

# Friends of West Norwood CEMETERY

Newsletter No. 78 – September 2013

Free to members

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## Chairman's Report

Bob Flanagan

A lot has happened in the cemetery this summer. Firstly, in June HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG made a welcome return visit specifically to visit the Catacombs. In July the *Curious* art trail and associated events took centre stage, and lastly the long-delayed next phase of the roadway and drainage works has commenced with excavations on Church Road. Added to this the cemetery staff and our volunteer groups have worked very hard to cope with the abnormal vegetation growth that has occurred thanks to the late, cold Spring and hot Summer.

In contrast, there has been little progress as regards the planned co-ordinated approach to the future of the cemetery whilst the Council grapples with budget cuts and internal restructuring. Hence no HLF bid, Consistory Court petition, grave re-use, etc., for the foreseeable future. The only immediate benefit of the new relationship with Lambeth is a willingness for us to undertake monument conservation works, hence we have decided to spend some of the funds that we have hoarded in



*Restored memorial to  
William Knight (grave  
29,020, square 94)*

anticipation of a lottery bid. In addition to providing ‘top-up’ funds to restore the Knight memorial (see above and Newsletter 76, January 2013), we have organised the partial restoration of the memorial to Sir Thomas Stevenson (grave 26,543, square 95) with funds provided by the British Academy of Forensic Sciences and support from his family.



*Partially restored memorial to Sir Thomas Stevenson*

We had hoped that the missing top of the memorial would be found in the grave, but this proved not to be the case. We are unsure what more to do in the absence of a photo or drawing of the original. No such dilemma with the other restorations to tie in with the celebrations to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ‘Tube’ (see page 4), the cleaning and straightening of the headstone to locomotive designer Robert Francis Fairlie (1831–1885; grave 20,788, square 22) (see

Newsletter 41, May 2001), and also that to Sir Charles Ernest Tritton (1845–1918; grave 26,669, square 19), Conservative MP for Norwood 1892–1906. This latter project is in sympathy with the campaign launched recently by the Friends of Brockwell Park to restore the Clocktower that Sir Charles donated to the Park in 1897.

A further long-term project is the partial restoration of the memorial to architect Arthur Beresford Pite (1861–1934; grave 31,852, square 23) and that on the adjacent family plot. Funding towards this restoration has been promised by the Heritage of London Trust and we remain grateful to Diana Beattie and her team for doing their best to promote the interests of the cemetery and of FOWNC by not only supporting



*The Mayor of Lambeth, Cllr Mark Bennett, Nicholas Long, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, and the Deputy Lieutenant of Lambeth, Col Piers Storie-Pugh at Norwood, June 2013*

individual projects, but also by sponsoring visits such as that of HRH the Duke of Gloucester referred to above that all help to keep the cemetery in the public eye.

And finally, an acknowledgement of the pivotal role of Cllr John Whelan in organising the rescue of the cemetery archives from their entombment in the basement of the Nettlefold Hall, where their survival was threatened not only by asbestos dust and damp, but also by the squatters who occupied part of the building in June. The cemetery railings were not so lucky, however, the squatters having forced a way through into the cemetery in order to get water. Oh well, they at least can be repaired.



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## NFCF AGM 2013 ~ York Cemetery

Nicholas Long

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Saturday 8 June 2013 was a gloriously sunny day in York and was ideal for showing the charms of York Cemetery, where the Friends of the cemetery were hosts for the 2013 National Federation of Cemetery Friends AGM. The organisation of the day was flawless and the Friends must be congratulated for their superb hosting.

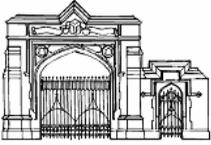


The 24 acres of York Cemetery lie to the south of the city centre. In parallel with Norwood it opened in 1837 (laid out by J.P. Pritchett) and the cemetery company was defunct by 1966. Unlike Norwood, which was compulsorily acquired by Lambeth Council, York lingered until the York Cemetery Trust purchased it in 1987. The Friends work with the Trust to maintain the cemetery and the results are impressive, the wilderness that was inherited having been tamed

and sensibly managed with due respect to wildlife. At purchase the Trust took responsibility for the then derelict chapel (also by Pritchett) in the Greek Revival style, Listed Grade II\*, and which they have restored so that today it looks to be in excellent repair and can be used for a variety of purposes.

Following a warm welcome from the Chairman of the Friends of York Cemetery, Clive Dawson, Dr Julie Rugg of York University spoke about recent research into patterns of churchyard burials in Yorkshire and Dr Richard Keasing, Chairman of York Cemetery Trust, described recent work to install a new heating system in the chapel and the laying of a new floor. The latter has taken the Trust into territory familiar to FOWNC members because the Diocese of York has pointed out that no Faculty (the chapel being consecrated) was obtained prior to commencement of the works and a Petition for a Confirmatory Faculty is now required. The costs are significant and Dr Keasing provided a warning to other Friends' groups about the perils of undertaking work on consecrated ground. There was a suggestion the Diocese were being unreasonable, but when reminded of the Norwood experience those attending understood more of the context of Faculty administration and its benefits.

The afternoon AGM was an exercise in good governance with ample demonstration of the good health of the NFCF and the dedication of those running the organisation.



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# Charles Pearson: Underground 150

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Bob Flanagan

On 9 January 1863 the world's first public underground railway train left Paddington station to make its inaugural journey to Farringdon. The line was built and financed by the Metropolitan Railway, a company formed in 1854 to undertake the project to link the mainline stations at Paddington, Euston, and King's Cross with the City. The line was a huge success with 26,000 passengers using the railway each day in its first six months.

On a very cold 9/10 January 2013 a train pulled by restored Metropolitan Railway 0-4-4T No. 1 (built 1898) made a commemorative journey amidst much publicity, none of the original engines, broad gauge locomotives provided by the Great Western Railway, either having survived, or being able to run on the present network. That the line was built was largely due to the vision of Charles Pearson (1794–1862), who campaigned to improve London's transport system from 1845. His memorial at Norwood, where he lies in the vault of his son-in-law, Sir Thomas Gabriel (1811–1891), Lord Mayor of London 1866–7 (grave 5,534, square 52) survives intact (see Newsletter 76, January 2013), and we have arranged for it to be cleaned as a contribution to *Underground 150*. As a further contribution to the celebrations we have also arranged for the memorial to the well-known engineer J.H. Greathead to be renovated.



*The Underground 150 Anniversary train at Olympia*



*James Henry Greathead  
(1844–1896)*

Greathead, who was born in Grahamstown, Cape Colony, was a pupil of P.W. Barlow (1809–1885). As contractor for the Tower Subway (1869) he designed his eponymous tunnelling shield. He was resident engineer to the Hammersmith and Richmond extension of the Metropolitan District Railway (1873–7) and engineer to the City and South London Railway (1886), the world's first underground electric railway. The Greathead shield was also used in boring the Blackwall Tunnel and indeed its modern derivative is busy boring the Crossrail tunnels. Greathead was also engineer with Sir Douglas Fox (1840–1921) to the Liverpool Overhead Railway (1889–93). He died at Ravenscraig, Leigham Court Road, Streatham, on 21 October 1896 and was buried at Norwood on 24 October,

aged 52 (grave 27,103, square 83). More details of his life and work are to be found in FOWNC Newsletters 30 (September 1997) and 53 (May 2005).



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## Conservation Report

Colin Fenn

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Every month for the last three years, a dozen or so FOWNC volunteers have cleared vegetation and cleaned tombs in the cemetery. Our efforts complement those of the groundsmen and the community payback teams who battle the grass and heavy scrub. We have adapted our approach to fit in better with nature's cycles, with vegetation clearance in the cold weather and lighter cleaning/trimming activities during the spring/summer.



*Memorials of H.S. Leifchild (left) and of other family members*

Members will see the results of our efforts around Doulton Path, Ship Path, and Sopwith Path, where we have been keeping the brush away from monuments and ensuring that sightlines to important groups of monuments remain clear. One headstone revealed was that of Henry Stormonth Leifchild (1823–1884; grave 20,386, square 40). He designed his own monument that features a delightful outline of a woman in mourning delineated in lead. Our work also revealed the Calvary Cross on the grave of Robert Francis Cooke (1816–1891; grave 24,183, square 120), Darwin's publisher in partnership with his cousin John Murray III. The cross on the neighbouring Roberts family plot (grave 24,743) was found to be leaning dangerously, but fortunately the cemetery management intervened on Health & Safety grounds and arranged for it to be reset.

This year the long, cold spring, and the hot May and June, saw the grass shoot up to waist height in weeks, along with growth spurts from brambles and ivy. Several modern headstones fell, including the replacement memorial to Christian Augustus Siebe, inventor of the closed diving helmet (grave 4,522, square 24; see Newsletter 27, September 1996) and that of Demetrious Capetenakis (grave 39, 710, square 29; Greek Cemetery). The Grade II listed tomb of Thomas Letts (grave 249, square 33) has also started to lean alarmingly and will need careful monitoring and repair, whilst the Clark obelisk (grave 4,994, square 36) by Alexander MacDonald (see Newsletter 73, January 2012) next to Sir Henry Doulton's mausoleum is also showing signs of further settlement. Finally, cracks are appearing in the south perimeter wall (square 45).



*Graves of R.F. Cooke and others (sq 120)*

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# The McArthur Brothers - Woollen Merchants

Bob Flanagan

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Scrub clearance in 2011 revealed the fine gravestone of Sir William McArthur, woollen merchant, Liberal MP for Lambeth (1868–1885), and Lord Mayor of London (1880), one of at least 14 Lord Mayors buried at Norwood. William's grave lies next to the imposing mausoleum of his brother Alexander McArthur, woollen merchant and MP for Leicester (1874–1892). Alexander's brother-in-law, the Wesleyan minister and writer William Gibson (1832–1894) lies in an adjacent grave.

William McArthur was born at Malin, Co. Donegal, on 6 July 1809, the fifth child and second son of John McArthur (–1840) and Sarah, *née* Finlay (–1861). His father was a Scots-Irish farmer who had converted to Methodism in the 1790s and became an itinerant preacher. William attended schools in Stranorlar and Newtown Stewart, and aged 12 was apprenticed to a Methodist woollen draper in Enniskillen. Subsequently he became clerk to a Methodist merchant in Lurgan, and then a travelling agent for a Dublin woollen draper. In 1831 he and John Cather set up a woollens export business in Londonderry, McArthur taking control when Cather left for Canada in 1835.

*W. and A. McArthur & Co.*

William's younger brother Alexander (b. Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, 10 March 1814) first served an apprenticeship with a merchant in Omagh. In 1842 he arrived in Sydney, started business with a consignment from his brother, and became a partner of William Little and James H. Atkinson. He was a devout Methodist and in 1843 was elected to the committee of the Wesleyan Auxiliary Missionary Society of New South Wales. He was also treasurer of the Young Men's Christian Association of Sydney, and a committee member of the Benevolent Asylum and the New South Wales Auxiliary Bible Society.

Alexander returned to Ireland in 1848 and the brothers formed W. and A. McArthur & Co. By 1851 Alexander was back in Australia. Branches of the firm were established in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Auckland to deal in textiles and Australasian exports. With the 1851 gold rush they made enormous profits from the great demand for durable woollens and from exporting gold. Australian success led them to open a London office in 1854. After this, Alexander became a member of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, took a share in the Australian Joint Stock Bank, and became a director of several building societies, insurance companies and mining companies. He also became a magistrate.

In June 1859 Alexander was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly for Newtown. After being re-elected in December 1860, he resigned in June 1861 when he was appointed to the New South Wales Legislative Council. In 1863 he went to England to take over the London business and as a result vacated his seat through absence in October 1865. In London he became a JP for Surrey and Deputy Lieutenant for the City of London. A Fellow of the Imperial Institute and of the Royal Geographical Society (1863), a member of the Royal Colonial Institute (1869), and of the Victoria Institute and the British Association, he was also a member of the first London School Board, 1870–3.

Alexander was elected Liberal MP for Leicester in 1874. His views were similar to those of the famous Liberal MP and founder of a political dynasty Joseph Chamberlain.<sup>1</sup> Thus, he promoted temperance and reform of the land laws. He also advocated the annexation of Fiji and Home Rule for Ireland. He retired from parliament in 1892.

Alexander had married Maria Bowden Boyce in August 1853 at Toxteth Park, Sydney. She was one of the four daughters of William Binnington Boyce, a prominent Methodist missionary.<sup>2</sup>

Alexander and Maria had six sons and two daughters. One son, William Alexander McArthur (1857–1923), also became an MP. Alexander McArthur snr lived at Raleigh Hall, Brixton Hill in the 1880s. He died at Northcotes, West Hill, Sydenham, on 1 August 1909, age 95. The grave at Norwood had been purchased originally in 1872 and also contains the remains of Alexander (d. 1880), Frank Dudley (d. 1908), and Maria Bowden McArthur (d. 1912).

#### *Sir William McArthur*

In 1843 William married Marianne (28 February 1817–13 April 1889), the only child of Archibald McElwaine, an Ulster businessman and Methodist. They had no children and from the 1850s Marianne was a semi-invalid and often lived apart from her husband. William moved to London in 1857 and by the mid-1860s the McArthur brothers had extended their activity into banking and insurance, and they sat on the boards of a number of other firms dealing in colonial and foreign investments. William had been elected to



*Square 41: Mausoleum of Alexander (grave 13,606) and monument to Sir William (grave 22,050) McArthur*

<sup>1</sup> The Rt Hon Joseph (Joe) Chamberlain (1836–1914), father of Foreign Secretary the Rt Hon Sir Joseph Austen Chamberlain KG (1863–1937) and of Prime Minister the Rt Hon Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940), was born in Camberwell to a successful shoemaker, also Joseph (1796–1874). His aunt Martha Chamberlain (1794–1866) had married woodscrew manufacturer John Sutton Nettlefold (1792–1866). After serving an apprenticeship as a cordwainer (shoemaker), Joe eventually became a partner in his uncle's firm in Birmingham that had opened in 1854, which became known as Nettlefold and Chamberlain. His cousin and successor in the firm was Frederick Nettlefold (1833–1913) (grave 19,602, square 37; monument destroyed).

<sup>2</sup> Boyce, William Binnington (1804–1889) by S.G. Cloughton. Australian Dictionary of Biography (<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/boyce-william-binnington-3036>)

the Londonderry town council in 1841 as a Conservative. It was not until 1865, however, that he became interested in a parliamentary seat. By this time he was well established in the City, had become a prominent benefactor of Methodist educational and charitable institutions, and lived in a south London suburb, Brixton Hill, amongst other wealthy nonconformist professionals and businessmen.



*Sir William McArthur*

William served as Sheriff of London and Middlesex in 1867 and was elected MP for Lambeth in 1868. He held this seat, which included Brixton Hill, until 1885. As one of the most prominent (and wealthy) Methodist laymen of the time, he played a considerable role in shaping the Methodist political agenda. For McArthur, the most compelling item on this agenda was the furtherance of Methodist missionary enterprise, especially in the south Pacific. Here he was strongly influenced by Alexander and his Australian Methodist friends and relatives.

William had helped to promote, as did many nonconformist Liberals, causes that were often critical of colonial administration (the British and Foreign Anti-Slave Society, the Aborigines' Protection Society, the Anglo-Oriental Society for Suppression of the Opium Trade, and J. S. Mill's Jamaica Committee to prosecute Governor Eyre). He campaigned in the early 1870s for the annexation of the Fiji Islands, where there was a well-developed Methodist missionary presence opposed to the traditions of enforced labour and slavery then prevalent. This idea was resisted vigorously by Gladstone, but McArthur triumphed ultimately when Disraeli's government took sovereignty of the islands in 1874.

William was elected alderman for the City ward of Coleman Street in 1872, and served on committees concerned with sewerage, the police, gas and water, and various charities. He was a founding member of the London chamber of commerce (1881), and supported the campaigns of the Metropolitan Free Bridges Association (to abolish tolls) and the Public Museums and Free Libraries Association. He also helped promote the Central Association for Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sundays and the National Association for Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and supported Methodist charities such as the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Methodist Chapel Building Fund. From 1872 until his death he was a lay representative to both the English and Irish Wesleyan conferences.

#### *Lord Mayor of London*

William became Lord Mayor of London 1880 and set a pious tone at Mansion House. He banned alcohol, card playing, and dancing, and instead encouraged prayer meetings. At the end of his year in office Gladstone created him KCMG (an award commonly associated with colonial service), rather than bestow the baronetcy that many former Lord Mayors received, an apparent slight which William and his friends resented. However, his move to a large house at 79 Holland Park, the grandness of his style, his foreign travel, and his increasing absence from the House of Commons made him vulnerable in Lambeth. His failure in 1883 to vote for the Affirmation Bill, which would have allowed

the atheist Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891) to take his seat in the Commons, resulted in a deputation from his constituents demanding that he resign his seat.

In the event William chose not to stand in the (realigned) Lambeth constituency in the 1885 general election. However, nonconformists in the newly created east Kent district of Newington West invited him to stand, but here too there was a radical challenge that split the Liberal vote and gave the seat to a Tory, with William coming in third.

William was humiliated by this reverse, abandoned Gladstone over Home Rule for Ireland and turned to the business of arranging and rearranging the many charitable legacies in his will. He remained in robust health until his sudden death from heart failure on 16 November 1887, *en route* on the London Underground to a City meeting. He was buried at Norwood in a grave purchased on 18 November by his brother Alexander. The 9' x 4' grave cost £18 and contains the remains of Sir William himself, his wife Marianne, his sister Rosanna Hughes (1806/7–1896), widow of the Rev James Hughes, a further sister Eliza McMillan (1818–1908), and the cremated remains of her daughter Maria McMillan (1854–1945).

Eliza had married Gibson McMillan (1811–1882), a Wesleyan minister, who died and is buried at Uitenhage in South Africa. He is also commemorated on the McArthur monument at Norwood. Their son Sir William McMillan was a noted Australian politician and merchant.<sup>3</sup> He went to Australia to work for McArthur Brothers in 1869. His second wife was Helen Maria O'Reilly, née Gibson (–1937), granddaughter of Rev W.B. Boyce. McMillan died on 21 December 1926 and was buried in Waverley Cemetery, Sydney.

William McArthur left almost £500,000 (some £25 million in today's money), more than £150,000 of which he left to Methodist charities. In April 2012 the then BA chief executive, Willie Walsh, unveiled a Blue Plaque to him in Londonderry, somewhat ironically on a pub (<http://www.ulsterhistory.co.uk/mcarthurwilliam.htm>). One wonders what Sir William and his Methodist relations would have made of that...



*Sir William McArthur's gravestone*

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<sup>3</sup> McMillan, Sir William (1850–1926) by A.W. Martin (Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcmillan-sir-william-1105>)

*Rev William Gibson (1832–1894)*

Just behind the McArthur graves is the tomb of the Wesleyan minister and writer William Gibson (grave 13,459, square 41). Gibson lived in Paris at 78 Boulevard de Versailles, St Cloud, but died suddenly at the home of his brother-in-law Alexander McArthur, Westbrook Hay, Boxmoor, near St Albans, on 17 August 1894.

Their father-in-law William Binnington Boyce hailed from Beverley and served as a Wesleyan missionary in Africa 1830–43 before going to Australia (1846). He became General Superintendent of Wesleyan Missions in New South Wales and the other Australian Colonies and was one of the founders of the University of Sydney (1850). He returned to England in 1859 and was general secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London 1858–76. He had married Maria, daughter of James Bowden, a Hull merchant, in 1834. She died at Tranby, Brixton on 18 October 1871. The burial of Maria at Norwood may thus be the reason the McArthur brothers in time purchased family plots adjacent to the Boyce grave. W.B. Boyce himself retired to Sydney in 1876 and died there on 8 March 1889. He is buried in the Wesleyan section of Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery, but is nevertheless commemorated on the Boyce tomb at Norwood.



*Norwood: Boyce family grave*



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## *Curious 2013*

Colin Fenn

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June brought welcome sunshine to the opening of the 2013 *Curious* Art Trail. Following the success of the 2012 event, curator Jane Millar again invited 20 artists to create works inspired by the cemetery and its history. The resulting exhibits included paintings, ceramics, poetry, sound, a vegetable plot, and even a flower theatre.

The trail opened on 21 June with an evening preview, thanks to the cemetery staff and FOWNC volunteers who had cleared access to a number of mausolea. More than 300 people attended, and afterwards many assembled at the nearby *Portico Gallery* to toast the *Curious* artists, sponsors, and supporters with Australian wine, inspired by James Busby (grave 13,335, square 86), who first introduced the vine to Australia (see Newsletters 25, January 1996 and 48, September 2003). The *Cemetery Carousel* developed for last year's events (see Newsletter 75, September 2012) was re-homed inside the gallery, casting memorial-shaped shadows around the walls.

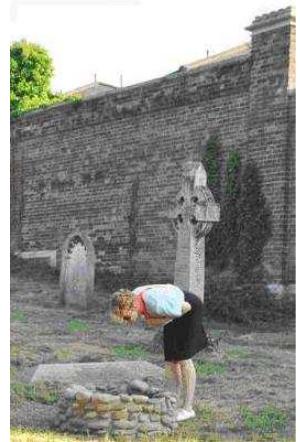
A theme elaborated by several artists this year was the use of painted or printed works placed over the doorways or windows of boarded-up mausolea. Some other highlights included Jane Wildgoose's collection that turned the interior of the Maddick mausoleum into a private museum, with additional items by Rozanne Hawksley; Jane Brockbank's flower theatre inspired by a Victorian auricula display, looking like a bathing hut from outside, but illuminating a sequence of flowers inside; wire probes by Steve Ounanian that could be inserted into the soil to 'listen' to music or speech from below; a 'well' that gave the illusion of great depth, placed near to Celtic Cross marking the grave Robert Mallet (grave 11,023, square 109, who incidentally designed the well for the Guinness Brewery in Dublin); and Gail Dickerson marking Sir Henry Bessemer's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday with pools of molten 'gold' around his gravestone.

On 6 July the cemetery again stayed open late for an evening of performances led by storyteller Vanessa Wolf and songwriter Nigel of Bermondsey. It was a captivating celebration of the living and the dead through songs and poetry by London Dreamtime and local performers. As the dusk fell the atmosphere grew as about 100 people sat in the glow of the candlelit tombs of the Greek necropolis.



Jane Ward: Digital Collage (*doorway of Longsdon Mausoleum*)

Victorian bier. Over £170 was raised in donations for the Norwood Foodbank. Closing the afternoon, historian Ruth Richardson recounted the story of the Enon Chapel (see Newsletter 68, May 2010) and placed a wreath at the mass grave of the remains that were



Ania Tomaszewska-Nelson: *The Well*

On 7 July, some of the artists explained their inspirations to visitors on walks and talks. Poet Chris McCabe researched a dozen of Norwood's poets, engraving extracts from their poems on pebbles placed near their plots. He later led an impromptu tour of the stones, explaining the story behind his discoveries and using his perspective as poetry librarian at the South Bank to discuss the merits (or otherwise!) of the 'Norwood poets'. Chris has produced a limited edition book of the stones, entitled *Clotted Sun* after a piece by Demetrious Capetenakis (but see Report, page 5).

On 21 July a *Grand Picnic for the Common Dead* encouraged families to enjoy an afternoon of music, poetry, talks, and Victorian food in the SE corner of the cemetery, an area that contains many thousands of burials in common graves. The centrepiece was a large coffin-shaped cake, iced to look like wood with gold Smarties as brass studs, transported to the picnic on the cemetery's

removed from the chapel to Norwood for burial in 1848. My recent research has located the site of the plot (grave 1,986, square 44), an area now covered with common graves. We plan to publish more details of the Enon Chapel burials at a later date.

During July, Archimandrite Theonas of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St Sophia held the first memorial service for some years at the Greek Chapel. He was accompanied by the Greek Ambassador and by trustees of the Cathedral. They were pleased with both the art exhibits and the improved grounds maintenance of the Orthodox enclosure.

Curious has inspired artists to connect with the cemetery's history and brought an opportunity to showcase their work in unusual surroundings. For us as a Friends group, it has proved an exciting – albeit time consuming – exercise. Even though the artists generously gave their time for free, there was a significant budget for artists' materials, transport costs, and curatorial costs to be managed by FOWNC, as well as handling the administration and reporting that goes with a grant affecting so many 'suppliers'. We used some of the funding to commission roof repairs to the Maddick mausoleum, to repair some paths, and to fund a few other infrastructure upgrades to allow the events to take place and at the same time leave a useful legacy for the future.

Thanks are due to the artists and many others including the businesses that gave assistance: Mylands paints, Portico Gallery, Okido (map design), the Floral Hall (Enon wreath), the Blackbird Bakery and the Kindred Bakery (coffin cake), Birchall (tea), Vitacress (watercress soup, commemorating Eliza James, *The Watercress Queen*; grave 33,533, square 105, see Newsletter 65, May 2009), to St Lukes church for use of their kitchen, the Mayor's Outer London Fund for sponsorship, and last but not least to the cemetery management for facilitating the event. We would welcome any feedback – please email: [vicechairman@fownc.org](mailto:vicechairman@fownc.org).



*The coffin cake on the cemetery bier  
(artist-curator Jane Millar 2<sup>nd</sup> from right)*



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## Bessemer 200 – Crucible of Fire

John White

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To mark the bicentenary of the birth of Sir Henry Bessemer (grave 27,463, square 99), the British Schools Museum at Hitchin, Hertfordshire this summer presented an excellent small exhibition about his life and achievements. This consisted of several storyboards with numerous original artefacts and two PC screen displays, and focused on Bessemer as 'the local hero with the global impact' and 'the father of the steel industry'.



*Price 1/- Bessemer's Gold Paint Price 1/-*

*Complete with brush*

*Applicable for all ornamental gilding,  
decorative and illuminating purposes*

*Manufactured by Winsor and Newton Ltd,  
London, England*

Henry Bessemer, the eldest of five children, was born on 19 January 1813 at Chalton, a small village about a mile from the museum. As a boy, his father encouraged his interest in engineering and mechanics. The Bessemers moved to Clerkenwell when Henry was 17 and there he set up a workshop. Later he moved to Highgate. By the 1860s he was a successful entrepreneur, and was married to Ann with several children, Elizabeth, Frances, who died aged 2, Henry, and Alfred George. In the early years, Ann contributed to some of her husband's ideas.

Bessemer's first real success was to devise a cheap way of making bronze powder for paint for gilding decorations, and an original box of 'gold' paint (loaned by a member of the Crystal Palace Foundation) was on display. This consisted of a container of paint, a small oblong glass bowl, a spatula, and a brush. The wording on the box was of course in 'gold' lettering. At

that time, bronze paint was manufactured only in Germany and was expensive. Bessemer went there to learn about the process and, on his return improved upon it and reduced the cost, confining knowledge of his method to close family members.

The exhibition amply covered Bessemer's best known invention, the process whereby pig iron could be simply converted into high quality steel. Another interesting artefact on display was a carved panel and newel post from the saloon of *SS Bessemer*. The saloon was approximately 60 feet long and 30 feet wide. A copy of share certificate No. 1639, dated 13 November 1873, vouchsafed that the *Bessemer Saloon Steamboat Company Limited* had authorised capital of £250,000 in 5,000 shares of £50 each and stated: 'This is to certify that Edward James Reed Esq. CB, of Kirk Ella, near Hull, is the Proprietor of ONE SHARE numbered as above in the Bessemer Saloon Steamboat Company'.

Bessemer's intention was to build a ship in which he would not become sea-sick. The vessel had a cabin supported by gimbals that was intended to remain steady in rough weather. Bessemer patented the design in December 1869 and the ship was built at Hull in 1874. A paddle-steamer some 350 feet long, the *SS Bessemer* sailed from Dover on its maiden voyage on 8 May 1875 in clear weather, but crashed into the pier on arrival at Calais. Unfortunately, the gimbal feature made it very difficult to steer the ship and it never went to sea again. The venture was one of Bessemer's few failures.

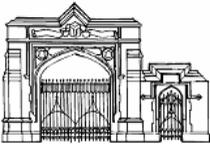
Bessemer was prolific, with some 117 patents awarded 1838–83, and was more effective in protecting his patents than some of his rivals. A summary at the exhibition listed a

remarkable number of activities, including electroplating and depositing copper, die making, work for the Stamp Office (for which Bessemer thought he was not satisfactorily rewarded), lead pencils, type casting, engine turning and printing, and glass manufacture.

Bessemer was thought of as a private and modest man. His estate at Denmark Hill was extensive and included a conservatory, grotto, and observatory. He grew exotic plants and vegetables, and kept pigs and poultry. He filled his house with paintings and sculpture. John Ruskin, the eminent Victorian art critic, was a near-neighbour.

Official acknowledgment of Bessemer's achievements came late in life: in 1879 he received a Knighthood from Queen Victoria, Fellowship of the Society of Arts, and Freedom of the City of London. His Coat of Arms, awarded by the College of Arms in 1880, was on display in the exhibition. In contrast, Bessemer received several decorations from European monarchs and His Majesty the King of the Belgians visited Denmark Hill several times.

Bessemer retired, aged 62, in 1875 although he carried on inventing. His wife, Ann, died in 1897 and Bessemer himself died on 15 March 1898, aged 85, at his home in Denmark Hill. They had been married for 64 years. The exhibition included photographs of Bessemer's house and garden on Denmark Hill, an area described as 'the Belgravia of south London' and of his grave at West Norwood Cemetery, where, as the caption put it, 'he is buried alongside other influential Victorians'. The exhibition was a fitting tribute to perhaps the most important person to be buried at Norwood.



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## Forthcoming FOWNC Events

September 2013 – January 2014

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Introductory tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month (1 September and 6 October at 14.30; 3 November, 1 December, and 5 January at 11.00) starting at the cemetery main gate off Norwood Road and lasting for 1½–2 hours. These coincide with West Norwood Feast (street markets and other town centre events, see [www.westnorwoodfeast.com](http://www.westnorwoodfeast.com)). There is no formal charge, but we welcome donations towards conservation projects. We also offer members-only tours of the Anglican catacombs (14 September and 16 November, advance booking necessary: contact Jill Dudman, details p. 16).

### **Tuesday 10 September: 19.15 – Bat Walk in the Cemetery – Iain Boulton**

Led by Lambeth Nature Conservation Officer. Bring a torch if possible. More details at: <http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/Environment/ParksGreenSpaces/WilldlifeEventsand+ActivitiesinLambeth.htm>.

### **Sunday 22 September: London Open House Weekend**

Tours will start at the cemetery main gate at 14.00, 14.30 and 15.00, and end at the Greek chapel, which will be open for viewing. The FOWNC bookstall will be present. Visit [www.openhouselondon.org.uk](http://www.openhouselondon.org.uk) or look for their booklet in libraries for details of many other places of architectural interest to see for free in London during the weekend.

Lectures 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 to help cover room hire.

**Saturday 19 October: AGM and Lecture - Monument Conservation – Ron Knee BA**

A morning spent in the cemetery with Ron Knee a couple of years ago led not only to the discovery of the rich heritage of monuments by Alexander MacDonald and his firm that survive at Norwood (see FOWNC Newsletter 73, January 2012), but also a better appreciation of the depth of Ron's knowledge about all types of monument and issues surrounding their conservation. Ron's talk, which will be preceded by our AGM, gives us an opportunity to formally pay tribute to his work at Norwood over the years, which now includes the reinstatement of the gravestone of William Knight (see page 1).

**Saturday 16 November: Lecture: Camberwell House Asylum – Dr Fiona Subotsky**

Dr Subotsky, a retired psychiatrist and Camberwell resident, is Hon Archivist of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Her research into the origins and fate of Camberwell House Lunatic Asylum (1846–1955) led to the discovery that many of those who founded and managed it are buried at Norwood, including its first Medical Superintendent, John Hayball Paul (1816–1899) – see FOWNC Newsletter 73, January 2012. The principal buildings of the asylum survive on Peckham Road; the Superintendent's House is now Southwark Register Office.

**Saturday 18 January 2014: Lecture: Alexander Parkes and Sir Henry Bessemer 200 Years On – Dr Susan Mossman**

Dr Mossman is materials science specialist at the Science Museum where a showcase about Alexander Parkes (1813–1890; grave 20,927, square 7 – monument destroyed) and his work will be displayed from the second week of December. She is also organising a study day on *Parkes, Parkesine and Celluloid* for the Plastics Historical Society on Friday 20 December at the Institute of Materials, Minerals & Mining, 1 Carlton House Terrace, SW1Y. In addition to her work on Parkes, she has lectured on the life and work of Sir Henry Bessemer who, as chance would have it, was also born in 1813.

*Other forthcoming events*

**September: Lambeth Heritage Festival**

This will include many talks, walks, workshops, exhibitions and other events across the borough. For the full brochure visit [www.lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk/home/news](http://www.lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk/home/news) or pick up a copy in Lambeth Libraries. Highlights include Ride + Stride on Saturday 14 September, organised by the Heritage of London Trust, in which walkers and cyclists are sponsored to visit as many places of worship in London as they can fit into the day, including the cemetery chapel (see [www.heritageoflondon.com](http://www.heritageoflondon.com)).

**Saturday 28 September, 10.00–17.00: Lambeth Archives Open Day**

Minet Library, 52 Knatchbull Road, SE5. This year the theme will be *1913 – Edwardian Swansong*. The period just before the outbreak of World War I was a time of great social and political change and, for those who could afford it, of extravagance. Stalls from local organisations including FOWNC will be present.

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## A Bit of Mystery – Bob Flanagan

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The destruction of the monument to Harriet Raincock (d. 1837) (grave 1, square 91) was a low point in Lambeth's management of the cemetery. Known as the *Queen of Dulwich* because of her charity work, she lived at Beech House, Dulwich Village – St Barnabas Church Hall now stands on this site. I had always thought the Grade 2 listed monument to Mrs Ann Joyce (d. 3 August 1839, aged 24) (grave 68, square 61) was perhaps the oldest surviving monument in the cemetery. However, this one in unconsecrated ground (grave 41, square 69), which commemorates Richard Fillmer of Kennington Row (d. 8 February 1839, aged 25), is even older. Is it now the oldest monument in the cemetery?



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If you would like further information about the Friends, please contact the Secretary.

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