

Friends of West Norwood CEMETERY

Newsletter No. 97 – January 2020

Free to members

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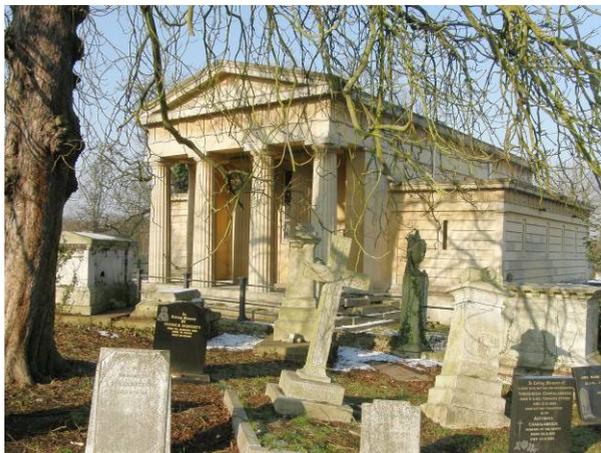
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Chairman's Report

Bob Flanagan

News this month is that the transfer of the items under the ownership of the Greek Cemetery Trustees, including St Stephen's Chapel, to Lambeth has taken place. This has opened the way for the release of the NLHF monies that were dependent on the entrance to the Greek enclosure, the boundary walls, and the Chapel coming into public ownership. Responsibility for the monuments other than the Chapel remains with the descendants of the original purchasers, although we have found that Lambeth already have ownership of the paths within the enclosure.

Other progress has been that contracts for the Lead Consultants for the restoration and drainage components of the agreed work packages have been awarded. In addition, Faculties for all planned operations on consecrated



The Greek Enclosure: St Stephen's Chapel

ground in the cemetery have been granted except that in the case of the proposed new entrance on Robson Road, further information on the proposed design has been requested. Notices explaining the various objectives of the NLHF project have been placed at strategic points in the cemetery.

Scheme of Management

Work funded via the capital grant overseen by the Scheme of Management Committee (SoMC) has been in abeyance for the last 12 months or more, although I can report that the restoration of the Letts memorial (grave 249, square 33) by *Sally Strachey Historic Conservation* and sculptor Rupert Westmacott has been completed. Rupert has done an excellent job! Hopefully new project manager Hannah Radlowski will now be able to pick up on outstanding works in conjunction with the NLHF Project Team. A start has already been made on planning to replace the scaffolding on the site of the Episcopal chapel.

As to tree works funded under the capital budget, the phrase ‘a new beginning’ applies not only to the NLHF programme, but also to the long-standing battle to remove dead and dangerous trees and branches. I must have walked round the cemetery at least a dozen times with generations of tree officers/arbiculturalists, but with only limited success. Hopefully the current Lambeth Tree Officer Ajay Shah and his team will get stuck into the task in earnest. Removing the tree growing out of the Grade II* listed Burges tomb (grave 4,478, square 34) remains a priority.

Not all members may realise the amount of work Nicholas Long and I, respective chairs of the SoMC and the Management Advisory Group, have done over the years, not least in respect of agreeing the agenda, proof-reading the minutes, and dealing with the inevitable matters arising.¹ The advent of the NLHF programme has added a cycle of three more scheduled meetings (project management, strategic oversight, NLHF monitoring), let alone site and other meetings with consultants, etc., etc. A Shadow Strategic Partnership Board has also been formed with the aim of in time taking over the role of the SoMC. This is not as simple as it sounds because due legal process will have to be followed.



The newly-restored Letts monument

¹ Note that the minutes of these meetings are available. For example, the MAG minutes are at: moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=11346&EVT=101&DT=M. In addition the basis of the formation and powers of the MAG/SoMC are detailed at: www.lambeth.gov.uk/bereavement-services/west-norwood-cemetery-historical-and-legal-background

Alfred James Carver & Dulwich College, 1858-1883

Joe Spence

Alfred James Carver was born at King's Lynn on 22 March 1826, the only son of James Carver, an evangelical clergyman who devoted himself to the spiritual welfare of the inmates of Newgate and other London gaols.² Carver proceeded from St Paul's to Trinity College, Cambridge as a scholar in 1845. He graduated BA with a 1st in classics in 1849. He became a fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge in 1850. In 1852, Carver became surmaster (deputy head) of St Paul's, and in 1853 he was ordained and married Eliza (1829–1907), youngest daughter of William Peek of Peek, Winch & Co., tea merchants.³

Headmaster

In 1858 Carver was appointed Master of Alleyn's College of God's Gift at Dulwich. A new scheme for the running of Edward Alleyn's educational foundation of 1619 had been sanctioned by an Act of Parliament in 1857. This act created two schools with different purposes. The upper school, providing a traditional public-school education for boys up to 18, became Dulwich College, and the lower school, offering a vocational curriculum for boys intended for commerce, was named Alleyn's School.



Alfred James Carver

Carver made Dulwich College one of the leading public schools, or perhaps more accurately into a great London day school based on the public-school model. Capturing this sense of being not quite of the inner circle, Carver was invited to the inaugural meeting of the Headmasters' Conference (HMC) in Uppingham in 1869, but did not attend. He was, however, to become the Chairman of HMC in 1874.

What he did share with certain other Headmasters invited to be part of the foundation of HMC was a liberal view of what a school curriculum should look like. Carver did not like the obsession in public schools with a traditional hierarchy of disciplines and believed that many subjects undervalued by such schools carried educational value. Carver pioneered the teaching of modern languages

² William Hoff (1814–1881; grave 5,562, square 7 - monument destroyed) and Thomas (1813–1873; grave 14,590, square 51) Wontner were born to John Wontner (1784–1833), Governor of Newgate Prison and Marshall of His Majesty's Gaols, and his wife Mary Hoff (1784–1862).

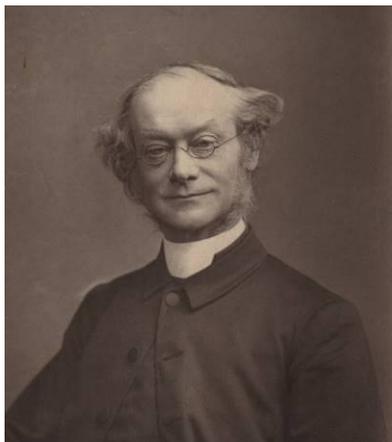
William became an architect, but Thomas became a solicitor. His firm Wontner & Sons were solicitors to the Metropolitan Police, the Home Office, and the Treasury for more than 60 years

³ William Peek (1791–1870; grave 12,872, square 89)

and science, having a chemistry laboratory built into the heart of the new Barry Buildings at Dulwich, for example, and he promoted the study of art.⁴ He opposed early specialization in learning and wanted his boys to have a chance to find and hone their academic aptitudes over the course of their school careers. An old boys' association was founded at Carver's instigation in 1873. It was one of the first of its kind and was called the Alleyn Club.

From 1863 Carver became embroiled in what was to become a 25-year battle with his chairman of governors, the Rev. William Rogers (1819–1896), who would have favoured the full weight of the re-formed Dulwich schools being put behind the education of more children from a wider range of social backgrounds. So, whilst the College's academic renown was enhanced by the number of boys proceeding to university, some being supported financially by Carver himself, the future of Dulwich College, its upper and lower school, remained uncertain through the 1870s.

In time, Carver appealed to the Privy Council for a new scheme of administration for the Dulwich College Charity. This was achieved in 1882, securing the future of Dulwich College and Alleyn's School as separate entities, with separate headmasters. The Act that carried the separation of Dulwich and Alleyn's also made provision for *James Allen's Girls School* (JAGS) to benefit from the growing income of the Dulwich Estate. Carver retired with a pension as Master of Dulwich College in 1883 after 25 years' service, becoming the first headmaster to be both appointed and retired by Act of Parliament.



Canon Carver DD in later life

Later Life

Although Carver had resigned his mastership having carried the new scheme of management for the schools of the Dulwich Foundation into effect, he continued his association with JAGS. In 1858 he had become a trustee and he was to be Chairman of the Governors of JAGS until his death in 1909.

In 1861 Carver had been awarded the Honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Archbishop of Canterbury and in 1882 he was appointed Honorary Canon of Rochester. In later life he was also vice-president and member of the council of the Royal Naval School, Eltham. He died at his home Lynnhurst, Streatham Common, on 25 July 1909 and was buried at Norwood (grave 23,256, square 50). He left £38,112. The first part of his funeral service was held in the Chapel of God's Gift in Dulwich, the chapel of the three schools of the Foundation he had served so well and for so long.

⁴ In 1870 the College had moved to a new 70-acre site with a central building designed by Charles Barry Jr. The terracotta ornamentation was supplied by *The Stamford Terracotta Company* owned by John Marriott Blashfield (1811–1882; grave 13,442, square 86 - monument destroyed)

Carver is commemorated in Carver Road, Herne Hill, by a reredos in the College chapel, and by an elaborate memorial near to the site of the Episcopal Chapel. The plot at Norwood cost £61 8s 6d when purchased on 21 December 1889 for the interment of Leonard Edward Hudson (b. & d. 1889). In the 1850s Carver had bought a plot in Nunhead Cemetery for the interment of Montagu M Carver, who had died aged 1 year. However, Montagu's remains were reburied in the new plot at Norwood in August 1896.

Family Connections

Others buried in the plot at Norwood in addition to Leonard Hudson and Dr Carver are his wife Eliza, their youngest daughter Gertrude (1868–1906), and the cremated remains of Constance Lyla Hudson (1856–1931), Dr Carver's grandson Dr Alfred Edward Arthur Carver (1883–1950), Medical Director of Caldecote Hall, Nuneaton (an addiction treatment centre) and his wife Beatrice Adelaide Carver (1883–1975), and Alfred Basil Carver (1911–1986), who was born in Beckenham on 2 October 1911 and was rector of Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, 1945–80.

Leonard Hudson was the infant son of Edward Francis Williams and Constance Lyla Hudson née Carver. Leonard was baptised at St Leonard, Shoreditch on 9 June 1889. He died aged 7 months and was removed from Carver's home, Lynnhurst. Edward and Constance had married at St Peter, Leigham Court Road, Streatham on 13 June 1888, implying little Leonard Edward was premature. Constance Lyla Carver had been born on 25 May 1856 and died at Rottingdean on 21 December 1931. She left £7,392 19s 11d.

Gertrude married Maurice Flouest, a stockbroker, of 78 Rue Charles Laffiette, Neuilly-sur-Seine, on 9 October 1898. Their daughter, Eva Maude Claire Flouest was baptised at St Peter, Leigham Court Road on 11 February 1900. Gertrude died on 14 March 1906 and her body was repatriated to Norwood on 17 March 1906.

Edward Hudson (1858–1949), a clergyman and son of Edward Taylor Hudson, surmaster of St Paul's School, was ordained deacon in 1885 and priest in 1887. He served as a curate at St Leonard, Shoreditch, 1886–90 and Tewkesbury 1890–91. He seems to have held several clerical appointments, including curate at St Luke, Jersey 1905–11 and assistant chaplain of Christ Church, Brussels, 1905–11. He died at Worthing on 30 November 1949.



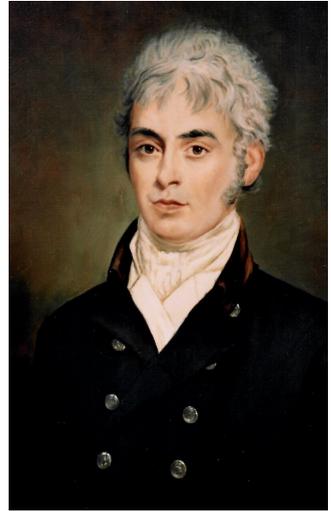
The Carver family monument

Thomas Letts (1803-1873): Diarist

Judy Harper

Much has been written about my great, great grandfather Thomas Letts and his achievements in developing Letts diaries and the business he inherited from his father. I want to present a slightly different picture of Thomas based in part on four of his journals covering the years 1829, 1831, 1849, and 1853 that are still in the family's possession.

Thomas Letts was born in Stockwell, the son of John Letts (1772–1851), a bookbinder and printer of the Royal Exchange. In 1816, his father published “Letts’s diary or bills owed book and almanack”, the first commercially produced diary. Thomas developed this into dozens of different annual publications. He took over the family-owned company in 1835, printing a range of diaries that stretched from small pocket diaries to commercial foolscap folio one-day-per-page editions. In addition, his factories at New Cross printed interest tables, specialist clerical and medical diaries, calendars, parliamentary registers, ledgers, and logbooks. Letts’ publications became ubiquitous, being used by many of the well-known writers and diarists of the day. For example, writing in the *Cornhill Magazine*, William Makepeace Thackeray noted he preferred a Letts No. 12 diary.



Thomas Letts

'Honest Jack' Letts

There is no doubt that Thomas possessed drive, initiative, and attention to detail. Perhaps he inherited some of these characteristics from his father 'Honest Jack' Letts. John Letts snr, Thomas's grandfather (1722–1790) married a widow, Anne Beaman (d. 1795), in early 1765. He is listed as a fishmonger. His son 'Honest Jack' took up modest premises at 95 Royal Exchange '.... and set up a business as a Stationer' in 1796. His was a 'thriving business mainly among the merchants & shipping firms'. In 1816 he published the world's first printed book for the recording of daily notes *Letts Diary of Bills Due Book & Almanack*. The coffee culture in the area was well established, with clients paying 1d for entry, coffee, and information about the shipping and stock prices each day.

'Honest Jack' married twice. His marriage to his second wife, Frances Debenham (1788–1848) resulted in 3 children, Mary Ann and twins Emma and Edwin. Edwin went to live in Valparaiso and 'reportedly fathered many children'! But it is his first marriage to Susan Mary Spicer (1773–1815) on 4 February 1800 that is more relevant. Their first child, another John (1800–1857), was born in Stockwell. Thomas was born 3 years later.

'Honest Jack' had hoped that both his sons would join him in his business and was upset when John chose to go into the ministry instead. John studied at Sydney Sussex College,

Cambridge. Thomas in his 1831 journal records his visit there to see his brother and includes some lovely sketches of the colleges. At the end of his visit to see his brother at Cambridge he says: 'Monday (black Monday to me for It was my last day of pleasure) After I had experienced my Brother's hearty squeeze at parting....'.

John married Charlotte Davis (1804–1886) in 1825 and entered into a living at St Olave's, Hart Street, City of London. Father and son were reconciled at some point and 'Honest Jack' according to his death notice is buried in St Olave's. John and Charlotte also had a son, another John! John snr died and was buried whilst on a visit to his son at Staunton Harold in Leicestershire, but there is a memorial to him in St Olave's.

Family Fortunes

Thomas first married Harriet Cory (1817–1841) at St Dunstan on 21 January 1837. The service

was performed by his brother John. Their first child was Thomas Alton (March 1838–1927). A second son Charles William was also born in 1838, but sadly was buried at Norwood on 19 December 1838 (grave 29, square 51/64). A further son, Charles John Letts (July 1839–June 1912) followed.⁵ Thomas and Harriet had one daughter, Harriet Louisa, who was born on 19 February 1841. She married Edward Herbert Flindt in April 1861. She may have moved to Ontario, Canada, and died there.

In time Thomas Alton and Charles John took over the bookbinding/diary company from their father. In 1870 it became a limited liability company, *Letts, Sons & Co.* However, there were disagreements and in 1881 Charles set up his own company, *Charles Letts & Co.* The original company folded in 1885 and was bought out by *Cassells & Co.*, who eventually sold the rights to selling Letts diaries back to Charles. Thomas Alton moved to New York and died there.

The Letts Vault at Norwood

When his wife Harriet died Thomas bought a brick vault at Norwood (grave 249, square 33 – see illustration, p. 2) on 2 March 1841 for £15 15s for her interment. At the same time Charles William was moved there to lie with his mother. In 1842 Thomas married Emma Horwood Barry (1822–1892). By 1850 he had bought Clare Lodge, 27 Perry Hill, Catford, and moved later to 23 Granville Park, Blackheath.



Thomas Letts: 1831 Sydney College

⁵ Towards the end of his life Charles Letts lived at Springfield House, Norwood Park. He is buried in Shirley Churchyard (see: *Charles John Letts 1836-1912* by D. Betty Griffin; www.norwoodsociety.co.uk/articles/128-charles-john-letts-1836-1912.html)

Thomas and Emma had 6 boys and 1 girl. George Barry Letts (1846–1883) married Thamar Eliza Earll in November 1870. In the marriage document, his occupation is listed as ‘stationer’, so it seems that he went into the family business. He died at Southview on the Isle of Wight. A second brother, Arthur Frederick Letts, was born c. 1847, but was buried in the vault at Norwood on 10 March 1849 with Harriet and step-brother Charles William.

Their third son Ernest Frederick Letts (1850–1904) went into the ministry like his uncle John. He married Mary Ferrier in Belfast in 1874. He was the Rector at Newtown Heath, Manchester from 1885 until at least 1895. Although she died in Belfast in 1892, his mother Emma is listed in the National Probate Calendar as being resident at Newtown Heath. One of Ernest’s children, Winifred Letts, gained some prestige as a writer of novels plays and poetry.

The fourth Edmund Thomas Letts (1852–1918) studied at Kings College, London and went on to do post graduate studies in both Berlin and Vienna. In 1874 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and won the Society’s Keith Prize for 1887–9. In 1879 he was appointed Professor of Chemistry at Queen’s College, Belfast, a post he held until he retired in 1917. He married Annie Elizabeth Gilmore in September 1883 and they had one son Bertram Chiene, who served in the Royal Medical Army Corps in the Great War. He was killed in Egypt and is buried there. Edmund retired to the Isle of Wight and was killed cycling the Zig Zag road near Niton in 1918.

Oswald Herbert Letts (1859–1876) joined the Merchant Navy (Indenture 18 November 1875). He joined the Shaw Savill Line’s *SS Euterpe*.⁶ On a voyage from Lyttleton, New Zealand to Gravesend) he fell from the rigging and died on 1 August 1876. He was buried at sea, but a memorial to him has been added to the Letts monument at Norwood. The last brother, Harold Arthur Letts, died in Manchester in 1884 aged only 23.

Sir Thomas Pittar and Family

Anne Frances (1848–1929), only daughter of Thomas and Emma Letts, was baptised at St Olave’s, London on 28 October 1848. She was a talented painter and some of her works are held in Lyme Regis Museum. She married Thomas John Pittar (1846–1924), a member of a Huguenot family that had fled from France to Dublin in the mid-1700s and set up a large and successful silver-smith business. Thomas John was created Knight Statistician for his work for the Board of Customs in London after representing England in sugar trade conferences in Europe and writing a book, *The Law & Practice Regulating Merchant Shipping*.

Annie and Sir Thomas had 3 sons and one daughter. Their daughter, Violet Mary Josephine (1875–1926) married Francis John Welsh Whipple (1876–1943), who was superintendent at Kew Observatory for many years. George Francis Pittar (1871–1946) was an engineer and was involved in a number of patent applications for improvements to

⁶ *Euterpe* of 1197 tons was built in 1863 at Ramsey, Isle of Man. Renamed *Star of India*, she survives in San Diego and is the fourth oldest sailing ship still afloat and the oldest ship still sailing regularly: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_of_India_\(ship\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_of_India_(ship))

windows. My grandfather Albert Vyvyan Pittar (1872–), a metallurgist, went to live in South Africa.

Thomas Frederick Barry (known as Barry) Pittar RBA (1878–1948) married Edith Nina Davies (1875–1955). He was a recognized painter and ceramicist. Born in Kent in 1878, he moved to London in the late years of the nineteenth century, to study art at the Royal College of Art and St. Johns Wood School, and for a brief period in Paris. In 1895 he was appointed as Chief Architectural Artist for the Royal Doulton ceramic factory in Lambeth, where he worked until 1905. He is also known for his posters for the Great Western Railway and paintings such as that of the interior of St Paul’s Cathedral.

The Letts Diaries

I had always known of the existence of four family diaries or journals, two of which were held in South Africa by my cousins and two ‘somewhere’ in England. It was unclear just who had written the diaries, but when I travelled to Cape Town to see and copy the diaries, I found that they were journals written by Thomas Letts himself, one dated 1829 and the other 1849. The 1829 diary, as with all the other diaries, is full of beautiful sketches and paintings.



Thomas Letts: 1829 Isle of Wight

I tracked the other two journals (which are dated 1831 and 1853) down to a second cousin living in Poole in England, a descendant of Sir Thomas and Anne Pittar. Further diaries are held in the National Library of Wales: *Journal of a tour in North Wales*, 1832; *Journals of tours*, 1833-34; and *Journal of a tour in the Lake District and Scotland*, 1847. There may well be other journals out there.

Right from the start of the 1829 diary we find Thomas was very methodical. In his preface to the *Tour thro Hants etc.* he says ‘it may be well to remember that we did not travel perfectly unencumbered’. He goes on to number every pocket in his trousers, waistcoat, and coat and then lists what he carried in each pocket, e.g. the right hand trouser pocket held an ink stand for drawing and writing, whilst the right hand waistcoat pocket contained 2 pairs of nippers for entomological use. At the end of the diary are pages of charts showing the date, bed, meals, costs, etc.

Early in the 1829 diary is a description of his visit to the Battersea Saw Mills founded by Marc Isambard Brunel that is accompanied by detailed sketches.⁷ This exercise was repeated in Thomas’s 1831 journal, when he twice visits Birmingham for the specific purpose of touring as many factories as he could. They ranged from ‘manufactory of

⁷ www.panoramaofthethames.com/1829/guide/brunels-sawmills

brass ornaments’ to ‘gun proving houses’. The first visit was rather spontaneous, so he had few if any formal introductions. He simply knocked on the door and asked if he could tour the factory, sometimes meeting with success, sometimes not.



Thomas Letts: 1831 Escaping from a hotel during a trip to Sevenoaks!

This initiative and determination reflects an incident in the 1829 diary when he recounts how having missed the ‘12 o'clock packet of Portsmouth’ (from Ryde on the Isle of Wight) he and his travelling companion ‘(determined not to be foiled) we jumped into a boat and pushed off directly... Mr R showed his prowess in rowing and I again in steering’. Why all this effort? Because Thomas wanted to inspect the dockyards in Portsmouth.

It seems that the tour of the Isle of Wight left a lasting impression on Thomas because he bought a house, *Southview*, in Chale in 1845. An advertisement in the *Hampshire Telegraph & Sussex Chronicle* of Saturday 5 April 1845 describes it as ‘having 7 bedrooms, being completely furnished and standing on a summit backed by magnificent rugged cliffs’. Although Thomas was listed in his Will & Probate as being ‘Thomas Letts of Chale, Isle of Wight’ it is more likely that the house at Chale was simply a holiday home. At some point

Thomas built a ‘Shakespeare folly and fountain’ on the road above the house. The folly still exists, although damaged and overgrown. The house remained in the family after Thomas died because at least 2 of his sons later died either there, or nearby. It was sold in 1885. None of the advertisements mention that it stood on the edge of a landslip area. In 1928 a landslide nearby left it vulnerable to vandalism and it no longer exists.

The 1849 and 1853 Diaries

In 1849 Thomas travelled with some of his family on a holiday to Devon. He was accompanied by ‘Charley’, his second son, who was 10 at the time and who regularly went tramping with his father, his wife Emma and their two children, ‘Georgy’ (4) and Annie (1) as well as a nurse. Thomas’s enjoyment at being a father shows when he tells of an incident when he and his wife and sons are walking along the breakwater in Teignmouth: “a noble sea however enticed us to the breakwater by the sea wall both



Thomas Letts: 1849 Teignmouth, Devon

morning & afternoon, the latter ensuring to myself, Charley and Georgy a pretty considerable ducking to our own amusement tho not our Dear Mama's”.

It is Thomas's 1853 diary that gives us the best glimpse into his character as both an ambitious man, but more especially as a caring and loving father. The diary details his 2-month trip across Europe to Vienna and back. He travels with his eldest son, Tom, who is just 15. The journey to Vienna tells of their exploration of the different towns and cities that they pass through, highlighting especially Thomas's love of and interest in architecture and the arts. He is especially taken with the buildings and art in Munich, but their visit to Valhalla near Passau did the most to capture his imagination.

In Vienna, however, it is a different story. It becomes apparent that the purpose of the trip is to leave Tom there to take an apprenticeship in a respectable printing firm who were using new, cutting edge techniques. Here we can see Thomas's drive to make his stationery company the best it can be and to train his eldest son to eventually take over the reins. But he cares about his son and the challenges that face him. As he bids farewell to Tom at the station he is quite distressed saying: 'I bad



Thomas Letts: 1853 Vienna

my poor boy adieu with a long kiss (...) & heavy heart for I had already reflected upon the severity of the plunge he would suddenly be compelled to take'.

He goes on to rationalise, reminding himself of all that he has undertaken to ensure Tom's safety and comfort. 'To the best of my belief I had well provided him for every probable contingency, but who can see the future? & what might not that future be? Still I could do no more.... for he had a good house over his head & a small connexion that any man might be proud of without a solitary exception, after a few tears and their attendant headache therefor I turned my thoughts more selfwards'.

Thomas died at Blackheath, on 9 August 1873. He was buried in the family vault at Norwood on 12 August, aged 69. There seems no doubt that Thomas was a remarkable man who founded not only a significant commercial enterprise but also quite a dynasty that begs for further research. It has been my privilege to gain such a personal insight into the man and his life.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Lorraine Thomson, FLB Group, for supplying the (undated) portrait of Thomas Letts and to my cousins for giving free access to the Letts diaries

George Widdowson (1804-1872): Goldsmith

Sharon O'Connor

George Widdowson was born in Lincoln on 25 August 1804, the son of William and Elizabeth. William kept the *Rein Deer Inn* in Lincoln. John Salter, his uncle, was a successful silversmith. He had supplied Nelson with many pieces of jewellery, including mourning rings. John Salter had been a close friend of Horatia Nelson, Emma Hamilton and Nelson's daughter, and had been godfather to one of her children. George became a silversmith and goldsmith, although a retailer rather than a craftsman, and by the age of 28 had taken over his uncle's shop.

Widdowson developed the company into the highly fashionable Widdowson & Veale at 73 Strand, on the corner of Adam Street and opposite the Adelphi. Widdowson had a good eye for publicity. He once had a long and detailed newspaper article dedicated to his idea of making a copy of Aeneas' shield, as described in Virgil's *Aeneid*. There is no evidence that the shield was ever made.



Widdowson & Veale, 73 Strand

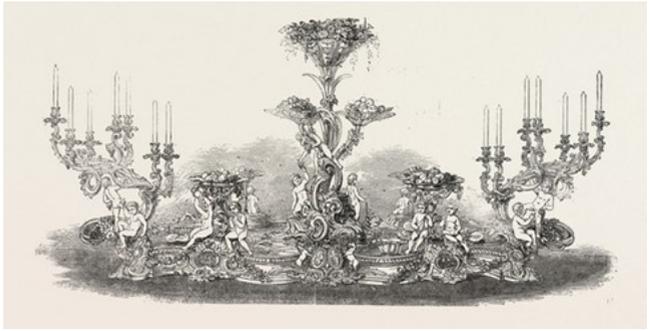
The company, however, did make swords and other weapons for the British army and navy. They also made orders and decorations for the Court of St James and were goldsmiths and jewellers to the Court of Spain. In 1842 on the christening of Queen Victoria's son, later King Edward VII, the firm gave 'an immense silver coronet supporting the Prince of Wales feathers'; 'of a large size' the report added, in case the splendour of the gift had not been made clear.

In 1844, George was 40 and his business was thriving. The firm advertised for apprentices, asking for a premium of £100. On 11 February 1847 George married Eliza Duffield née Boville, the daughter of a Putney wine merchant who had been living in Gibraltar when she was widowed when her first husband, John Duffield, died. George and Eliza lived at *Bell House* in Dulwich. They did not have children.

The Great Exhibition

George was much involved in charitable work. He was a steward of, and supported, the Goldsmiths' Benevolent Institution and his firm also made donations to the newly built Charing Cross Hospital. At the 1851 Great Exhibition, Widdowson & Veale exhibited an

enormous silver ‘plateau’ with candelabra, dessert stands, dishes, flagons, jugs, coffee pots, teapots, jewellery, and an equestrian statue of Wellington. George must have been delighted when the Crystal Palace was rebuilt at Sydenham, where it was almost visible from his front door at *Bell House*.



Widdowson & Veale: Centerpiece for the Great Exhibition

Eliza Widdowson died in April 1861 leaving George a widower with no children. She is buried at Norwood (grave 7,523, square 36) beneath a Grade II listed tomb. George continued to live at *Bell House* with his unmarried sister Ann and his brother-in-law John Boville, a barrister. Boville was a governor of the *Royal Humane Society for the Recovery of the Apparently Drowned or Dead*.⁸ The household employed a footman, coachman, cook, housemaid, and lady’s maid. Footmen were often hired ‘by the foot’, i.e. the taller you were the more you were paid! In 1863 George moved into the *White House* in Dulwich Village, on the site where *James Allen’s Girls School Pre-Preparatory School* is now. Perhaps *Bell House* was too big and too full of memories.⁹



The Widdowson family monument at Norwood

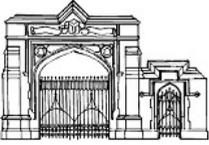
George Widdowson died on 10 December 1872, aged 68. There is no known portrait of him. He is buried in the grave he had bought for his wife for £5 5s in 1861. He left some £30,000. In 1873 a note was added to the cemetery records: ‘stone in perpetuity’.

Strangely, a year after George died an advertisement was placed in the *Daily Telegraph*: ‘FOUND: a large black bitch, name on collar George Widdowson Esq, Bell House, Dul-

wich’. The advert went on to say that the finder would give the dog to its owner on payment of ‘expenses’. If the dog was not claimed by 7 November it would be sold.

⁸ The Society was founded in London in 1774 by the apothecary and physician Dr William Hawes (1736–1808) and physician Dr Thomas Cogan (1736–1818), who were keen to promote techniques of resuscitation. The Society is still going strong

⁹ *Bell House* is still there on College Road in Dulwich. It is run as an educational charity (www.bellhouse.co.uk/)



Recent FOWNC Events

John White

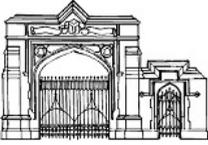
Before our AGM on 19 October, Chris Everett, late of the Museum of London, spoke about the Cubitts and the River Thames. He described the achievements of five well-known Victorians named Cubitt, all of whom left their mark on London. Three were brothers: Thomas (1788–1855, grave 649, square 48), William (1791–1863), and Lewis (1799–1883); and father and son (Sir) William (1785–1861, grave 7,740, square 36) and Joseph (1811–1872). Sir William was a civil engineer who worked on the South Eastern and Great Northern Railways, amongst others. He died at his home on Clapham Common. His son, Joseph, also a civil engineer, worked for example on the construction of the Great Northern Railway. He built Blackfriars Railway Bridge for the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, which was opened by Queen Victoria in 1869.

Thomas Cubitt was a master builder before the profession of architect had developed who by 1845 was employing 400 men and who changed building practice by employing all trades under one roof. Cubitt Street, WC1 is named after him. He was responsible for many developments in London and for work on Buckingham Palace and Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. His brother William is remembered for the development of an area which eventually took his name: Cubitt Town on the Isle of Dogs (1850) and for many other achievements. Lewis was a civil engineer and architect who designed Kings Cross Station (1851–2) and the adjacent Great Northern Hotel (1854). A recent major redevelopment of the railway land just north of the station – Kings Cross Central – includes his refurbished Granary, now in cultural and educational use.

At our meeting on 16 November, Kath Church, Chair of the Friends of Streatham Cemetery, outlined its history and discussed some of the burials there. Under the Metropolitan Burial Act of 1852 the Streatham Burial Board purchased some 23 acres of land, then in open country, in the Manor of Streatham at a cost of £17,684 5s. The resulting cemetery was opened in 1893. Two lodges and two mirror-image chapels by William Newton-Dunn (1859–1934) in Gothic style were erected. A further 13 acres were added in 1929. A notable burial is that of Edward Foster (1886–1946), a corporal in the 13th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry at Villers Plouich, France in April 1917. A dustman, on his return to civilian life, the Council, in recognition of his gallantry, promoted him to a supervisory role. The Friends have a particular interest in bees and maintain an apiary in the Cemetery.



The Chapel, Streatham Cemetery



Forthcoming Events

January – April 2020

Introductory tours will be held on the first Sunday of each month, starting at the cemetery main gate off Norwood Road at 11:00 (5 January, 2 February, 1 March) or 14:30 (5 April), and lasting for 1½–2 hours. There is no need to book. Donations are welcome. The April tour coincides with West Norwood Feast (street markets and other town centre events: <https://westnorwoodfeast.com/>). To register for notifications of additional events, please visit www.fownc.org/news/. To volunteer to help with vegetation clearance in the cemetery, please contact Beth Cross (BCross@lambeth.gov.uk). For details of events organized under the NLHF project see: www.westnorwoodcemetery.org/events.

Lectures will be held at the Old Library, 14-16 Knights Hill, SE27¹⁰ as detailed below, starting at 14:30. PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE FROM PREVIOUS YEARS. There is no formal charge, but we welcome donations to cover refreshments & room hire.

Saturday 15 February – Canon Carver and the Refoundation of Dulwich College, 1850–1890 – Joe Spence and Nick Black

Dr Spence, Master of Dulwich College, and Dr Black, Head of Middle School and editor of *Dulwich: the first 400 years of the College*, will give a joint lecture on the life and times of Alfred Carver, Master of Dulwich College, 1858–83. Dr Spence will examine Carver in the context of other reforming headmasters of the Victorian age; Dr Black will talk about the Carver family and the place of the College within the Dulwich community in the late 19th century (see article, p 3).

Saturday 28 March – Sir Henry Tate: His life, work and philanthropy – Bill Linskey

Sir Henry Tate (1819–1899) made a great deal of money and gave an enormous amount of it away. He lived at the end of his life in Streatham and has his Grade II mausoleum at Norwood (grave 19,897, square 38/39). We will look at his life and the impact his philanthropy had on Lambeth. Bill Linskey is Chair of the Brixton Society and of the Lambeth Local History Forum.

National Federation of Cemetery Friends

This year *National Cemeteries Week* will be held 9–17 May. We will aim to provide a special tour on Sunday 10 May – details in the May Newsletter.

Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe

The first *European Cemeteries Tour* (13–15 May 2020) features cemeteries in Croatia: (<https://cemeteriesroute.eu/projects/european-cemeteries-tour/european-cemeteries-tour-2020/program.aspx>). The *Week for Discovering European Cemeteries* is 11–17 June 2020. The ASCE AGM is to be held in Milan 17–19 September 2020.

¹⁰ The building is managed by the Rathbone Society, a local charity, as a community centre, particularly for youth groups, but available to all

A Bit of Mystery – Bob Flanagan

One reason for doing these short ‘tail-pieces’ is that I am made to go into the cemetery every 4 months with open eyes. I had not noticed symbolism such as that found at the base of the tall limestone monument of William and Caroline Mercer (grave 14,097, square 66) before. The sickle has just cut the lily flower from its stalk, a poignant reference to life cut short. Are there other examples surviving either in the cemetery, or elsewhere one wonders?



William Mercer, was buried on 25 January 1873, aged 53. The grave was purchased by Caroline on 25 January 1873. It is unclear whether he was born in Highgate, or Reigate. He appears to have been a carpenter of 12 Western Terrace, Bermondsey in 1851. By 1861 he is victualler, retired, of Soute[?] House, Bermondsey. He was living at 7 Blackman Street, Southwark, when he died. Caroline was a native of Bermondsey, but was living at 6 Lower Balham Park Road in 1881. She was buried on 16 June 1881.

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