



# Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Issue No.5

September 2008

## Newsletter

### Waving the Green Flag



*Without doubt it is the Friends' involvement that has won a deserved Green Flag for this site. We hope they keep up the good work.*

This was the judges' accolade in July when they awarded "this fantastic site" a prestigious Civic Trust Green Flag as one of Britain's exceptional green places.

The judges praised the environmental management plan governing all we do for its balance of wildlife protection, memorial conservation and enabling more people to enjoy the site.

Their recommendations include a "strong" one to the Council to acquire or at least manage the adjoining derelict land, sort out the parking, and repair walls and fences. They also want the option of a second entrance explored. These are all matters of great interest to the Friends on which we shall be working closely with the Borough Council in the coming months.

### Singing in the rain



The judges were much taken with St John's Guides evening concert in the cemetery. Undaunted by a passing shower, their *Midsummer Dreaming* raised £50 for our

conservation work from the audience of parents and supporters. Musical solos and short playlets were performed on the steps of General Molyneux Williams' fountain. Cinderella Fouard, who is buried higher up the hill, would surely have approved of the one about the trials and triumph of her namesake.



### The smaller wildlife

Our natural history advisors continue to make intriguing new finds. *Andrena fulvago*, shown here, is a scarce mining bee with only one other Kent location so far recorded. This hard-working lady, struggling with her large golden pollen baskets on her rear legs, favours yellow composites – hawkweed, dandelions and other daisy like flowers. A fascinating walkround pamphlet and map, *The smaller wildlife of Woodbury Park Cemetery*, (some of it is very small indeed) has now been completed for us by Dr Beavis and is being printed. It demonstrates how important it is to retain the specialist food plants each species requires.



Meanwhile, already available is a revised edition of the tree walk pamphlet, written by Richard Still and now with a map and line drawings, to help you identify some of those puzzling conifers and shrubs as you stroll round. Over 50 people honed their recognition skills in the guided tree walk in June, led by Chris Reynolds, Director of Bedgebury Pinetum. Watch out for details of a repeat of this walk next summer.



*Buddleia x weyeriana*

## Mini-beast safari



Fossicking among the grasses and along the banks created great excitement among all the children taking part and their accompanying adults. Unexpected guest appearances were put in by dragonflies. They at least have benefited from the wet summer which has refreshed the damaged pond in the “triangle”, where the Friends – and the Civic Trust – want to see a nature reserve created.

Less happy news, however, concerning the butterflies and bees. They, like humans, prefer sunny weather for their courtship displays. At our June moth-trapping evening, as part of the national Moth Survey, we found a dive in numbers this year. These moth surveys, besides having a serious scientific purpose, are to be recommended as bringing back happy childhood memories of illicit night expeditions.

## Finger tip searches

The work parties have acquired some new members, but further helpers to garden and plant are always welcome. Just turn up at 2pm on Saturdays.



They are also our front line detectives and have located some as yet unidentified stones under the turf and a number of tantalising fragments. A recent fabulous find is this delicately inlaid top of Sir Henry Yule’s neat small cross which has now been refixed as part of the refurbishment of this grave. Look out for it on the left as you

stroll along from the entrance. It looks as trim and businesslike as he was reputed to be. This is the man of whom it was said “He hated two things: cruelty and authors who did not index their books”.

## Conserving the memorials

We had to get a Faculty from the Diocese to carry out our conservation programme – an elaborate process successfully negotiated with the help of the Vicar of St John’s. It came with the Diocesan Chancellor’s good wishes for our efforts.

Another set of good wishes came from English Heritage.



Here Sara Rutherford, English Heritage guru who secured the listing of the cemetery 4 years ago, is seen with TWBC manager Jeff Kempster, who has throughout given us warm encouragement and support. They are examining the elaborately carved monument of Henry “weep not for me” Wheeler, horse dealer extraordinaire from Southborough.

Burslems have now begun the first phase of monument repairs for us with the money the Friends have so far raised. You will see some of their careful handiwork as you walk round – re-erected headstones and ledgers put back as they were before the ravages of tree roots. Do let us know of any monument you would specially like to see on our priority list, cost permitting.

Is there anyone out there who is an expert at lime mortaring – or who would be willing to take a day’s training in the technique to become one? The Friends could then seek authority themselves to do some of the simple water-sealing around the edges of graves. It could release precious repair funds for the tricky work that only skilled masons can do.

## The 1987 Great Gale

Remember this? Some of the memorials suffered greatly, not helped by the subsequent flattening and re-location of those deemed unsafe or too costly to repair. This

explains some gaps and puzzling re-alignments. We were told that one casualty was an inscribed stone arch close to the “triangle” boundary marking the area set aside for paupers graves. We would love to find out more about this. Our February lecture will be looking at Pembury workhouse and its many paupers who are buried here.

An unexpected 1987 drama was when the torn-up roots of a tree close to the chapel revealed a vault full of guns and Mills bombs. This must have been an adjunct of the Chapel crypt during its 1939-1945 war years as an ARP post. The record of the arms hidden there to fight against the threatened German invasion was then forgotten in some War Office filing cabinet. When the cache came to light again in this unexpected way, the police were summoned and it was removed in two vans by army experts. We would welcome more research into the use of this ARP post in the war years and the local plans into which it fitted.

Has anyone got more recollections or pictures of the gale’s impact in the cemetery and the clearing up that followed? In particular of the paupers arch?

## Hidden heroines

The history research group continues to amass information on those buried in the cemetery. Many fascinating histories are emerging, some of eminent figures like Jefferson Hale who founded Quebec’s biggest hospital, and some of unsung local heroines like the woman who, rather than let her family be sent off to Pembury workhouse when the farmer evicted them from their tied cottage, carried her sick husband off in a wheelbarrow, and supported him and her children by selling penny cups of tea at the foot of Little Mount Sion.

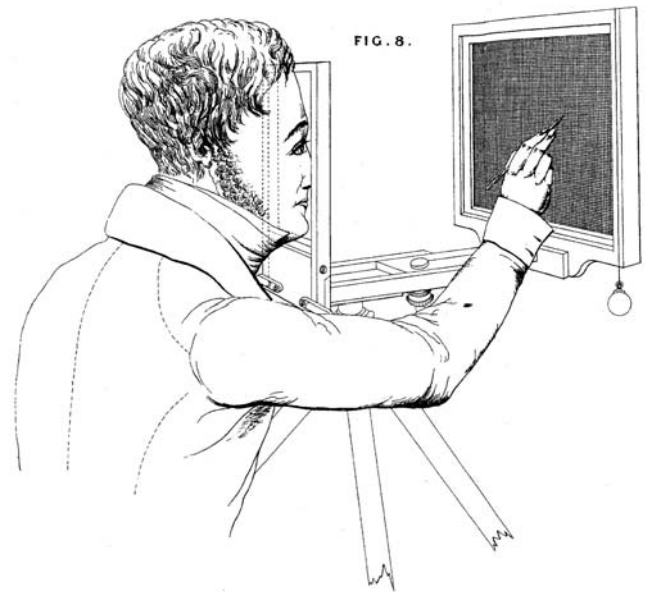
Here are some of the local names currently being researched:

Apps, Ashby, Avis,  
 Back, Barrett, Barfoot, Bassett, Bird, Bishop, Bond,  
 Brampton, Burges,  
 Caldwell, Catchpole, Catt, Coleman, Cox, Crittal,  
 Diggens, Everest, Fitness, Foard, Fox, Geer, Gibbs,  
 Hawley, Hoare, Hopton, Hosmer,  
 Langley, Milton, Moon, Owen, Otway,  
 Peacock, Pinn, Pope, Powell, Plumley, Prebble, Prickett,  
 Quinnell, Quint, Ranger, Roffe,  
 Sandall, Smirke, Strange, Swift, Thorpe,  
 Walkling, Wells, Wilmot, Wheeler, Woodfall,  
 Woodhams.

Do let us know if you have any knowledge or material about any of these families. And do join us if you are interested in exploring the Victorian past of Tunbridge Wells.

## Help for hopeless artists

Skinners School are now using the cemetery for a range of work. As part of this they are attempting at our request to build and test the drawing, sketching and delineating machine patented by lady inventor Caroline Burges in 1832. She is buried not far from the Hoare grave. We obtained a copy of the long-expired patent through the good offices of Councillor John Miller.



This inventive and interesting lady has been chosen as the subject of this issue’s concluding “mini-monograph”.

## Winter programme

Last, but not least, be sure to put this list of events into your diary.

Sun. 12<sup>th</sup> Oct.: **Autumn walk** (Keith Palmer). Meet 2.30 pm, WPC gate.

Fri. 14<sup>th</sup> Nov.: **Jenkin Homfray Llewellyn - the life and times of a Victorian military surgeon.** Talk by Michael Hinton about this interesting character buried in the cemetery. 7.30 pm, Camden Centre.

Fri. 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2009: **Pembury workhouse and the paupers graves in WPC.** 7.30 pm, Camden Centre.

Do come to the events with your friends and to the autumn walk with your family.

## WPC Memorials

### 2. Caroline Burges — Inventor

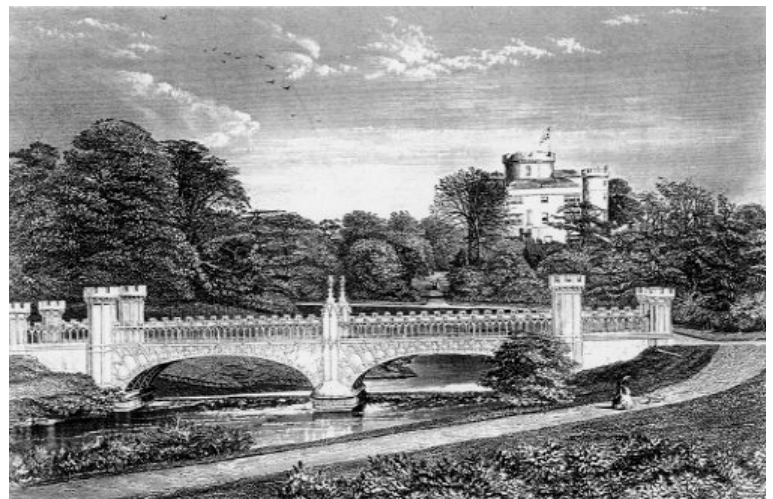
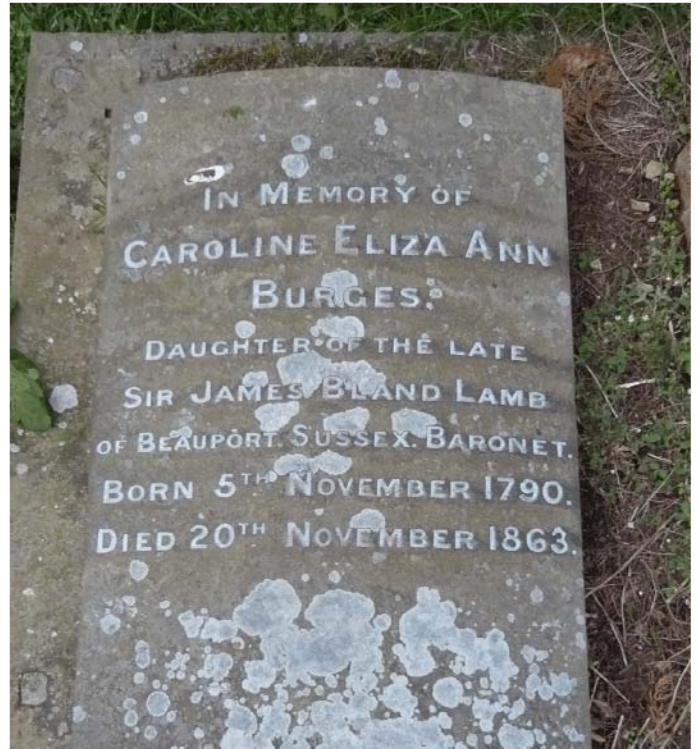
Caroline lived for most of her life at Beauport Park, near Hastings, with her father, Sir James, and then with her raffish elder brother, Sir Charles. Her father had been a Government Minister and Knight Marshal of the Royal Household, overseeing George IV's Coronation. He was also a poet, playwright and musician. Born James Bland Burges, he and his eldest son Charles changed their surnames to Lamb in 1821 after a legacy.

Caroline kept the name she was born with, as did the rest of her many siblings. When she was 21 her younger brother, Ensign Wentworth Noel Burges, died heroically aged 19 at the siege of Burgos fighting Napoleon's army. 3 years later another brother, Somerville Waldemar, lost a leg at the battle of Waterloo, also when he was 19. A contemporary described how after the battlefield amputation he refused help and insisted on hopping unaided to the hospital cart.

Charles's own son was obsessed with the world of chivalry and from the age of 7 began with the help of the Beauport estate carpenter to build a "Kingdom of Winnipeg". This was an elaborate walled city, castle, pyramid tombs and monument for his guineapigs. Over the years he wrote extensive volumes with illustrations about their noble exploits. Perhaps the same carpenter helped Caroline with the construction details of her apparatus in 1832.

Caroline spent much time at Eglinton Castle in Ayrshire, which Sir Charles enjoyed as stepfather and guardian of the young Earl of Eglinton. She must surely have attended the elaborate medieval tournament at Eglinton, organised by Charles and his stepson in 1837 to mark Victoria's accession. It cost the equivalent of £4 million today. Alas it was washed out by rain. This tournament bridge, for example, was specially built for their guests. It still stands today, though the castle has gone.

Presumably the death of Sir Charles in 1860 was the cause of her move to Belvedere No 1, Church Road, directly opposite Holy Trinity Church. It was her home in 1861, together with a companion and 5 servants. She had long connections with Tunbridge Wells as her father used to rent a house on Mount Sion, next door to his friend and literary colleague Richard Cumberland.



## Useful Contacts

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