

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery



NEWSLETTER NO 8: October 1991

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

To be presented to the AGM on 16th November 1991

It is just two years since I called a meeting in the Nettlefold Halls, West Norwood, to discuss what had been happening at the Cemetery. In November 1989 we established a working group to look at how one might try to raise funds to repair some of the finer monuments there. But Geoffrey's Manning's booklet had just been published, and showed us also, to our alarm, that some three of the 44 listed monuments had disappeared since their listing in 1981.

In March 1990 we became formally established as the Friends, and started our regular tours. Then in August, all hell broke loose: in the Cemetery, at least! Wholesale clearance, which had not taken place for several years, suddenly restarted, without any notice to us. It continued until December, and swept through the entire south side of the Cemetery, giving us no chance to record what was going before it went. Not even a visit by the London Division of English Heritage resulted in any lessening of the clearance.

We attended a Lambeth Council meeting in October 1990, where the Friends and others asked questions of the Committee chairman concerned, and received whitewashing answers. In January this year, we at last managed to raise the matter in the press. Letters to the Times were followed by feature articles in the Evening Standard, the Guardian, and Country Life, even a short feature on TV News. Meanwhile, Save Britain's Heritage took up the cry, resulting in a splendid article in the Daily Telegraph.

The Cemetery authorities reluctantly decided to consult us before undertaking further clearance, and site meetings reached agreement on what would happen in further

areas. English Heritage also pointed out to the authorities that they needed a Faculty from the Church of England for any removal of tombs in consecrated ground: virtually the whole of the Cemetery is consecrated, apart from one stretch in which non-conformists are buried, adjoining the Greek section. The authorities agreed to do no further work, while applying for a faculty. Despite this, there has been new turfing of areas near paths, but the authorities have assured us there has been, and will be, no removal of any part of any monument until a faculty for such removals has been obtained. So matters have undoubtedly improved.

RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS

1) Stevenson Mausoleum

We could hardly have anticipated so many obstacles when we offered to help restore monuments. The Stevenson mausoleum was under threat of immediate demolition, and when we raised the £630 which we were told was necessary to save it, we were told this could not be used, as the putative relatives might object to the monument being repaired! When this objection was dropped, Lambeth then told us that their experts insisted on major structural work being undertaken before the loose columns could be restored: this structural work putting the cost up from £600 to £1600. Despite this, the Heritage of London Trust and English Heritage between them generously agreed to provide the money, and I'm delighted to report that at the beginning of October, after the structural work was completed, work started on the superstructure. We are confident it will be finished before the winter, so the building which imitates the original elaborate Gothic Chapel is now safe.



Above: the tomb of Dr Mantell, as it appeared until 1987, with its original railings and cypress tree.

2) Gideon Mantell

The monument to Gideon Mantell was the next on our list. This Grade II Star listed monument fell to pieces in 1988, for reasons still in dispute, but it now lies in about twenty pieces. (Dr Mantell was the man who actually discovered the existence of the dinosaur, though as Professor Richard Owen gave it its name, it was Owen who was commemorated on stamps this August.) As Dr Mantell was so important, the Geologists' Association agreed to provide most of the money needed to restore the monument, and we are hopeful that an English Heritage grant will provide much of the rest needed. The monument was sufficiently important that the Association had a set of about ten photographs which we could use in reconstructing its original appearance, so we hope that work will also be able to start on restoring it soon.

3) Other monuments

There are of course many other monuments which need minor repairs. And we now find that the monument to Edith O'Gorman (see Newsletter 5) has started to lean, so we are getting quotes for ensuring its safety too. There are also much simpler works. For example, the cross, now flat, on the tomb of Charles Bravo (the murder victim of 1876) is steadily weathering: the name was much clearer when photographed in 1987, and it should be set upright before the name weathers completely away. Though not yet weathering, the headstone of George Jennings, a really fine lead-lettered inscription to a prominent sanitary engineer, is also on the ground, and will also start to decay, now exposed to the

elements, unless it too is set upright. So we are going to keep quite busy raising money for these purposes as well!

ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS

Notwithstanding the time necessarily spent on these campaigns, we have managed to offer our members quite a variety of interesting events, and intend to increase these over the coming year.

In addition to our monthly tours, which average about 10 visitors each time and concentrate on the listed monuments, we have also run six other tours: of prominent Victorians, of scientists and inventors, creative artists, Crystal Palace connections, as well as a special tour to view the catacombs, and another (to be annual in future) to mark the anniversary of the death of Charles Bravo.

We have had talks about the artist David Roberts, the works produced by the Doulton factories in Lambeth, and the Cattermole family of artists. We have arranged tours of Kensal Green and Camberwell Old Cemeteries, and have run a Publications Stall at the Lambeth Country Show, the Annual Meeting of the Upper Norwood Improvement Team, the Open Day at Lambeth Archives, and at Nunhead and Kensal Green Cemeteries. Indeed, it is ironic that Norwood is now the one cemetery which has so far refused to allow us to run a stall at all!

THE COMMITTEE

Thanks are due to every one of our Committee members, who have all proved their worth this year. Bob Flanagan has set up and run virtually every one of our Publications stalls. Jill Dudman's researches on Victorian scientists, and Crystal Palace worthies, have resulted in excellent tours, and sets of notes for both. David and Rosemary Comber have controlled the finances and sent out Newsletters to all our members. Margaret Jackman has produced Minutes after Committee Meetings, and run the refreshments at them: both thankless tasks which are vital for jogging our memories, and helping us enjoy our general meetings. Tom Easton turns out to have a particular expertise in photography, and has been kindly printing up for us some of the many Eric Smith photos of the Cemetery where we hold the negatives, but do not have his original prints. Lastly a recent addition to our Committee, John Spencer-Silver, is both a solicitor, and the owner of two family graves in the Cemetery, so his advice and support have been invaluable.

Nicholas Reed

PUBLICATIONS ON SALE FROM FOWNC BOOKSTALL
by Robert Flanagan, Publications Officer

We run the bookstall not only to raise money for conservation in the Cemetery, but also as a service to members, to help increase knowledge of the Cemetery and its famous 'residents'. Overleaf is the full stock list: remember that some items might make good presents with Christmas approaching! We have reduced the price of one item, and have acquired two new books for the list.

NEW: "The Craces: Royal Decorators 1768 - 1899", ed. Aldrich. Pub. 1990. 202 pp paperback, with many colour illustrations. £9.95.

Produced for an exhibition held at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton last year, this is a series of essays with colour and black and white plates, giving the history of this remarkable family. We are always told that John Nash designed the Royal Pavilion, but in fact it was Frederick Grace who designed and executed the exotic interiors for the Prince Regent. Frederick's son John Gregory Grace worked extensively with Pugin on the Houses of Parliament and other projects. Many famous houses, including Chatsworth, Eastnor Castle, Kebworth, Longleat and Windsor, owe some of their remarkable interior designs to John Gregory and his son John Diblee Grace: they even designed interiors for ships, such as the Great Eastern. The Grace firm was also called upon to recreate Frederick's interiors at Brighton after the Pavilion had been gutted and sold by Queen Victoria.

Frederick Grace died in 1859 and was buried at Norwood. His son John Gregory later moved from St. John's Wood to "Springfield" near Dulwich (to be near his father's grave?) in 1862. Unfortunately Frederick's tombstone is one of the many which have been destroyed in recent years, but John Gregory (d. 1889) and John Diblee (d. 1919) were also buried at Norwood, near Frederick, and their tombstone survives. It is a slate-faced stone topped by a stone cross, standing just behind the tomb of William Wyon and near that of William Burges (no 22 in the Manning booklet). Incidentally, the Craces decorated the house which Burges designed for John Heathcote-Amory at Knightshayes Court. If you'd like to know more about the Craces, I suggest you buy the book!



1:15 F. H. Grace, Portrait of Frederick Grace, c.1830.

Also NEW: "The Brookwood Necropolis Railway" by John Clarke. Paperback, pub. 1988. 96 pp; 46 illustrations; price £4.95.

This tells the fascinating story of the Necropolis at Brookwood and its associated railway, which provided a continuous funeral service for 87 years from 1854. There are many maps and diagrams in addition to the 46 pictures. Chapter 1 is a good general introduction to the problem posed by the disposal of the dead in the ever-expanding London of the 1830s: hence the establishment of Norwood and the other commercial cemeteries on the outskirts of London.

Reduced: "David Roberts". Compiled by H. Guiterman and B. Llewellyn. Pub. 1986, with 128 pages, 221 illustrations, and 40 full pages of colour. This is the catalogue of the comprehensive exhibition on David Roberts held at the Barbican in 1986. We bought some of the last stock remaining. An excellent introduction to the work of probably the most famous artist buried at Norwood. We can sell the last few at £9.95 (original price £11.95): it could make an excellent Christmas present!

PUBLICATIONS available from FOWNC:

The Listed Monuments of West Norwood Cemetery, by G Manning, 1989. £2.25.
 "On the Trail of Iguanodon", by Ken Woodhams, 1990. £2.95 paperback.
 "Murder at the Priory", by Bernard Taylor, 1988. £3.95 paperback.
 "John Ruskin's Camberwell", by James Dearden. £3.95 paperback.
 "Robert Browning's London", by Mairi Calcraft, 1989. £4.95 paperback.
 "Kingswood House", by the Dulwich Society, 1985. £1 paperback.
 "Spurgeon", by Arnold Dallimore (1984). 252 pp, 8 ill. £5.95.
 "The Forgotten Spurgeon", by Iain Murray (1973). 254 pp, 5 ill. £3.25.
 "David Roberts", by Guiterman and Llewellyn (1986). 128 pp, 40 illustrations in colour; numerous others in b&w. Large paperback: £9.95.
 The Doulton Story, by Atterbury and Irvine. 100 pp, 300 photos. £3.
 The Story of Royal Doulton: 30 pages, 40 illustrations in colour. £1.
 The Story of Minton. 20 pages and over 30 illustrations. £1
 "Sir Henry Doulton", by Edmund Gosse, 1970. 218 pages; £3 hardback.
 "Lambeth Stoneware: The Woolley Collection" by R Edwards. £5.
 "Memorials by Artists", by Harriet Frazer; £2.50.
 "The Story of Norwood", by J.B Wilson (reprinted 1990). £8.95.
 "Clapham Saints and Sinners", by Eric Smith. 62 pp; £8.95.
 "Clapham" by Eric Smith (revised 1991). 95 pp, over 100 photos. £5.95.
 "Sir Hiram Maxim"; 1 page broadsheet. 30p

Historic Postcards:

Maxim's Flying Machine at the Crystal Palace: 30p; The Dinosaurs in Crystal Palace Park: 30p; Bedhead designed by William Burges (large card) 50p
 William Wyon, R.A., medallist: 30p; The Bessemer Steel Process at work: 30p
 Publications are sold at our meetings, after tours, or from Robert Flanagan.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS: All events listed are open to the public.

TUESDAY 22nd OCTOBER, at 7.30 pm

Kensal Green Cemetery: talk by Julian Litten. St John's Church Hall, Harrow Road, Kensal Green. Admission £2; details from 0303 267 612.

SUNDAY 27th OCTOBER, at 3 pm.

Talk about Famous Residents in Norwood Cemetery, given to Peckham Society by Nicholas Reed. St Johns Church Hall, East Dulwich Road, off Goose Green SE22.

SUNDAY 3rd NOVEMBER, at 11 am (please note earlier time).

ARTISTIC TOUR with a difference. While including several of the artists Patricia Jenkyns used to include on her artists' tour, this tour by Nicholas Reed will also view several monuments not previously visited on any tour. Meet near the entrance.

SATURDAY 16th NOVEMBER, at 2.30 pm.

TWO DISTINGUISHED MEDALLISTS: illustrated talk by Philip Attwood. This talk about William Wyon and Maria Cassavetti, will be at a new venue: the Meeting Room in Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way, off Norwood Road, West Norwood SE27.

MONDAY 25th NOVEMBER, at 8pm.

Talk on BRIXTON WINDMILL. Bon Marche Building, 444 Brixton Road, SW9. For details of this talk and that on the 16th, see Newsletter no 7.

MONTHLY TOURS of the Cemetery, meeting near the entrance at 11 am.

The tours on Sunday 3rd November (artistic tour), Sunday 1st December and Sunday 5th January 1992, will start at 11 am, to suit the winter opening hours.

CEMETERY OPENING HOURS

A reminder that the opening hours are:

April to October: 8-6 weekdays, 10-6 weekends

November to March: 8-4 weekdays, 10-4 weekends

FOWNC OFFICERS

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