fenn described his work researching the Greek enclosure, and Management Advisory Group Vice-chair Dr Brent Elliott detailed work associated with the recent regrading exercise undertaken to update The English Heritage Register of Historic Parks & Gardens. It still irritates that the consequence of the illegal Lambeth operations in destroying half of the cemetery should be cited as the reason for a Grade II* and not a Grade I designation – surely the challenge for Lambeth must be to work to get the cemetery the Grade I designation it deserves...

But back to the AGM. This continued with tours of the cemetery that included the Greek Chapel and Catacombs, followed by lunch. The AGM passed largely uneventfully save that the suggestion that groups managed by owners be associate rather than full members was referred for more discussion, and concerns from the Friends of Cherry Lane Cemetery where there are some 9,500 burials. The cemetery had been threatened by road building to service the 3rd runway and 6th terminal proposed for Heathrow. It was acknowledged that the threat had receded for now, but that it was not going to be easy to go against any future government determined to act in what was felt to be the National interest.
I must warmly thank all the FOWNC members who helped on the day especially Committee members Colin and Rose Fenn, Jill Dudman, John White (who organized the NFCF delegate list), Anna Long, and Paul Graham, and also Ellen Barbet, John Craske, Rosemary Dawson, Rory Hyde-Smith, Ashley Jones, Imogen Long, Sophie Mayers, and George Young. It was a good day for NFCF, FOWNC, the cemetery, and for Lambeth thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment voiced by the Mayor and by Cllr Nosegbe.

The Venerable Richard Bird (1933-2010)
Christopher Skilton

Friends will be sorry to hear of the sudden death of the former Archdeacon of Lambeth, the Venerable Richard Bird, on 2 June this year. A native of Guildford, altogether he spent 24 years in the Southwark diocese. His ministry was deeply influenced by his work in South Africa during the closing years of the apartheid era. A recent obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* makes reference to his instrumental role in bringing the action in the Consistory Court in 1993 following the destruction of listed and other memorials and the illegal re-use of graves by Lambeth Council as a result of its ‘lawn conversion policy’. The Archdeacon remained an important advocate for the good order of the Cemetery until his retirement to Bury St Edmunds in 1999. Our sympathies are extended to his wife Valerie and family.

Conservation News
Colin Fenn

Vegetation removal has continued around the perimeter of the cemetery. We have had positive comments from passers-by from Robson Road, who can now see into the cemetery. Secondly, a number of self-seeded saplings have been removed before they can wreak much damage to the monuments. The arboricultural specialists have, however, recorded several diseased mature trees, and a number will have to be felled. These mostly relate to the later plantings of the 1870s and 80s. They have also identified a couple of clumps of Japanese knotweed, which need specialist chemical treatment applied promptly before there is any damage to structures.

Since the Spring we have had help from a group of offenders doing supervised scrub clearance work. Guidance has been given on avoiding delicate marble and limestone monuments. The results of their labours are impressive, and can be seen at the top of the hill, in front of the crematorium and along Beeton path. A huge amount of invasive scrub
has been removed and we owe them a debt of thanks. We have asked they next focus on Sopwith and Hodges paths. Hopefully this combination of contractor and offender working parties means that we can keep on top of the worse excesses of vegetation in a cost effective way, allowing FOWNC scrub clearance teams to focus on the more sensitive areas, and leaving the cemetery staff to deal with scheduled grass cutting, etc.

The Greek Cemetery

Unfortunately, there has been a major setback. The Greek Trust of St Sophia Cathedral requested quotes for the repair of the perimeter railings of the Greek section some years ago, but were deterred by the sums involved. We have aimed to encourage progress, promote scrub clearance, and help locate potential funding. Unfortunately the Trust and Lambeth have not yet agreed on ownership of the wall, or indeed on who owns the monuments within the Greek section. No charity will give support until these questions are resolved. Then on 11 August there was an almighty crack, and a 50' section of the perimeter railings fell down. Fortunately no monuments were damaged. These railings are not in a prominent location, being set back from the road on the north of the enclosure. At first glance, it looks like the coping wall below the railings has buckled, probably exacerbated by soil movement as a result of the wet winter, dry summer, heavy recent rain, and blocked drains. This cannot be a new problem as there are signs that this area had been repaired before. It seems best to leave the fallen railings where they are for now. Hopefully this situation will give new impetus to Lambeth and the Trust to resolve their differences so we can then apply for grants for repair work.

Postscript – William Wimble

Scrub clearance work a couple of years ago revealed a headstone to William Wimble (1849-1903) adjacent to the large Wimble vault (see article by Janet Weeks, p. 6). His is the only burial in the grave. Presumably a relative of John and Mary Ann Wimble, we would be grateful for any information about him. Janet has not come across mention of him in her researches.
Charles Chabot (1815-1882) – Document Examiner
Bob Flanagan

A handwriting expert, Chabot is credited with promoting the rise of forensic handwriting examination (not to be confused with graphology, handwriting analysis purporting to relate to mental state) as an important area of study before fingerprinting and other now familiar forensic science disciplines were developed.

Chabot was born in Battersea on 28 January 1815, the second of the three children of Charles Chabot, a Huguenot lithographer, and his wife, Amy (or Amey), née Pearson. He trained as a lithographer in Holborn. On 3 August 1842 he married Sarah, née Nichols (born 2 February 1817, died 3 May 1884). From 1855 Chabot acquired a large practice as a graphologist. In 1862 he gave evidence in a trial caused by the actions of William Roupell (1831-1909; grave 5,541, square 62; only base of monument remains). The illegitimate son of Richard Palmer Roupell (d. 1856), William Roupell (MP for Lambeth 1857-1862) forged a will in his father’s name by which he obtained control of the family estate, 1856. Convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, he was released in 1876 after 14 years in Portland Prison (see Harris J. The Roupells of Lambeth. London: Streatham Society, 2001). Chabot’s examination (1871) of the handwriting of ‘Junius’, the pseudonym of a writer who contributed a series of letters to the Public Advertiser from 21 January 1769 to 21 January 1772, are looked on as seminal in forensic document examination. The letters criticised the ministries of Augustus Henry Fitzroy, 3rd Duke of Grafton, Lord North (Grafton's cousin), and the Duke of Bedford, and were very influential in their day. Chabot studied the handwriting of the various people to whom the letters had been attributed and confirmed as far as is possible the identification of Sir Philip Francis as Junius. Chabot also appeared in the Tichborne inheritance case that resulted in the impostor Arthur Orton being convicted of perjury in 1873. Chabot died at his home, 26 Albert Square, Clapham, on 15 October 1882, leaving a son, also Charles.
'I direct that my body may be decently and plainly interred at the discretion of my beloved wife. She alone shall have the ordering and regulation'.

Despite the wish John Wimble expressed in his will, the monument his widow erected to him at Norwood cannot be described as plain, illustrating as it does his career as a sailing ship captain. It is decorated on three sides with bas-reliefs of ships that he commanded, and on the top of the tomb is a carving of a sailing ship’s hull. The scenes depicted on the tomb are of great interest. To the east is the *Maidstone* in calm weather, her topsails furled, to the south is *Florentia*, in stormy weather, to the west is the *London*, in heavy seas with a broken mizzen mast. The bas-reliefs are framed in flat Corinthian columns and there is a decorative frieze representing a rope around the plinth. The monument is Grade II listed and is intact save that the simple iron masts from the boat are missing.

The dedication on the north side of the tomb reads: ‘Sacred to the memory of Mr John Wimble, thirty four years of whose eventful life was passed on the seas. Died 23rd July 1851. Aged 54 years. “They that go down to the seas in ships and occupy their business in great waters; these men shall see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep”. Also of Mary Ann, his wife, who shared in some of his perils. Died at Exeter, 22nd March 1886, aged 94 years.

John Wimble was born to John and Martha Wimble in Maidstone, Kent, and was baptised in All Saints Parish Church in March 1797. He probably went to sea aged 12 or 13. By 1823 he had gained sufficient skill and experience to meet the criteria laid down by the Honourable East India Company for captains of ships contracted to carry goods to and from India. Although the EIC had its own clippers, this did not provide sufficient capacity for the lucrative trade and ‘extra’ ships were contracted at an agreed rate per ton of freight.
The master of an ‘extra’ ship had to be at least 23 years old and to have already made three return voyages to India, serving as chief mate on one voyage. Each return trip took about a year. The EIC laid down rules for the uniforms to be worn by captains on both formal and informal occasions. The dress uniform John Wimble would have worn as Captain of an ‘extra’ ship was a navy blue cloth jacket with black velvet lapels. There were gilt buttons on the cuffs, the collar, and in two rows down the front, all embossed with the company’s crest, and gold embroidery on the cuffs. The jacket was worn over a white waistcoat and blue cloth trousers. A black silk cravat and cocked hat completed the outfit. There was no embroidery on the ‘work’ uniform. Captains of EIC-owned ships had similar uniforms, but more buttons.

Before the opening of the Suez Canal, ships to India and beyond followed a circuitous route to make full use of the prevailing winds and avoid being caught in the Doldrums. They would sail from England first to Madeira and then, carried by the northeast trade, steer towards Brazil until they could turn into the north-west wind that would carry the ship back across the Atlantic to southern Africa. Cape Town was regarded as the halfway point in the voyage and the ship would lie there for a few days while fresh supplies were taken on board.

On approaching the Cape, ships were often buffeted by violent northerly and north-westerly gales. The cyclonic winds and treacherous seas encountered on the England-India route were the main cause of losses: masts and rigging collapsed, the wooden hulls sprung leaks, or ships were driven ashore. Fire at sea was another hazard. There was also the danger of attacks by pirates and privateers.

The first ship John Wimble took charge of was the ‘extra’ ship Florentia (452 tons). She was built in Newcastle in 1821 and made 3 voyages to the Indies 1821-7. He sailed from the Thames in her on 25 May 1823 and arrived back from Bengal on 6 May 1824. His next ship was the Parmelia (443 tons), which he captained for another voyage to Bengal and back in 1826-7. Next a larger ship, the London, made her maiden voyage to Madras under Wimble’s command. She was built on the Thames, had a single deck, and was sheathed in copper. Wimble took her on four return voyages to India. On the last one, he reached the Thames in June 1840 and set sail on his next ship the following month.

By now, John and Mary Ann Wimble were living in Lower Sussex Place, off the Old Kent Road. John Wimble had amassed enough money during his 17 years as captain to be able to buy one of the largest shares in his new ship, the Maidstone (818 tons). She was built in 1839 at Green and Wigram’s Blackwall Yard. Established at the time of the Spanish Armada, the yard is said to have built some of the best sailing ships. A large share in the yard was bought by Sir Robert Wigram (1744-1830), who had for eight years been a surgeon on EIC ships. When failing eyesight forced him to leave.
the sea, he went on to make a fortune as ‘a general merchant all over the world’. In 1788, he started to build up a shipping business. On retirement in 1819, he sold his interest in the yard to Money and Henry, two of his 24 children, who were also shareholders in the Maidstone. As was usual, small syndicates of investors bought shares in the ship in 1/16 and 1/32 lots. The investors realised profits when the cost of construction, fitting, repair, insurance and other expenses had been deducted from the freight payments made by the EIC for the shipment of its cargoes to and from Asia. In addition to being paid a monthly salary, masters of EIC ‘extra’ ships were allowed to carry a certain amount of cargo for their own gain. Passengers’ fares were also part of the captain’s income. In 1830, a one-way ticket to or from India was about £100 (£83,000 today compared to average earnings). Passengers were expected to furnish their own quarters on board. The sale of provisions such as spirits, hams, and cheeses, was another potential source of income.

In July 1840, John Wimble took the Maidstone on her maiden voyage to Bengal. At the end of July the next year, he embarked on a round-the-world voyage in her. From the Thames, he sailed for Calcutta, then on to Wellington, New Zealand. After rounding Cape Horn, he headed for Chadwick, New Jersey, and, finally, New York before returning to London. Captain Wimble made his last voyage in 1842, taking the Maidstone to Calcutta and back. A square-rigged, three-masted ship, the Maidstone was 146 ft (44.5 m) long, 32 ft (9.75 m) in breadth, and 22 ft (6.7 m) in depth at midships. She was lengthened in 1842, when extensive repairs were also made. Her figurehead was the bust of a woman. She was intended for the London-Bengal, London-Calcutta route. Since John Wimble was her first Master, he may have been allowed to name her.

In retirement he, together with Franklin Allport, set up a ship and insurance broking business in the City of London. At the same address in Gracechurch Street in 1845 were the Wigram brothers trading as ship builders and owners. By 1850, both businesses had moved to 156 Leadenhall Street, a road occupied almost entirely by the offices of ship owners, agents and brokers.

John Wimble retained his share in the Maidstone. She was not sold until a year after his death and remained in operation, sailing to Australia, until 1860/1, when she was abandoned on the way to Australia. When she was built she had been thought to have a life expectancy of 12 years. The National Maritime Museum has a painting of her.

By 1851 John was living in Maidstone Cottage, Upper Tulse Hill along with his wife, Mary Ann, aged 54 and two servants, Mary Iles and Elizabeth Sheffield, each aged 26. It was here that John Wimble died in July 1851. The death certificate gave heart disease as the cause.
His will, signed 9 months before he died, directed that his widow should take possession of all his furniture, household implements, linen and clothing, pictures, telescopes and harts, jewelry, glassware, and liquors. During his life at sea several wealthy passengers had given him articles of gold and silver, as was then the custom. These, he specified, were to be used by Mary Ann during her lifetime, but then were to be distributed to some of his six brothers and sisters. These items included a number of trays, six candlesticks and snuffers, a soup tureen and ladle, a tea and coffee service, and a vase. His sister Eleanor Maria was to receive a gold snuff box. A gold watch was destined for John, son of Edward. This nephew would also be given £500 for his education and ‘advancement in life’, but it was specified that if, at the time of his death, John’s education were to be completed, he should be able to maintain himself and not need the money!

John left all his money and securities to Mary Ann, except for some monetary bequests. This inheritance was to remain hers even if she married again. He specified that she was to receive without delay a payment of £500 (£400,000 today), and the £1,000 that she had given him before their marriage was to be returned to her. Three of his siblings had borrowed money, and those debts were forgiven. He instructed that his sister Frances was to receive an annuity of £50. After the death of Mary Ann, brother Charles and sister Eleanor Maria were to receive £500 each. He gave £10 to his brother-in-law Joseph Lachlan (husband of Eleanor) ‘for the purchase of a mourning suit in token of my esteem and regard’. To his friend and business partner, Franklin Allport, he left £200 also in token of his esteem and regard. Franklin, Joseph and Mary Ann were named as executors of his will.

Although John Wimble left Maidstone Cottage to Mary Ann, provided she paid the rent, she went to live in Heavitree, near Exeter. She remained there, with two servants, until her death in 1886. Wimbles, however, still live in the Maidstone area: when John’s mother died in 1821 his father remarried and the family moved to East Malling.

Four silver candlesticks mentioned in John Wimble’s will were in the possession of Derek Wimble, who lived in Herne Hill until his death some 20 years ago. Derek was descended from John’s brother, Charles. Sadly, he never knew about his ancestor’s splendid tomb. His widow has since sold the candlesticks, but remembered that there were originally six, plus a candle snuffer and a tray. An engraved inscription recorded the fact that they were given by grateful passengers on a voyage home from Calcutta in 1840.

Acknowledgement
The Last East Indiaman
Bob Flanagan

A visit to Picton in New Zealand gives a vivid memory of Captain Wimble and his times. Similar to ships built for the EIC, Edwin Fox (747 tons, 160 ft overall) was built of teak and saul (Shorea robusta, a native Indian tree giving strong and durable, but rather coarse-grained wood), in 1853 by William Henry Foster of Calcutta. On her maiden voyage to London she carried 10 passengers and general cargo. Less than a year later she served as a troop ship for the Crimea. Could Sister Eliza Roberts (1802-1878) (grave 17,244, square 77), Florence Nightingale’s principal nurse, Dr John Sutherland (1808-1891) (grave 24,102, square 86), Nightingale’s senior ally and mentor in pushing through sanitary reforms, or Troopers John Withers (served as John Brooks, 1823-1911) (grave 27,508, square 95) or Henry George Wickham (1836-1892) (grave 12,587, square 58; common grave), two of the Six Hundred, have sailed in her?

After the war, Edwin Fox made her first voyage to the Southern Ocean, arriving in Melbourne on 28 May 1856. In 1858 she was chartered to transport convicts to Fremantle. From 1858-1872 she sailed between England and the East with a range of cargoes including trips to India carrying pale ale, earning her the nickname of ‘Booze Barge’, and as a troop ship again, making several voyages from the UK to Bombay. The return voyages were with casualties, many dying en route.

In 1863 she was sold in London, and in 1873 she was chartered by Shaw Savill to ferry immigrants to New Zealand, carrying in all 751 such passengers in 4 voyages. However, by the 1880s steam was taking over from sail and Edwin Fox was fitted out as a freezer hulk. She was towed to Picton, on South Island, on 12 January 1897, initially for use in freezing mutton. Later used as a coal hulk, she then lay abandoned for some 40 years. Fortunately her hull is now preserved in dry dock, where her lines, the remains of her ‘coppering’, and much else can be admired. She is said to be the world’s oldest surviving merchant ship. See: http://www.edwinfoxsociety.com/index.html for more information.
In the early hours of 17 July 1944 a V1 ‘Doodlebug’ flying bomb landed atop the hill at the apex of the cemetery, badly damaging the crematory and chapel. Sexton Keith Lucas has recently discovered plans from the architect Alwyn Underdown, RIBA to rebuild the Dissenters’ Chapel that date from 1946. The proposal was to replace the building with one of a similar design, and his drawings record the form of Tite’s Gothic Chapel and the vaults beneath.

Unfortunately, the plans were never used: the remains of the chapel were pulled down and the present crematorium built in 1955 to a more modern design by the same architect. Nonetheless, the plans show that the catacombs of the Dissenters’ Chapel were preserved, although the burial records suggest that these were never as popular as the Anglican Catacombs, with just a handful of the 40 bays holding coffins.

Exploration of the remains of the Dissenters’ Catacombs has revealed a rusty bier in a disused bay. It is clear that the iron trolley has wheels designed to run on a narrow-gauge railway track! The wheels are just over 1 metre apart between flanges, indicating a continental design. Two metal handles were obviously handholds for use whilst pushing the trolley. The top of the deck has rollers to ease the loading of a coffin. In the middle is a sliding ‘tongue’ that was driven by a windlass on the left rear side, a ram for pushing a coffin off the trolley. The size and weight of the trolley would have ensured that it was very stable when in use.

The legal principles of modern cremation were established with the first crematorium in Britain, built at Woking in 1885. The crematorium at Norwood was designed in 1914 and incorporated the latest technology. The first cremator was installed by Toisoul, Fradet, et Cie of Paris, a device described in the British Medical Journal of 21 January 1905:

‘Various forms of furnaces are used in the different crematoria in this country, which now number nearly a dozen. At Woking the Gorini system is in use, as in Italy; and at Manchester and Hull a form of the Siemens regenerator furnace, which is in vogue in
Germany. As the installation at Leeds is the first of its kind in this country, a brief description of the furnace will be of interest. It has been put up by Messrs. Toisoul, Fradet, et Cie, who are the patentees.

The Toisoul, Fradet cremator consisted of a low metal-skinned chamber on the ground floor of a ‘crematory’ built on a paved area to the west of the Dissenters’ Chapel. A large ‘regenerator’ (a type of heat exchanger) was constructed in the Catacombs beneath the Crematory. The BMJ article continues:

‘The incinerating chamber is vault-shaped, built of brick, and has two grooves in the floor in which the projections of the introducer slide. At the far end are the gas burners, eighteen in number, and on the Bunsen system. The gas is conveyed by a large main, and, in addition to the general control in the supply of gas to the furnace, each burner has its own regulating tap. At the sides of the furnace hot air can be supplied in graduated amount from the regenerator, a system of pipes, so arranged under the furnace, and in relation with its flue, that the heat from the furnace is employed to heat the air entering in this way.

‘The introducer consists of a trolley which runs on rails and carries the coffin from the chapel, and by a special arrangement of projecting rails places it with precision in the incinerating chamber. The tray on which the coffin rests is made of sheet iron. At the junction of the flue with the chimney is a large pilot gas-turner to secure an upward draught before the furnace is lighted. It is claimed that during the process the temperature can be regulated to a nicety by the amount of gas supplied, by the use of dampers, and by varying the supply of hot air from the regenerator; and it is guaranteed that, starting with

Norwood: Crematory and Dissenters’ Chapel, 1915

Norwood: Interior of the Crematory, 1915
the furnace cold, a body may be reduced to ash within five hours, with consumption of 10,000 cubic feet of gas.’

The cemetery office at Norwood keeps a register of cremations; not only does it list the details of the deceased and the certifying authority, but it also records the amount of gas used. It seems that if the furnace was in continuous use it would mainly use ‘regenerated’ hot air, requiring only 1,500-2,000 cubic feet of gas per cremation. A separate register recorded the amount of smoke produced.

Although the Toisoul, Fradet device was efficient, more capacity was needed and the South Metropolitan Cemetery (SMC) Company Secretary, Mr Arthur Charles Lockwood, designed an improved furnace, based on a steel-ribbed brick chamber with a vertically-sliding square door. It featured a separate tray below the chamber for the tidy removal of cremated remains, and had burners the whole length of the chamber. This compact design was installed in the catacombs besides the original Bramah (!) hydraulic catafalque. Ironically this catafalque, the existence of which has been largely forgotten, thus had much greater use in the end than that in the Episcopal Chapel.

The SMC used the catafalque inside the Dissenters’ Chapel to discreetly lower the coffin from sight of the mourners to the cremation furnace. This showed great sensitivity, as rival crematoria had designs that required the coffin to be placed directly onto rollers that led straight towards the furnace. Such unsubtle methods are probably what inspired the poem *The Song of the Strange Ascetic*.

*If I had been a heathen,  
I'd have piled my pyre on high.  
And in a great red whirlwind  
Gone roaring to the sky.  
But Higgins is a Heathen,  
And a richer man than I;  
And they put him in an oven,  
Just as if he were a pie.*

The Song of the Strange Ascetic *(G K Chesterton, 1913)*

The preserved engineering drawings reveal that the loading doors and rails inside Lockwood’s furnace were 3’ 4" above floor level, matching the height of the trolley that remains in the Catacombs. So there we have it: the rusty bier was an ‘introducer’ for the 1916 Lockwood cremator that ran on a narrow gauge railway in the Catacombs. This discovery now explains the mysterious dashed lines drawn on plans of the Catacombs: the dashed lines indicate the route of the tracks! Engineering drawings show the Lockwood design had been improved by Young & Co, and a second cremator had been installed by the early 1930s. Underdown’s 1946 plans called for the Bramah catafalque to be relocated further back towards the chimney on the south wall. The then extant ‘marshalling yard’, with perhaps 90 feet of track, would be slightly extended to carry coffins from the catafalque to two furnaces inside the catacombs. The original Toisoul, Fradet cremator would be removed from the crematory hall, which would become a smaller ‘family hall’ with pews for services.

A new electro-hydraulic Collis lift was to sit in a turntable to raise and lower a second catafalque into this hall, and a third furnace was to be installed in the catacombs. However, it took some years to implement these plans, with the third cremator being replaced by a Radiant Heating Ltd. model in 1956. Incorporating remote controls and electric blowers for safety and efficiency, it became the main cremator in use.
Between 1968 and 1971 both Lockwood cremators were removed, the Bramah coffin lift demolished, and a ‘Diamond’ cremator installed by J G Shelton & Co. to work alongside the Radiant. More recently, the catacombs were fitted with more efficient equipment, including a state of the art furnace and an air blast cooler to clean the exhaust fumes (see FOWNC Newsletters 64 and 67). However, the Collis electro-mechanical lift of 1955 remains in place to lower the catafalque from the main hall. It still functions, albeit noisily, but is limited to bodies of no more than 20 stone. A spare wooden catafalque top with its rollers is also stored in one of the vaults. Could this have been removed from the original Bramah coffin lift?

There is an article about the Toisoul, Fradet cremator installed at Leeds in the Undertaker’s Journal 1905: 6. There is also a description of this cremator in Resurgam 1988; 41: 1519. In a curious twist to the tale, we have discovered that the first western cremator in Asia was a similar Toisoul, Fradet furnace that was installed in Calcutta (1903). It has not been used since 1980, but recently the Christian Burial Board of Kolkata announced plans to restore it as a working heritage crematorium.

Forthcoming FOWNC Events
September – December 2010

General tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month, starting at the cemetery main gate off Norwood Road (5 September and 3 October at 14.30, 7 November and 5 December at 11.00) and lasting for 1½-2 hours. There is no formal charge, but we welcome donations of £1 per person (£0.50 concessions) towards conservation projects.

Sunday 19 September: Open House London
For this London-wide free event, there will be tours of the cemetery starting at the main gate at 14.00, 14.30 and 15.00, each lasting 1½ hours and finishing at the Greek Chapel, which will be open for viewing. The FOWNC bookstall will be on display. Volunteers to help will be most welcome!

Autumn Lectures
Talks will be held at Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way (off Norwood Road), SE27 (enter by second door on right in Imdiston Road), starting at 14.30. There is no formal charge, but we welcome donations of £1 per person.
Saturday 16 October: AGM and Lecture - The London Parks and Gardens Trust - Chris Sumner

Following the AGM, which starts at 14.30, our speaker (ex-Chair of the London Parks & Gardens Trust, and currently chair of the Conservation and Planning Committee) will be explaining the work of the LPGT. The Trust maintain an inventory of nearly 2,500 parks, gardens, squares, churchyards, cemeteries and other historic green spaces across London. Amongst other things, LPGT organise the annual London Open Garden Squares Weekend, which we participated in this year in June, and also has a programme of additional events.

Saturday 20 November: Lecture - John Overs: A Dickens Protégé - Michael Slater

Michael Slater is Emeritus Professor of Victorian Literature at Birkbeck College and is the author of acclaimed biographies of Charles Dickens and Douglas Jerrold. The poet John Overs (1808-1844) is buried in a common grave at Norwood (grave 576, square 8). There is of course no headstone remaining to mark the grave.

Other Forthcoming Events

Saturday 25 September, 10.00-17.00: Lambeth Archives Open Day

Minet Library, 52 Knatchbull Road, SE5. The theme this year is Screen Lambeth, and will range from home movies to the big films that were shot on location in Lambeth and the social life of cinema-going. The FOWNC bookstall will be present: volunteers please!

Saturday 9 October, 19.30: Music at the Crystal Palace: The Story of Sir August Manns

St Bartholomew’s Church, Westwood Hill, Sydenham, London SE26. Narrated by Leon Conrad as August Manns, music performed by Greg Tassell (tenor) and Gary Branch (piano). Tickets £10 (£8 concessions) to include glass of wine from The Secretary, Norwood Society, 38 South Vale, SE19 3BA (cheques payable to The Norwood Society, enclose SAE) or from The Kirkdale Bookshop, 272 Kirkdale, London SE26 4RS.

Tuesday 19 October, 10.00: Lambeth Celebrating Age Festival

Nettlefold Lower Hall, Norwood High Street, London SE27. FOWNC Secretary Jill Dudman will be giving a talk about the cemetery and its notables as a part of this month-long festival.
Only the base remains of this mausoleum at the other end of the path leading from the mausoleum featured in this column in January. We have no photograph of the missing mausoleum. However, we now know that the surviving mausoleum is owned and maintained by descendants of Charles Beyer (c. 1846-1930), corset manufacturer, of Tewkesbury Lodge, Forest Hill. CB corsets were ‘as easy fitting as a perfectly cut kid glove, with a complete absence of pressure upon the respiratory organs’! More about the Beyer family anon.