



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Issue No.16

April 2015

Newsletter

Clearing up

It is hard to remember now just how dreadful the scene was this time last year. The fallen trees and debris have all been cleared away by Angela Swain's indefatigable team of volunteers, though ugly gaps left by lost trees are still all too evident.

Kent Highways have at last unblocked the silted street drains that were flooding the paths, and work has been commissioned to repair the damaged memorials below the Culverden Square warehouse. The fissures in the Belvedere by the gate have still to be dealt with and we



Examining the possibility of re-using a trunk as a rustic seat

are pressing for action on this so that access there can be restored.

To replace some of the greenery lost from the south west part of the boundary, a new hedgerow intermingling hawthorns and other wildlife-friendly shelter shrubbery has just been planted along the warehouse bank.



Kasia Olszewska from TWBC Parks Department with Felicity Brown

However the 2014 elements as we were recovering from wind and water still had a nasty shock in store for us. Along came fire. Despite the efforts of 40 firemen, the mellowed Victorian buildings about to be renovated as a row of mews houses, but meanwhile standing empty on the site running along our

north boundary, were burnt to the ground. This was apparently due to arson by teenagers. The ground they had occupied is now bulldozed and barren.

We shall be watching closely to see what planning proposals are brought forward for re-developing this sensitive site.



Green fingers

With longer days, the hosts of bulbs and flora planted over the past year are bursting into flower to embellish the banks and spring walks. The gardening team have also introduced a new feature. Where graves still retain their kerbstones in reasonably good order, these are being used to provide an elegant frame for single varieties of plants like violets, lady's smock and creeping thyme.

In the picture below on the left the team is planting up round William Willicombe's tomb. Their teeshirts are booty from their



Hundreds of cowslips are in bloom

silver award from South and South East in Bloom



The Poynder grave on the right with spring snowflakes (*leucojum vernum*) shows how effective this themed planting can be. Two sisters, Julia and



Elizabeth Poynder lie here. Their father John Poynder was an energetic evangelical clergyman, author, and campaigner. Using his holdings in the East India Company, he succeeded in getting suttee declared as culpable homicide rather than a local cultural custom.

For 40 years he was clerk and solicitor to the Royal Hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlehem (or Bedlam); respectively the house of correction for vagrants, petty criminals, and prostitutes, and the City institution for the criminally insane. Sydney Smirke's domed addition to the buildings still can be seen, now transformed into the Imperial War Museum. Poynder

survived some critical grillings from Parliament about conditions there. On the whole they compared favourably with those in other institutions, such as by providing clean bedding straw.

The sisters lived at 10 Upper Grosvenor Road till Julia died in 1872. Elizabeth then moved to 15 Queens Road where she died in 1888.

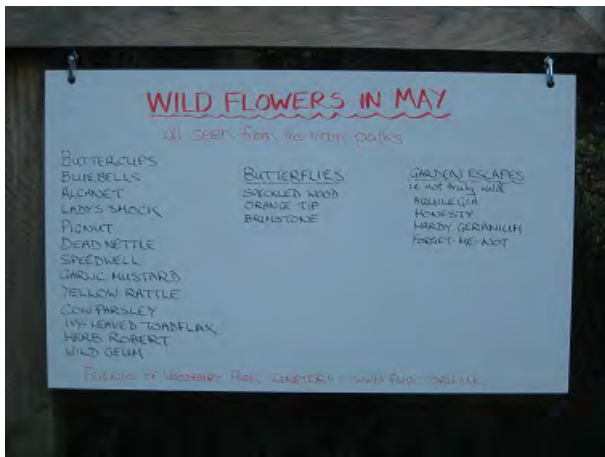


Thomas Rowlandson 1808 Bridewell Pass Room, so called because people passed from here to their parishes. Note the loose straw stalls



Bethlehem Hospital for the criminally insane in St Georges Fields

Gardening gear



Another innovation by the ever-inventive gardening team is an information board about plants to look out for each month. It was praised by the Judges of the dossier we submitted to the RHS Its Your Neighbourhood competition. *“This delightful entry is a credit to the Friends and committee...The use of the whiteboard and photographs at the entrance was a nice touch and very informative to visitors...the work that the committee and the Friends do is phenomenal ensuring that the heritage of the site is not lost, as well as making an*

area for many to use and enjoy. The work done on the heritage is especially good”



Different century, different crop, same hard work

Here are two gardening questions for all of you. First, would you like us to attach some tree labels to identify the different varieties? We don't all know our cupressocyparis from our chamaecyparis and our sawara cypress from our sequoia. A related task is updating and illustrating our tree identification booklet - we are seeking someone keen to help with this.

Second, have you any old tools, materials, garden pots and ornaments, outdoor chairs longing to be re-homed? Please do hunt out disused items lurking in your shed or behind it. That would help us stock the garden bric a brac stall at our plant sale, which has an added feature this year of a children's stall of small plants. As in previous years this will be on St Johns Green. Contact Angela Swain 01892 541881 or Wendy Streeter 530293 to agree how, where and when items can be delivered to us, or alternatively picked up from you. The plant and equipment sale is an important source of funds to pay for memorial repairs. Making good after gales, frosts, and sometimes human behaviour is a perennial task.

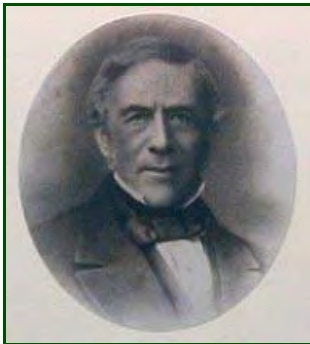


WPC Burials 13

Sydney Smirke RA FRS FSA 1798-1877 & Margaret Jane Smirke 1854-73

Sydney Smirke's tomb, perched high on the bank is an eye-catcher, the handsome memorial of an eminent architect. His youngest daughter Margaret who died of TB at 19 was buried here in 1873. It is reasonable to assume he discussed the form of a memorial for her with its

designer, his friend John Loughborough Pearson, with a view to making it a fitting record of himself as well when he should come to join her there. Its features echo his past architectural feats such as the rosy granite pillars of his Carlton Club building, the Greek temple format reminiscent of his years of



work on the British Museum, while its hexograms and other embellishments reflect his antiquarian pursuits and perhaps his work on the Temple Church. A biography in stone.

Isabella his wife had in 1871 been buried at St Marys and St Eanswyth in Folkestone. It was a town they knew well through his work for Lord Radnor, who sought to emulate James Burton's St Leonards. When they married in 1840 she was 20 and he was 42. They had 10 children during the next 16 years. For most of that time their home was London's Berkeley Square where Smirke had his office a few doors along. By the early 1870s, however, he was living at The Hollies in Frant Road Tunbridge Wells. Both Mary Octavia (seen here with Margaret) and their elder sister Isabella were married at St Marks Church, Broadwater Down.



During his long career, Smirke became a wealthy Establishment figure of high repute and many public appointments. In the words of one obituary,

This picture must have been just before Margaret's death

It may truly be said of him that his works live after him, for his name is associated with some of our most beautiful architecture. The restoration of York Minster, of Lichfield Cathedral, of the Temple Church (in which he was assisted by Mr Burton) and the beautiful little Savoy Chapel are monuments of his rare skill and taste in ecclesiastical architecture. The famous dining hall of the Inner Temple too bears record of his work, while the handsome Carlton Club in Pall Mall with its polished granite pillars so well known to Conservatives is his design

Official eulogies tend to gloss over any unfavourable traits but one lukewarm comment is interesting "Mr Smirke's manner was somewhat cold and reserved but he was greatly esteemed by those who knew him. He had travelled much and possessed a cultivated mind"

Perhaps a kinder testimonial is that of the diarist Joseph Farington who wrote of the young Smirke that he was "very tractable and sweet".

“Assisted by Mr Burton”



The only known caricature of Burton

Sidney Smirke and Decimus Burton were friends and contemporaries at the Royal Academy Schools, moving in the same circles, and later members of the same learned institutions. Patronage was important in getting commissions, and needed the right connections. Both men had flying starts in their careers as members of leading families in the architectural field. Sydney’s elder brother Robert Smirke, for whom he worked for many years, was a Greek Revivalist and Sydney designed many buildings in classical mode. But he was also interested in mediaeval and eastern styles, contributing articles to *Archaeologica*. This knowledge was honed up in restoration work at Westminster Hall and at York Minster. As for Burton, it was at Tunbridge Wells in 1827, that he first tried his hand at designing a Gothic revival church - Holy Trinity.

Smirke’s father in law was John Dobson, a leading Gothic Revival architect in Newcastle, with lucrative commissions throughout Northern England. Soon after marrying, Smirke was appointed jointly with Burton by the Inns of Court to restore the crumbling 12th century Temple Church.



The font was a Smirke addition



The cupola was added later by Smirke and no longer exists

They used replica mediaeval tiles and stained glass windows, along with extensive painted decoration to re-create what they believed to be the original early medieval appearance of the building. Not all were happy with this. Some thought it vandalism, some as creating a tourist hot spot rather than a place of worship (the Benchers were particularly incensed when visitors occupied their regular pews) and others as a slide towards reintroducing Catholic practices. The

sketches below for the decoration of the ceiling and of the altar give some idea of how richly colourful it must have appeared. The painted work was all destroyed when the church was firebombed in 1941 and never replaced in the rebuild.



Out and about in August



Samuel Morley of Hall Place Leigh, philanthropist, at Abney Park Cemetery

One of our annual events is a walk round an interesting Victorian graveyard, preferably with a guide from their Friends Group. Notable past visits have included Nunhead, Brompton, Margate and last summer Abney Park Cemetery and Clissold House, once owned by the Hoare family.

This year our eyes are set on the 72 acres of Kensal Green, opened in 1833 and still operating today. Among its many hundreds of nationally notable memorials there are some of special interest to Tunbridge Wells. They include John Claudius Loudon whose mortuary garden designs clearly influenced our own cemetery, William Makepeace Thackeray visitor and writer, the Rev Professor Baden Powell of Langton Green whose illustrious son went to

school at Rosehill, Dr James Miranda Barry who was court-martialled in St Helena by General Middlemore after refusing to fight a duel, the pious embezzler Sir John Dean Paul whose second wife Susan was buried in WPC *“after severe and protracted bodily suffering borne with exemplary Christian patience and fortitude”*, Louisa Twining philanthropist and member of the Board of Guardians at Pembury workhouse, who saw the tea and cabbage being boiled there in the same pot, and Dr John Cumming who preached that the end of the world would come by 1867 but prudently renewed the lease of his house on the Common for well beyond that date.

We also hope to visit old St Marylebone churchyard where Sir John Soane, Professor of Architecture while Burton and Smirke studied at the Royal Academy Schools, has his tomb. It is also where Thomas Hardy as a young surveyor had to oversee the removal of bodies and gravestones from one part to accommodate the new railway line. An experience that later led him to pen the following lines,

The Levelled Churchyard

**Oh passenger, pray list and catch
Our sighs and piteous groans,
Half stifled in this jumbled patch
Of wrenched Memorial stones!**

**We late lamented resting here,
Are mixed to human jam,
And each to each exclaims in fear,
‘I know not which I am!’**

**Where we are huddled, none can trace
And if our names remain,
They pave some path or porch or place
Where we have never lain!**

**From restorations of thy fane,
From smoothings of thy sward
From zealous Churchmen’s pick and plane;
Deliver us O Lord!**



The “Hardy tree” with its wrenched stones



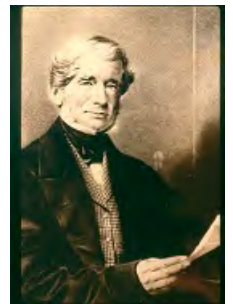
He made his fortune in Leicester selling Morleys knitted goods and gloves

Action reminders



Charles Tattershall Dodd was baptised in King Charles Church in 1815 a few months before the Battle of Waterloo. Don't miss Philip Whitbourn's bicentenary talk at our AGM on 22 May. We plan a small exhibition in the Library and Museum over July-August and a heritage walk on 11 September -booking will be needed for the latter.

A 150th anniversary is that of Quebec's Jeffery Hale Hospital made possible by his bequest. Michael Boden Executive Director of the Jeffery Hale Foundation will be at our AGM on the 22nd to tell us about their plans for refurbishing the Hale memorial in Woodbury Park Cemetery. We hope to make a Friendship Link with Mount Hermon Protestant cemetery in Quebec which Hale founded at the same time as ours.



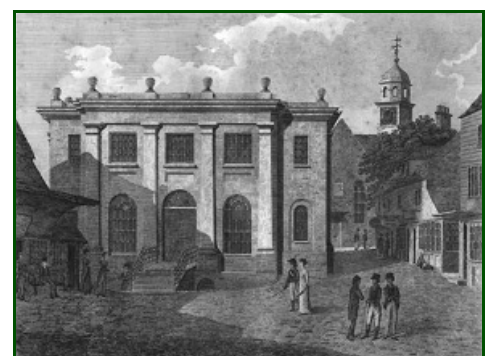
Also at our AGM, tickets will be on sale for the Hand Bell open air concert in the cemetery on Sunday 19 July. This will be personally conducted by our Chair Angela Phillips. So *“Ring out wild bells to the wild sky”* but hopefully not to the flying cloud, the frosty light. If that happens, we have arranged to adjourn to St Johns Church.



You may also want to book yourself with David Bushell for the 8th August Kensal Green outing described opposite. Two other notable memorials of special local interest there are those of Decimus Burton and of Letitia Byrne whose etchings in Paul Amsinck's 1810 guide show how Tunbridge Wells looked around the time Tattershall Dodd was born.



Letitia Byrne



Dates for your diary

* *Friday 22 May*

7.30 Camden Centre

AGM and talk on Victorian Tunbridge Wells through the eyes of Tattershall Dodd

* *Saturday 23 May*

10am-1.30pm St Johns Church Green

Plant sale and gardening bric a brac

* *Sunday 19 July*

2.30 Cemetery (St Johns church if wet)

Open air handbell concert

* *Saturday 8 August*

all day - details to be announced

Summer outing

Tour of Kensal Green Cemetery

* *10-13 September*

Details to be announced

Heritage Open Day walks



Notice of Annual General Meeting 2015

This will take place at the Camden Centre on Friday 22 May at 7.30pm. Nominations are invited for the four Honorary Officers (Chair, Deputy Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) and up to eight other Committee Members. These should be sent to the Secretary at Bridge House, Culverden Park Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9QX.

The AGM will be followed by "*Tunbridge Wells through the eyes of Tattershall Dodd*", a talk by Dr. Philip Whitbourn. 2015 is the bicentenary of the birth of this artist whose drawings and paintings record how Tunbridge Wells looked in the early Victorian years.