

Friends of West Norwood CEMETERY

Newsletter No. 99 – September 2020

Free to members

Chairman's Report

Bob Flanagan

Despite the Covid-19 crisis we have managed to make some progress with cemetery matters, although there has been no tangible movement as regards the NLHF Project save for a (sensible) redesign of the drainage package. I remain mystified as to why a myriad of extra considerations (each with their own consultants and costs) have surfaced for the first time once the project was given the go ahead. Silly me thought the planning and budgeting had been done and that we were now in the implementation phase. I just don't know what to make of it all. It is very wearing after 30 years of doing my best for the Cemetery to be landed with so much extra grief.

But now for some better news. The Vaglianos Company, wheat traders, were founded by Marinos Vaglianos (1808–1896). They made a fortune supplying the Allies during the Crimean War. It was said that Marinos sometimes purchased the whole Russian wheat export crop. He died in Russia in January 1896, but his body was brought to



The Vaglianos Mausoleum

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Norwood for interment. He was buried initially on 30 May 1896 in St Stephen's Chapel. His Grade II listed mausoleum (grave 27,142, square 42) in the Greek Enclosure was inspired by the Tower of the Winds in Athens. Thanks to an initiative from Victoria Solomonidis-Hunter (see article on p. 4), the Vagliano Foundation in Greece have undertaken to consider favourably funding the renovation of this exceptional monument.



The Wilkinson memorial

Further good news is that after reporting the damage to the monument to Lt Charles H. Wilkinson in the May 2020 Newsletter, I remembered that I had contact details of relatives. Jonathan Acton-Bond (in the UK) and Charles Wilkinson (in NZ) responded to my mail and thanks to them and to Rowland Brothers a repair was effected promptly. Although the crack in the stone remains visible, only a couple of letters from the inscription have been lost. The mystery as to why Lt Wilkinson came to be buried at Norwood has also been addressed (see p. 3).

Finally, a lockdown project has been a new Guidebook to the cemetery. One of those featured is merchant adventurer Richard Thornton (1776–1865). In 1810, with the Baltic closed to British trade, he armed one of his own ships and set off himself, leaving his brother Laurence in charge in London. He fought off a Danish gunboat and landed at Memel (now Klaipeda in Lithuania). From there he went on

to Russia, returning to England with several thousand tons of hemp for rigging the fleet.

In 1812 Laurence was in Memel when he heard of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. He sent an express message to Richard in London, who got the news three days before anyone else, including the Cabinet, and made a fortune by selling futures in Baltic goods at wartime prices. He died at Merton on 20 June 1865. Photographing his monument (grave 9,815, square 63) revealed severe damage to the vault, but again I remembered that Nigel Pullman and a descendant Anthony Thornton, both ex-Masters (as was Richard himself) of the Leathersellers' Company, had expressed



Richard Thornton's monument

interest in the monument many years ago. Again, they responded promptly and a repair is in hand thanks to them and to help from Jacqui Landy, Bereavement Services Manager.

A Welcome Initiative

Finally, I must record thanks to local resident Luke Thomas and his friends who gave up one Sunday afternoon in June to gather seven bags of litter from within the cemetery and deposit it neatly for collection. This is just the sort of things FOWNC should be doing, rather than spending endless hours in frustrating discussions with Lambeth!

The Chapmans and the Wilkinsons: A Mystery Solved?

Nicholas Long

The burial of Lieut. Charles H. Wilkinson RFA MC Croix de Guerre Belge at Norwood (grave 34,937, square 95) was facilitated by Mrs Hannah Chapman of 3 Hopton Road, Streatham – see Newsletters 80 (May 2014) and 98 (May 2020). Ownership of the plot was transferred on 17 May 1923 to Wilkinson's father, Charles Anderson Wilkinson (1868–1956) in Eltham, New Zealand. What was the connection between the families? I think I may have the answer.

Francis Chapman (1849–1916) was born in Finsbury. He married Hannah Cranfield (1852–1931) of Colchester, Essex, at All Saints, Hockley, Warwickshire, on 9 August 1873. He had an early career as a clerk and accountant. Shortly after they married it would seem the Chapmans travelled (emigrated?) to Australia because their eldest child, Constance Evelyn (1876–1953), was born in Queensland.

On returning to England Chapman developed a business as an Australia/New Zealand merchant, most probably specialising in iron goods (hardware?), his company becoming Chapman, Son & Deekes of Hopetoun House, Lloyds Avenue, Fenchurch Street. They also had an office at Castleragh House, Castleragh Street, Sydney and were represented in New Zealand by H.E. Cooper & Co. of Hobson's Buildings, Shortland Street, Auckland.

By 1911 the Chapmans lived at *Stratheden*, 1 Hopton Road, Streatham. Francis died on 11 December 1916 leaving £24,435 2s 9d. His widow purchased grave 34,473, square 95 at Norwood on 12 December. In turn Hannah, by now living at 3 Hopton Road, purchased grave 34,937 on 16 October 1918, presumably in the knowledge that Lieut. Wilkinson was near to the end of his life. Graves 34,473 and 34,937 are border graves and face each other across Lower Road.

Lieut. Wilkinson's father was at the time a successful merchant in New Zealand. It seems likely Chapman and Wilkinson were, at a minimum, business associates. Indeed, they may have been personal friends, albeit rather distant. Hannah herself died on 11 February 1931 (leaving £24,063 5s 10d) and was buried with Francis. Unmarried daughter Constance Evelyn Chapman (by then of Rodney Hotel, Cheltenham) was buried in the same grave on 14 August 1953.



The Chapman family gravestone

John Cavafy MD FRCP (1838-1901)

Victoria Solomonidis-Hunter FKC

John Cavafy became a leading physician and dermatologist at St George's Hospital in London. He was born into a life of privilege within an international network of cosmopolitan Greeks, linked to the highest circles of Victorian society. Status, respectability, and philanthropy were pillars of the family tradition. John grew to become not only an excellent clinician, but also a polymath, with a cultivated taste in art and music, as well as a keen interest in botany and ornithology.

His father George Cavafy (1806-1891) had arrived in London from his native Constantinople in 1827. After seven years in the employ of Thomas, Argenti, & Co, the first Ionides trading concern in the City, he married Mariora Thomas (1815-1882), the daughter of one of the three partners, and moved to Manchester. There he set up his own company, G.J. Cavafy & Co, initially operating from the same address as the Ionides business. By the late 1840s, the business in Manchester was well established and a branch in Liverpool was flourishing in the hands of P.J. Cavafy, George Cavafy's brother and father of the poet C.P. Cavafy (see FOWNC Newsletter 95, May 2019).

In the 1830s, Manchester experienced an unprecedented period of cultural growth, with the foundation of many cultural institutions such as the Manchester Literary & Philosophical Society, the Royal Manchester Institution (now Manchester Art Gallery), the Athenaeum, and the Manchester Botanical and Horticultural Society, where George Cavafy cultivated his interests in the company of like-minded members of the Manchester elite. A man of broad education and wide interests, he soon consolidated his prominent position within the local Greek community, and – crucially – in the wider circle of Manchester society.



The Royal Manchester Institution

Cavafy & Co thrived. George Cavafy became a leading figure in civic affairs. He seems to have been associated with the causes championed by the Whigs and by the Unitarian movement. He was an Honorary Visitor and Inspector of the Manchester Royal Infirmary and made regular contributions to causes espoused by the Unitarians, causes also championed by Lord Derby (1775-1851), the owner of the house the Cavafys leased in fashionable York Road, Cheetham. Not only a philanthropist, but also a noted zoologist

and ornithologist, Lord Derby appears to have been a strong influence on George Cavafy, whose interests developed along the same lines.

A Victorian Greek, a Doctor's Doctor

John Cavafy was born on 12 June 1838 at 130 Tulse Hill, Norwood, the sumptuous home of Alexander C. Ionides (1810–1890). A first cousin of his mother and a close friend and associate of his father, Ionides became John's godfather. John and his parents moved back to London in the late 1840s, although the links with Manchester remained strong and their philanthropic support was sustained.

Their home was now a villa in 'retired and picturesque' Stoke Newington, where the household included four nephews and six members of staff. The main business address was in the heart of the City at 31 Threadneedle Street, where Cavafy & Co was listed among the leading merchant houses, with an estimated capital of £20–30,000, and George Cavafy was among the top members of the all-important Baltic Exchange.

In 1851 John went to school in Brighton, where his interest in botany and ornithology developed to such an extent that by 1853, aged 13, he was addressing letters to *The Naturalist*, which published his detailed descriptions of birds and insects encountered on his walks. At 15, John entered University College School, the most progressive school of the time, where, alongside the classics, modern languages and the sciences were also taught and where, as we read in *The Times*, he excelled, winning prizes in French, German, Italian, Biology and Mathematics.

On completing his secondary education in 1857, after a brief sojourn in Egypt visiting the family firm and studying the local fauna, John, in deference to his father's wishes, joined the family firm, now renamed George Cavafy, Son & Co. However, commercial life was of no interest to him; his tastes led him to the study of natural history, especially botany and ornithology. His leanings were towards medicine and eventually, with his father's consent, he entered St. George's Hospital in October 1861.



John Cavafy MD FRCP (photograph by Mr Dent, 23 January 1899, courtesy St. George's Hospital Archive)

By now, the Cavafys lived at 26 Pembridge Gardens, a double-fronted detached house in fashionable West London. Whilst pursuing his medical studies John was also part of a close-knit circle of friends. These included his Ionides cousins and a number of artists, most notably Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), Edward Burne Jones (1833–1898), and James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), whose works adorned the family home together with a series of family portraits by George Cavafy's friend George Frederick Watts (1817–1904).

In 1867 John obtained a 1st class degree in medicine from London University, in 1868 he became a Member of the Royal College of Physicians, and in 1869 he graduated Doctor of Medicine. After a brief spell at Westminster Hospital, he joined St. George's Hospital where his abilities were quickly recognized. He was appointed in succession Demonstrator in Histology, Lecturer on Comparative Anatomy, Medical Registrar, Lecturer on Pathology, and, finally, Lecturer on Medicine. In time, he served as Examiner in Medicine at the Royal College of Physicians and the University of London.

Philanthropy in the wider sense was a way of life for him. He had no time for lucrative private practice because his spare time was devoted to preparing case papers for the medical press and attending meetings of the Medical and Chirurgical, Pathological, Clinical, Harveian, Microscopical and Dermatological Societies.

His heavy workload did not diminish his contribution to the affairs of the London Greek community, the interaction with his circle of artistic friends, or his natural science pursuits. Indeed, in 1870 he was elected Fellow of the



St George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner

prestigious Zoological Society, an honour that had been bestowed on his father in 1853. A 'clubbable' man, in 1868 Cavafy was one of the two first medical recruits of the Saville Club, where 'The intellectual level was exceedingly high, the thinking extremely broad'. The other medic was Dr P.H. Pye-Smith (1839–1914), his UCL schoolmate, fellow dermatologist and life-long friend.

In 1875, Cavafy was appointed Assistant Physician at St. George's and seven years later Physician. He was also one of the two Physicians at the voluntary Victoria Hospital for Children and the Atkinson Morley Convalescent Hospital. Thus, he had the opportunity to continue the care of those under him who, discharged from St. George's, were sent to this home to convalesce, the first such purpose-built facility to be associated with an inner-city hospital.¹

Although a general physician, he had a keen interest in diseases of the skin and in 1882 took over the newly formed Department of Dermatology at St. George's. In the same year, he was one of the twenty founding members of the Dermatology Society, 'a forum for the best informed and the most enthusiastic... that brought a breath of fresh air to the London scene'. During the International Medical Congress held in London in 1881, he was Honorary Secretary to the Section of Dermatology and at the Third International

¹ *Lost Hospitals of London* (<https://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/atkinsonmorley.html>)

Congress of Dermatology, held at the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in 1896, Cavafy was a Vice President, under Lord Lister.

It can be said that he was a true doctor's doctor: in all the positions he served, the excellence of his work and his gifts as a teacher were highly appreciated by his colleagues and students alike. Treating a number of his colleagues as patients, he was also quick to come to their aid in times of trouble and financial hardship. 'As a lecturer Cavafy was always remarkably lucid, and the same quality was displayed in his clinical teaching in the skin department and in the wards. The striking success of his teaching owed something also to his extensive acquaintance with medical literature, and to the ever-apparent fact that the lecturer was master of his subject.'²

Personal Life

In 1873 John Cavafy married Marigo Ralli (1852–1916), youngest daughter of Antonio Ralli (1805–1881), one of the four signatories to the first lease of the Greek Necropolis at Norwood, and sister-in-law of Stephen Ralli (1829–1902), founder and donor of St Stephen's Chapel, all of them now interred at Norwood.



Camille Silvy (1834–1910) Marigo and Ambrose Ralli, 17 July 1861 (the future Mrs John Cavafy and her brother). © National Portrait Gallery

A year later, the Cavafys had a daughter, Kitty (1874–1960), who married Theo H. Ionides MD FRCS, the grandson of A.C. Ionides, John Cavafy's godfather. She became the mother of Bobby 'Snake' Ionides (1901–1968), naturalist and herpetologist. The extended Cavafy family now lived at 2, Upper Berkeley Street in Mayfair, with five members of staff and a social life at the epicentre of the Greek community, as well as of Victorian society and the art world. Their new home was a neoclassical building, designed by James 'Athenian' Stuart in the 1780s, as part of the Montagu House complex in Portman Square.

Of gentle nature and sober temperament, bespectacled and bearded, favouring a black jacket and pin-striped trousers, Cavafy had 'a ...manner which endeared him to seniors and juniors alike, always clear, always emphatic, very rarely dogmatic, he had a few equals as a teacher of medicine. He was highly sensitive and sympathetic with the patients, and conscientiously devoted to his duties, both to them and to the students.'³

² A Farewell. *St George's Hospital Gazette* 1899; VII, No.1

³ Gould T, Uttley D. *A History of the Atkinson Morley's Hospital 1869-1995*, London 2000, p. 31

Beneath his austere, scholarly appearance Cavafy possessed a keen sense of humour and a ready wit. He was an excellent linguist, and his acquaintance with international medical literature was unusually wide. A good musician and a born artist, his drawings, some published as illustrations of his articles in the medical press, were evidence of his talent. He was one of the few dermatologists whose training rendered them independent of the assistance of the water-colour artist.⁴ He contributed papers to the St. George's Hospital Reports, the medical journals, the Transactions of all the Societies of which he was a member, as well as many entries in Heath's *Dictionary of Surgery*. His papers on skin diseases and their treatment are perhaps the best known and most valuable of his writings. 'He was a learned physician; he was a just and honourable man. No man ever made firmer friends or fewer foes.'⁵

Sodium Salicylate

In 1876, Cavafy pointed out that the use of 'salicylate of soda' (sodium salicylate) could be used as an antipyretic (fever-reducing) agent instead of salicylic acid itself. He observed that in a case of enteric fever 'its most marked effect is the rapid depression of temperature which ensues, so that fever is practically abolished'.⁷ Salicylic acid, of course, in the form of acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin) was used as an antipyretic for many years.

In 1896 he had an attack of typhoid fever. His convalescence was slow, and his health was never completely restored. True to form, Cavafy used the experience positively in the shape of an admirable lecture on the case from the patient's point of view, a lecture he presented at St. George's Medical School and published in the *Clinical Journal*. Two years later, with his health deteriorating, he felt he had to retire. Leaving London, the Cavafys moved to Brighton, near Stephen and Marietta Ralli, and their daughter Kitty. On Sunday 28 April 1901, whilst on a visit to London for a family wedding, he died from cardiac failure, aged 63. Writing to a friend in Athens on 4 May 1901, his sister-in-law Marietta Ralli (1838–1922) described the events: 'The wedding went off very well indeed... Our beloved John Cavafy in excellent spirits, laughing and joking & poking fun at everyone & was ... extra affectionate to Stephen & myself... On Sunday morning at 7.30 he was gaily chatting to Marigo before he got up. He went into his dressing room & while there he called "Maggie" she went to see if he wanted anything, found him unconscious and in a few minutes he was dead'.



John Cavafy: Watercolour ⁶

⁴ Dr John Cavafy – Obituary. *British Journal of Dermatology* 1901; 13: 311.

⁵ Dr John Cavafy – Obituary. *Lancet* 1901; 157: 1436–7.

⁶ Cavafy J. Symmetrical congestive mottling of the skin. *Trans Clin Soc Lond* 1883; 16

⁷ Cavafy J. On the antipyretic action of salicylate of soda. *Lancet* 1876; 108: 633

His funeral took place on 2 May and he was interred in the family grave at Norwood (grave 21,207, square 28) with his parents. His wife Marigo would follow in 1916. Sir Lucas Ralli (1846–1931), Alexander P. Ralli (1852–1927) and Philip L. Argenti (1853–1911), all nephews of Marigo Cavafy, all of them also now at Norwood, were the executors of his will, leaving an estate of £38,641 (approx. £4 million in 2020). His will lists a number of bequests, including £500 to the Endowment Fund of the Royal College of Physicians ‘of which he had been an ornament during his life’⁸.

This sketch of John Cavafy’s life gives only a partial picture of the man and his ‘crowded hours of glorious life’. It is fitting to close with the words of his colleagues St George’s: ‘No one, in whatever capacity he may have served his Hospital, ever had its interests more at heart than Dr Cavafy; no teacher in a medical school took more pleasure in such important work, and few teachers have attained to greater success than fell to his share....

His retiring disposition and innate modesty often led him to depreciate his own remarkable abilities, but as a scholar and a physician he stood in the front rank among the men of his time... His great characteristic, however, was his high sense of honour; and while he was ever lenient to the shortcomings of others, anything approaching snobbishness or dishonourable conduct was especially repugnant to his feelings. He was a man of exceptionally high abilities; he was a learned physician, and a staunch friend’.⁹

‘The consciousness of failing health... deprived English medicine of the full services of one of the acutest intellects that have adorned it of recent years. Modest and unassuming to a fault, he joined a profound knowledge of modern medical literature to a power of exact observation and a scientific precision of thought that should have placed him in the foremost rank of contemporary investigators. By his retirement, St. George’s Hospital and School lost at once a consummate physician and a brilliant systematic teacher. One may safely say that few men have left behind them such universal and unalloyed regret as Dr. Cavafy. He was a man whom to know was to like, admire, and deeply respect. His nature was a complex one, of many-sided development; but balanced with a singular harmony of proportion that bespoke the pure Hellenic ancestry of which he was pardonably proud’.¹⁰



Norwood: The Cavafy family gravestone

⁸ Royal College of Physicians, Annual Report 1902, pp. 16-19

⁹ *St George’s Hospital Gazette* 1901; IX (4): Friday May 10

¹⁰ Dr Isambard Owen (1850–1927). *British Medical Journal* 1901; 1: 1178

Asphalt and the Steam-Age Cemetery

Ian Dungavell

‘New graves warmed by steam!’ So scrawled one witty vandal on the hoardings of a proposed new cemetery in West London in 1834. Of course, there were no such things, but the perceived link between the modernity of cemeteries and that of railways was neatly made. Both were part of the upheavals that were reshaping the early 19th century city, private building speculations funded by joint-stock companies and enabled by Acts of Parliament. It is thus not surprising to find the same men involved in both.

Sir William Tite (1798–1873), the architect of the South Metropolitan Cemetery at Norwood, also designed the first London terminus of the London and Southampton Railway (1838), and he was employed by a number of other railway companies. Philip Hardwick (1792–1870), architect to the London and Birmingham Railway, who designed what is today the oldest railway terminus building in the world at Curzon Street in Birmingham (not to mention the famous, but demolished Euston Arch), was employed at Highgate Cemetery to sort out disputes with neighbours. Moreover, William Hosking (1800–1861), the architect of Abney Park Cemetery, was engineer to the Birmingham, Bristol, and Thames junction, afterwards called the West London Railway.

Architects also had the challenge, then as today, of verifying the competing claims of various suppliers promoting the usefulness of their new building products. In London in 1838, the sensational new product was asphalt. ‘Asphalte as it was known at the time, was a mixture of asphaltic rock with mineral pitch (bitumen) that formed a mastic cement that was both hard and elastic. The French spelling reflected the fact that it was enjoying something of a vogue in that country. One of the most prominent instances was 24,000 square yards of paving on the Place de la Concorde in the centre of Paris. The asphaltic rock was pulverized to a powder and mixed with the purified bitumen before being heated and poured into moulds for transport. It had been used very little anywhere until the 1830s, although it was said that the brick walls of Babylon had been cemented with bitumen as were some supposedly Roman fortifications discovered in the Haute-Savoie department around the end of the 18th century.

The Seyssel Asphalte Company was one of the most prolific advertisers proclaiming the suitability of asphalt not only for cement, pavements and roofs, but also ‘for protecting arches against the infiltration of water’, citing ‘most extensive works on the Greenwich Railway, Southampton Railway and Cemetery at Norwood’.

The firm had been established in March 1838 by Richard Tappin Claridge (c. 1799–1857, now best known as a hydrotherapist) who had taken out a patent for a ‘mastic cement’ useful for making roads and pavements, covering buildings, or lining tanks, in November 1837. It had an exclusive agreement with a French company for the supply of asphalt and bitumen which they mined at Pyrimont, near Seyssel, on the Rhone. In his patent, Claridge claimed that the Seyssel asphalt and bitumen formed a cement ‘better than that formed from any other asphalt I have been able to procure’. He had engaged the engineer

Frederick Walter Simms to travel to France in October 1837 to investigate the material and produce a report as to whether it would work as well in England as it did there.¹¹ Simms's report was published by John Weale's Architectural Library as Practical observations on the asphaltic mastic or cement of Seyssel, now extensively employed on the Continent, for pavements, roofing & flooring, for hydraulic works, &c. & c. explaining its nature and manipulation, late in 1837 or early in 1838. Simms went on to become the Engineer, Manager, and Secretary of Claridge's company.

Others were sceptical about Simms's claims for the superiority of Seyssel asphalt: the engineer Charles Pasley (1780–1861) wrote that he 'could not see anything in its natural chemical component parts... that can render it superior to similar compositions that may be made by combining the same substances found anywhere else'. Nevertheless, there had been several high-profile failures of similar materials which the Seyssel firm was keen to distance itself from: theirs was 'not the same kind of material that was laid down on the Roadway at Vauxhall a few years ago' or the same as that 'used on some parts of the Boulevards at Paris' which had 'broken into fissures in all directions, requiring the daily attention of the makers of the material ... to restore the surface'.

Another of Claridge's advertisements listed successful examples of Seyssel paving used in Paris including on the Boulevard des Italiens, the Place de la Concorde, the Rue de Rivoli, the Pont Royal and not least on the Pont du Carrousel that 'shows no indication whatever of wear or tear, though exposed to the extreme cold of winter, the heat of summer, and the constant passing of passengers, for nearly three years.' In London, their paving could be seen opposite the Horse Guards in Whitehall and near the Zoo at Regent's Park.

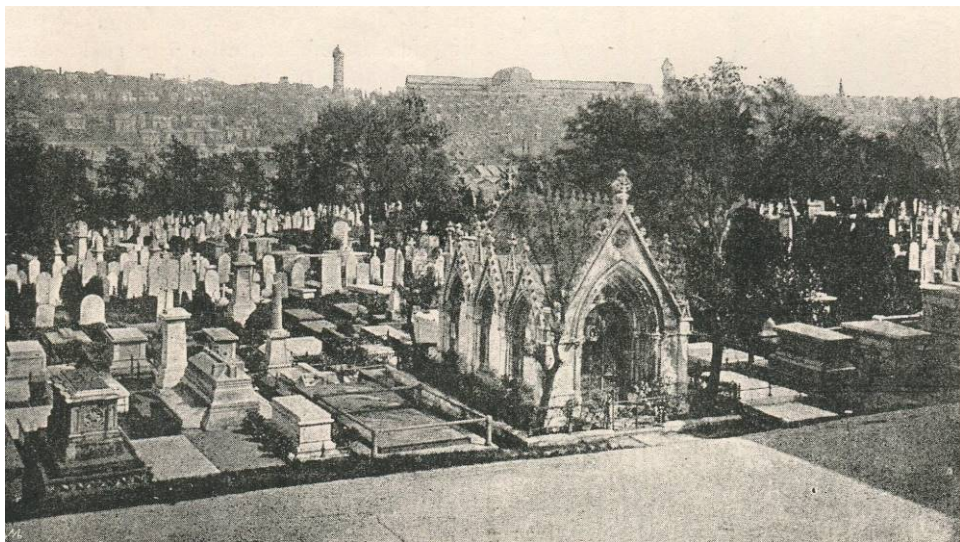
When Claridge's patent was advertised in March 1838 it was challenged by a firm run by John Henry Cassell, a manufacturing chemist from Millwall, which alleged that it infringed one they had taken out in 1834. Cassell was thus prompted to set up a joint-stock company to further exploit it. This seems to have precipitated an explosion of joint-stock companies seeking to exploit the new material: Cassell wrote of 'the present rage for "Asphalte Companies"' which many of the sober-minded are disposed to class among the bubbles of the day: "the earth has bubbles as the water hath, and these are of them".

And what a bubble it was. In April and May 1838, *The Times* carried advertisements from 22 new joint-stock companies promoting asphalt that together sought capital of some £3 million. As well as from Seyssel, their materials would have come from as near as Birmingham or Manchester, or as far afield as Egypt, Scotland, Switzerland, and Trinidad. Claridge's Seyssel Asphalte Company aimed not only to sell the asphalt to builders in ready-use casks, but also to train their workmen to use and apply it correctly. This would reduce the risk of failure, and so they encouraged architects to specify it by name rather than by use of terms such as 'asphalt' or 'bitumen'.

William Tite liked it so much he was prepared to lend his name to a commercial endorsement: 'wherever I have introduced your Asphalte Mastic, it has been perfectly

¹¹ Frederick Walter Simms (1803–1865) was a younger brother of scientific instrument maker William Simms FRS (1793-1860; grave 79, square 64 – replacement memorial)

successful', he wrote in 1841. 'I have used it very extensively not only as paving and to resist damp, but also at the South Metropolitan Cemetery at Norwood, in covering a very extensive range of catacombs, where it forms a terraced floor quite impervious to wet, and not acted upon by the weather.'



View from the roof of the Anglican catacombs to the east. Photograph: P Fincham c.1893

Tite was referring, no doubt, to the catacombs beneath the chapels, which were reported to be almost complete by the end of November 1837; the building of the chapels themselves was to begin immediately thereafter. If the Seyssel Asphalte Company was established in March 1838 this must have been one of its first jobs. Exactly when the asphalt was installed is unclear: but as late as August 1838 the directors stated that 'works at this cemetery are nearly completed', so surely by then, yet it was only early in January 1839 that advertisements appeared stating 'The cemetery is now complete.'

Unfortunately, both chapels have been demolished, the Dissenters' Chapel after being damaged in the Second World War, the most serious heritage losses sustained by any of the great London cemeteries. In consequence, the roof above the Anglican catacombs is now exposed in a way never intended. A recent inspection found no trace of asphalt, which was presumably removed in large part when the chapel was demolished.

Asphalt was also used at Kensal Green Cemetery to waterproof the catacombs, and although the supplier and date are uncertain it must also have been in 1838, which seems to have been a great year for cemetery asphalt. It is often forgotten that the Anglican chapel and catacombs there were opened only in June 1838, despite the cemetery having been consecrated over five years earlier. The 1861 guidebook to Kensal Green notes that the catacombs were dry and well-ventilated, and that large sums of money had been spent from time to time to keep them so: 'The terraces above... are covered with a thick coat of asphalte and concrete'.

Seyssel asphalt was also used at Highgate Cemetery to protect the roof of the Terrace Catacombs, also completed in 1838. Unlike many other cemeteries where the catacombs were beneath the chapels, this building is actually at ground level, set just down the hill from St Michael's church so as to give the appearance of being the entrance to its crypt. It is difficult to know exactly when the Terrace Catacombs were finished but certainly, like the rest of Highgate Cemetery, by September 1838 and, probably, a few months earlier. Highgate and Norwood were neck-and-neck in laying out their cemeteries, but Norwood was consecrated long before it was finished and Highgate long after. Highgate's Terrace Catacombs are now listed Grade II* for being 'probably the earliest surviving asphalted building in the country', although the asphalt itself has been renewed.

One connection which has rarely been remarked upon was that the engineer Sir Marc Isambard Brunel (1769–1849) was in 1838 a trustee of Claridge's company and his son, the great Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806–1859), was its consulting engineer. I.K. Brunel also had a personal link with Highgate: his sister had married the deputy chairman of the London Cemetery Company, Benjamin Hawes (1791–1862), in 1820. As MP for Lambeth, Hawes always took a personal interest in Brunel's other involvements such as the Thames Tunnel and the battle of the railway gauges, and this did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries. Unfortunately, no documents survive to link Brunel to this work.

Remarkably, a stone badge with the 'buckled belt' logo of the Seyssel Asphalte Company that was inset into the Terrace Catacombs has survived and is now in Highgate Cemetery's archive. This shows how keen the company was to demonstrate the successful application of its product. It was also used at Highgate's sister cemetery at Nunhead by May 1842, presumably on catacombs again, as the chapels there were not started until the summer of 1844.



Seyssel Asphalte Company logo at Highgate

Ever concerned with its reputation, the Seyssel Asphalte Company was keen to point out when things went wrong through the use of a competitor's inferior product. From an advertisement early in 1843 we know that an asphalt pavement at Abney Park Cemetery had failed and had had to be taken up. It was worse, though, not to use asphalt at all: Benjamin Baud (1807–1875) roofed the Colonnade Catacombs at Brompton Cemetery just with stone flags, and the damp environment has led to much decay of the outer wooden shell of the coffins.

The Seyssel Asphalte Company flourished during the 19th century and with demand for improved road surfaces, it should have done well in the 20th. However, it did not outlast its product: badly timed expansion and diversification on the eve of the First World War led to its winding up in 1917.

Dr Frederick George Bokenham (c. 1818-1868)

John Clarke

Frederick Bokenham's death 'in the tidal wave and earthquake that destroyed Sou.... Pere[?][sic] in August 1868 age 50' was recorded on the grave (grave 3,983, square 33) of his mother Harriet, who died on 18 November 1858, aged 75.¹² Tragically her second son, William Henry Bokenham (b. 9 April 1814), had died 'of typhus fever on landing at Boston N.A.' aged 52 on 5 January 1866.

Frederick was the son of George Bokenham (1778–1831) and Harriet, née Houghton (1784–1858), who married at St Mary, Islington, on 21 March 1810. Frederick was fifth of seven children, his sisters Harriet (1812–1890) and Amelia (1815–1895) being buried at Norwood with their mother. In 1851 mother (Harriet) and unmarried daughters Harriet and Amelia were living at 16 Bouverie Street, off Fleet Street, mother being described as a 'proprietor of houses'. By 1861 the daughters had moved to 29 Bouverie Street, presumably after the death of their mother, and to 32 Colville Road, North Kensington, in 1871. By 1881 the sisters were at 17 Delamere Road.

The Great Arica Earthquake

Despite the incomplete inscription on the family headstone we can be fairly certain that the missing words 'Sou ... Pere[?]' are 'South Peru'. Thus, Frederick was killed in the terrible earthquake that occurred on 13 August 1868 near Arica, then part of Peru, but now part of Chile. The earthquake and tsunami caused the almost complete destruction of Arica, Tacna, Moquegua, Mollendo, Ilo, Iquique, Torata, Arequipa and the surrounding areas of southern Peru. At Arica, the USS Civil War gunboat *Wateree* was carried 3 miles up the coast and 2 miles inland, to within 200 feet of a sheer cliff.

Tsunamis were recorded as far apart as Hawaii, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. The total casualties in South America were some 25,000. The earthquake had an estimated magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter Scale (8 causes death and major destruction, 9 is rare, but can cause enormous damage; the 1906 San Francisco earthquake was magnitude 8). Two contemporary illustrated accounts



The ruins of Arica after the earthquake of 1868

¹² *Norwood - The Monumental Inscriptions* by John Clarke (FOWNC Newsletter 96, September 2019)

are: *The Great South American Earthquakes of 1868* (Harper's New Monthly Magazine, April 1869), and *The Earthquake at Arica* in Scribner's Monthly, November 1872 (books.google.co.uk/books?id=m6L1O1hxqzkC&pg=PA603&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false). A summary of reports of the Arica earthquake can be found at: web.archive.org/web/20100116170411/http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/world/events/1868_08_13.php. There is also this account of the speed with which the tragedy occurred [*Pilot* 1868; 31 (46): 14 November]:

Mr. Dowling proceeds to describe the next calamity, which soon after overtook him, in these words: 'Ere this, you will undoubtedly have heard the account of this great calamity, and I need not enter into particulars as to the general effect of the catastrophe, but will try and state my personal share in it. At a few minutes before five o'clock, on the 13th of August, I was taking my usual walk before dinner, and called on my friends, William Billinghamurst, whom I found laughing and joking with Dr. F. Bokenham (who were both victims) and John-Nairn. They were both in high spirits, and invited me to walk in and take a cocktail, assuring me that the one they offered was not an ordinary cocktail, but was to be made by the best manufacturer in Iquique, who was now coming down the street. "This is the great cocktail man", said Billinghamurst, as Don Constantino Duarte joined my merry friends. They again invited me to partake of the celebrated composition. I excused myself and continued my walk, being desirous of seeing an amalgamating machine which was to begin work the next day. I found the machine complete. As the clock struck five, I wished Mr. Dixon, one of the proprietors, good evening, saying that I would call again in the morning to see the process of crushing and amalgamating, and went to dinner. I had just commenced, when I felt my chair move; the earthquake had commenced! I took out my watch: it was seventeen minutes past five. I held my watch in my hand and continued to take my soup, observing to a young man—Mariano Cano, who was dining with me, that the shock was a heavy one. He jumped up from the table and left me alone. I soon followed him, and gained an open place on the quay, near the custom-house. I still held my watch open in my hand. The shaking was most awful; the open space on the quay was occupied by all the neighbors, who could with difficulty keep their feet; in fact, several fell. One old lady, Dona Monica Loaiza, fell close to where I stood. I helped her on her feet again. The houses in the vicinity were solid stone buildings, but they rocked to and fro like twigs, and every moment were likely to come down. They, however, stood it well for some time; part of the customhouse fell just as my old Scotch friend, Peter King, had passed that part of the wall, and he was saved by a miracle, and joined us on the quay. During the earthquake, which had now lasted four minutes, the surrounding hills shook most awfully, darkening the horizon with clouds of dust. It was now twenty-one minutes past five'.

Frederick George Bokenham had married Maria Tinajas (1827–1911) in Iquique, Peru. They had seven children, two of whom Elena Victoria (1860–1917) and George (1861–1876), both born in Peru, went to live with their aunts in Colville Road. George died at school in 1876. Sometime during the 1870s Elena returned to Tacna where she married George Edward Brooking (1848–1894) of East Allington, Kingsbridge, Devon – variously also known as Jorge Eduardo Brooking and George Edward Billing – and they were to have five children all born in Peru. By 1891 they were back in England and living at Cannons Park House, Stanmore, Middlesex. At death, three years later, George Brooking left £29,113 11s 4d and Elena, by now known as Elena Bokenham de Brooking and living at 26 Belsize Avenue, Hampstead, left £14,204 14s.



Book Review: *Their Exits: Encore*

Richard Offer

Vivian-Neal H., Bisset A. *Their Exits: Encore. Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery*, 2020. Hardback, 400 pp, many monochrome and colour illustrations. ISBN 978 0 9572049 6 6. £20.99. Available at: www.kensalgreen.co.uk/publications/their-exits-encore.

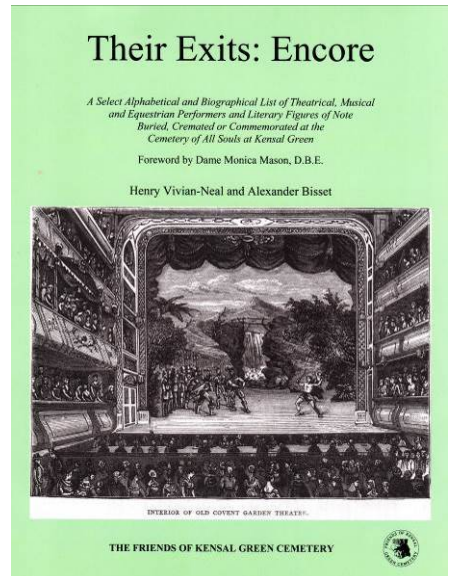
If, on the night of Halloween, the actors, singers, comedians, and dancers arose from their graves in Kensal Green you would see the most amazing and spectacular show. This new book, a much enlarged version of a previous volume, describes the entertainers, authors and musicians who are buried or otherwise commemorated there.

Henry Vivian-Neal and Alexander Bisset have produced an excellent A-Z of the burials giving biographical details, descriptions of the headstones and grave plus how to find them in the cemetery. There is also a short history of the cemetery itself.

Some of the names featured in the book remain familiar: writer William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863); actor, theatre manager and playwright Charles Kemble (1775–1854) and Frances (Fanny) Kemble, his daughter (1809–1893); novelist Wilkie Collins (1824–1889), who was buried with Caroline (one of his two mistresses); and the tightrope walker Blondin née Jean François Gravelet (1824–1897).

There are many links with the Crystal Palace. Blondin was engaged at £100 for a 30-minute appearance in 1861 (£12,000 in today's money). Others include: timpanist Gordon Cleather (1846–1922) who was General Manager of the Palace in 1882; Francisco (Frank) Mori (1820–1873), who was Professor of Singing there; and soprano Catharine Penna (1853–1894), who was in demand for choral works.

There are also many links with Norwood. A direct link comes via actor, comedian and theatre manager John Lawrence (J.L.) Toole (1830–1906), who was, say the authors, recognised as the leading farceur (joker, comic actor) of his day. The stage partnership he forged with Paul John Bedford (1792–1871) 'ranks among the most effective comic duos ever seen'. Toole was diminutive and lively while Bedford was tall and sedate. Bedford was buried at Norwood (grave 9,290, square 72; monument destroyed), but sadly their partnership was not maintained when Toole died in 1906.



The book is up-to-date. Two recent notable burials are those of Harold Pinter (1930–2008) and his collaborator, the writer Simon Gray (1936–2008). Today many well-known names such as Film Director Fred Zinnemann (1907–1997), Alan Rickman (1946–2016), and Anna Massey (1937–2011) are cremated and their only memorial will be the cremation register.

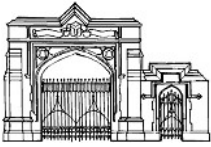
Their Exits: Encore is a book for either referring to, or best enjoyed by just dipping into it at random. As each entry is cross-referenced to other people in the cemetery, one can go on a wonderful journey of discovery. The actress and singer Madame Vestris (1797–1856) is cross-referenced with 22 other theatrical burials. She led a colourful and eventful life, making and losing money, having many lovers including a four-year affair with a son of the Marquess of Bath, leasing theatres and touring America. Thomas Grieve (1799–1882) was principal scenic artist at Covent Garden in 1839 under Vestris and her then husband Charles James Mathews (1803–1878), where he painted the panoramas for their Christmas pantomimes. Mathews too is buried at Kensal Green, but in a separate grave to that of Madame Vestris. Grieve, however lies at Norwood (grave 19,073, square 100 – monument destroyed).

It is clear from the career of Vestris and many other entries that the stage provided one of the few ways that 19th century women could gain real independence. Some such as pantomimist and actress Sarah Borrow (Miss Wilton, Mrs Lane, the ‘Queen of Hoxton’) (1822–1899) married well; in her case Sam Lane, the proprietor of *The Britannia Theatre*, which she ran when he died, earning reputed profits of £5,000 a year (some £580,000 today). A large number of the singers and actors had successful careers. But as the authors point out many of the performers began at a very young age and must have been badly exploited. It is also clear that performing in the US on tour was very lucrative.

The book has some very colourful and controversial characters. William Wilde (1852–1899) was the journalist brother of Oscar. He worked for *Punch* and *Vanity Fair* before becoming Chief Correspondent and Leader Writer for the *Daily Telegraph*. Wilde, we are told, was notoriously lazy and never reached work before noon. George Bernard Shaw dismissed him as a vulgar journalist of no account and Sir Max Beerbohm agreed. Oscar portrayed him as the idle wastrel Ernest in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. When Oscar went on trial, William said ‘Thank God my vices were decent’; he died of liver disease.

There are seven cross dressers mentioned in the book. Thomas Ernest Boulton (1847–1904) formed a very successful duo with Frederick William Park (1846–1881, buried at Mount Hope Cemetery, Rochester, NY) as *Fanny and Stella*. The authorities were happy with their stage performances, but when they went into London dressed as women they were ejected from two theatres, bound over after being mistaken for women dressed as men, and then prosecuted for homosexuality. But they were found not guilty because the prosecution could not prove such activity had taken place.

Their Exits: Encore adds to our understanding of one of London’s finest cemeteries. Usefully there are Indexes by Occupation and by Location in the cemetery as well as a Bibliography. It is pleasing that the seven cemeteries circling London are now being meticulously researched and have enthusiasts who care for them. It is to be hoped that more books of this nature will follow.



A Promenade in the Cemetery

Bob Flanagan

On 2 July I was contacted by Bryon Fear, Publicity Director of the South London Theatre (SLT), and festival director of Fest Norwood. Of course many of their festival events this year have been performed online, but Bryon suggested that an open-air promenade performance in the cemetery would be acceptable given that social distancing could be observed easily. Of course I welcomed the idea and passed on details to Jaqui Landy and Beth Cross (Bereavement Services Manager and Events Co-ordinator, respectively) immediately whilst cautioning that we could not interfere with funerals, for example.

The next I heard was that the performances were scheduled for 9 and 11 August starting at 7 pm and were immediate sell-outs! I must thus apologise to members because it was my intention to publicise the event via our Twitter feed and Mailchimp list.

Be this as it may, SLT generously allowed me to join one of the groups in order that I could compile this report. I must say that the event was well planned and organised with seemingly some 20 or so volunteers present to ensure everything ran smoothly in addition to the performers! Perhaps the promise of a pop-up bar in their courtyard afterwards was an encouragement! Lambeth Parks were also on hand to lock up afterwards.



Roisin Deady and Connie de Marais perform an extract from The Importance of Being Earnest in the new Rose Garden (see p. 17)

After a brief introduction to the Cemetery given in the shadow of the Tite arch, the Promenade took the form of 17 ‘stops’ round the cemetery, three of which were ‘heritage insights’ delivered by the guides. The first stop was at the grave of Sir Hiram Maxim (grave 34,481, square 124) where Kim Goldsmith, Olly Adkin, and Matthew Ali recited moving poems from World War One. Maxim of course invented smokeless powder (cordite), which was produced in massive quantity in both World Wars, as well as his eponymous gun. I didn’t know that his son Hiram Percy Maxim (1869–1936) invented the first successful firearm (and automobile) silencer back in the US, in response it was said to his father’s deafness brought about by frequent tests of his machine gun.

The only other monument that featured directly in the Promenade was that of juggler Paul Cinquevalli (grave 32,152, square 82) where Gideon Benari gave a display of juggling whilst outlining aspects of the life of ‘the Master’. This being said, Mrs Beeton’s early

death and burial at Norwod (grave 8,348, square 64) were referred to in a monologue given by her ‘cook’, aka Margaret Glenn, and ballet dancer Katti Lanner and her partner/lover Guiseppe de Francesco (both grave 21,835, square 40) were mentioned in conjunction with a performance by *Ballet Builders* (Chaz Doyle, Bryon Fear, Robert Hayman, Mitch Labiak, and Suzie Partridge).



Celia Delaney Finale
with ukulele



Other highlights included *Little Miss Buttercup* from *HMS Pinafore* sung by Katie-Jayne Mainwood, and extracts from *Hamlet* (Daniel Kelly) and *Dracula* (Jerome Joseph Kennedy). St Stephen’s Chapel of course provided an ideal backdrop to an extract from Margaret Atwood’s *The Penelopiad* (Siobhan Campbell, Anjali Dwesar, Maddie Dunn, Jazz Long).

The Promenade concluded with a *Finale with ukulele* (the first time I have ever had to think about how to spell ukulele) by Celia Delaney, a professional performer apparently, who has of course seen hard times lately. Nevertheless, she produced a superb ‘Sarf’ London performance to summarise the evening.

All-in-all I was pleased to see the cemetery able to play a part in this community venture in this difficult year. Thanks again to Jaqui Landy and her team for facilitating the event and to Bryon Fear and his SLT colleagues for making the evening such a success. The weather too was kind of course. Let us hope that in the fullness of time further collaborations will materialise based in St Stephen’s Chapel as well as in the cemetery.

Forthcoming Events

September 2020 – January 2021

In response to the continuing uncertainty vis-à-vis the Covid-19 pandemic, your trustees have decided reluctantly to abandon thoughts of holding meetings or tours this year. We thus plan to start afresh with tours and with the AGM and lecture in January next year at the Old Library, 14-16 Knights Hill, SE27 0HY starting at 14:30. If plans change these will be notified in the January 2021 Newsletter.

Saturday 16 January 2021 – In Pursuit of Special Interest – Roger Bowdler

Visiting a cemetery like Norwood can be daunting. The myriad memorials clamour for attention, and their sheer number overwhelms. How are the key tombs identified? This talk considers how new discoveries and new understanding can be reflected in conservation and celebration. Dr Bowdler was formerly Director of Designation, i.e. Listing, at Historic England.

A Bit of Mystery – Bob Flanagan

The grave of William Openshaw (c. 1854–1924) and his wife Jane (1854–1933) in the unconsecrated portion of the cemetery (grave 36,417, square 28) has clearly suffered the loss of a medallion that likely featured an image of William himself. The grave was purchased on 14 July 1924 – no purchaser is shown on the burial register.

William was a commercial buyer of grocery provisions. He was born in Salford, Lancashire whilst Jane was born in West Norwood. They had no children. William was buried on 19 July 1924 and Jane on 11 January 1933. Has anyone a photograph of the intact memorial?



FOWNC Personnel

Chairman & Publications Officer: Bob Flanagan, 79 Durban Road, London SE27 9RW
(Tel: +44 20 8670 3265; e-mail: chairman@fownc.org)

Deputy Chairman: John Clarke, 35 Addison Gardens, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8DJ
(Tel: +44 20 8390 7121; e-mail: deputychairman@fownc.org)

Hon Secretary & Tours Organiser: Jill Dudman, 119 Broxholm Road, London SE27 0BJ
(Tel: +44 20 8670 5456; e-mail: secretary@fownc.org)

Hon Treasurer: Anna Long, 1st & 2nd Floor Flat, 47 Hambalt Road, London SW4 9EQ
(Tel: +44 7940 581 654; e-mail: treasurer@fownc.org)

Webmaster: James Slattery-Kavanagh, Quotes, 3 Cricketfield, Newick, East Sussex BN8 4LL
(Tel: +44 1825 723943; e-mail: webmaster@fownc.org)

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