



# Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

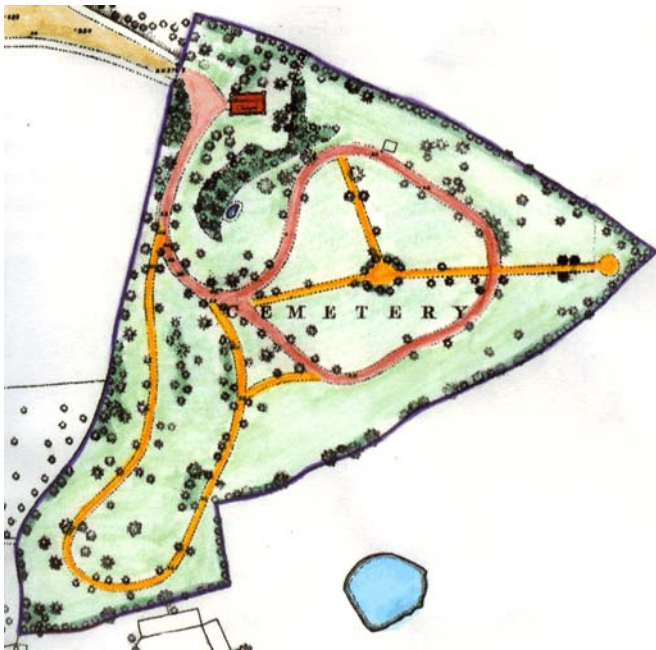
Issue No.6

February 2009

## Newsletter

### Paradise on earth

The September issue celebrated our Civic Trust Green Flag award. December saw another national appearance, this time in the pages of Shire Library's new publication *The Victorian Cemetery* by Sarah Rutherford. She describes the spiritual nature of the Victorian cemetery, with its "tranquil attractive grounds, calm in character to soothe mourning visitors and provide a contemplative pointer to Paradise." Page 7 shows an early Victorian layout designed to mirror the Elysian Fields by creating an "Arcadian setting for the mortal remains of the deceased: man's idea of Paradise on earth". Here it is.



### Winter wind-down

With winter, natural herbage has been less mettlesome, and the weekly working parties have completed the end of year tidying up jobs.

Sight-lines — and thus security — have been improved, but we continue to maintain the wildlife patches and restrict mowing in key areas.

An exciting find was a surviving plant of the *calluna vulgaris*, or ling, that once flourished over this area and the Common.

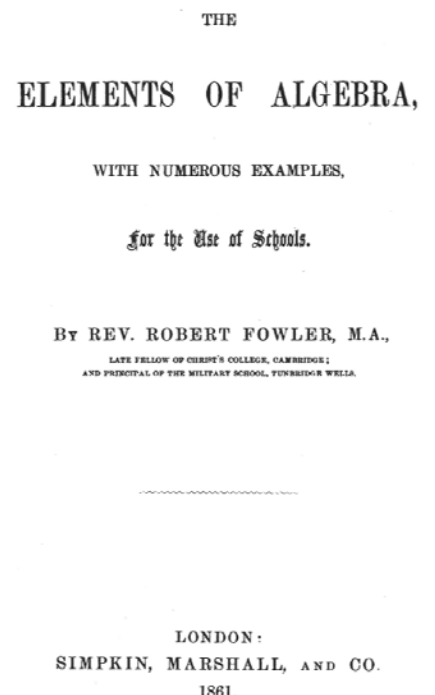


Careful probings are being carried out in certain areas to map more accurately the "lost lines" of graves. Insensitive maintenance work in the past has left some puzzles to solve.

### Recovering the past

The history team continue to assemble information about the people buried here, especially those whose monuments are being repaired. A set of "mini-biographies" is accumulating for lodging in the Reference Library. Do contact Jan Holly if you would like to help with this work. There is heaps to do, advice is available and we all have it in us to be detectives.

A big repair has closed the gaping crack in the vault of the Rev Robert Fowler and his wife Caroline, hitherto a treacherous invitation to further investigation by marauding animals and curious children. The Fowlers had six sons, two of whom — both schoolmasters — wrote *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, *The King's English* and *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Robert Fowler himself was a



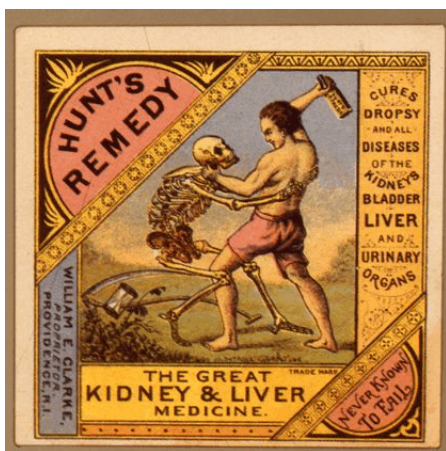
Cambridge wrangler and teacher who published three mathematics text books, to help boys keen to enter the army. One of them, *The Elements of Algebra*, can be read in full on the internet and is still in print — in India. He died in 1879 aged 56 from typhoid fever just a couple of hundred yards away, at the “military school” he ran at Grosvenor House, a mansion standing on the site of the present Grosvenor Park.

## Other memorial repairs

Other repairs have also markedly enhanced the general appearance of the cemetery. They include the re-erected headstones of General “Lance” Fyler, William Hilbert, water engineer for Decimus Burton’s Calverley estate, John Meager, blown up in a gunpowder ship off Tristan da Cunha, Jonathan Wheatley brewer in Goods Station Road and the Puncker babies. Vandalised pillars have been replaced on the ornate tombs of architect Sydney Smirke and Jesuina Cooper Scott, 30 year-old daughter of a Brazilian shipping magnate. Many minor repairs have included stabilising top ledger slabs, refixing unsafe headstones and mortaring cracks to prevent further water penetration.

## The great creosote mystery solved

73 paupers from Pembury Workhouse lie in Woodbury Park Cemetery. Our 20th February meeting will look at their life in the workhouse. Some would undoubtedly have known Dr John Bramston Wilmot who has a headstone at the top of the cemetery. He was mentioned in Dr Hinton’s November talk as having devised a “creosote cure” for soldiers in the Crimea suffering from dysentery. We all speculated about the nature of that cure.



*A New World alternative cure*

Now we have found the answer. In a paper in 1845 to the Royal College of Physicians Dr Wilmot describes how he first tried his creosote remedy on four paupers in the Pembury workhouse, where “a fatal dysentery was raging” involving 38 inmates. The symptoms and the treatments

tried are given in gruesome detail. Calomel and large quantities of opium proving of no avail, hot turpentine fomentations were applied to the abdomen. Then Dr Wilmot decided to take his treatment a drastic step further with daily creosote injections directly into one sufferer’s gut. The patient recovered whether because of or in spite of the treatment. It was then applied to several others, none of whom apparently died — though the treatment was observed to cause “great excitement in the system”.

## Recognise these buildings?

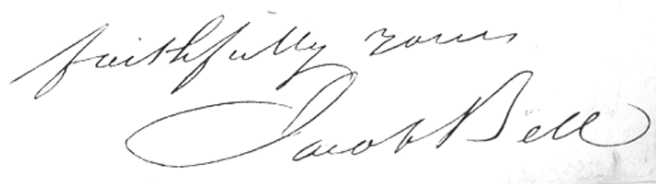
That mystery solved, here is another. These pictures belong to the great granddaughter of a Tunbridge Wells participant in the 1890s in the infamous “Canada Home Children” scheme. Orphan children or those of “unsuitable parents” were shipped off to Canada as young as 9 into what was often unsupervised and unpaid drudgery. Can we identify the pictures?



The story of another member of this family buried in Woodbury Park Cemetery appears in this issue’s mini-biography.



## Jacob Bell lecture



We shall be looking at the life and achievements of the remarkable Jacob Bell, founder of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, at the AGM evening on 15<sup>th</sup> May. His modest tomb sits next the elegant rose-wreathed pillar of his friend Dr Golding Bird, likewise cut off in his prime. We are preparing a new booklet about him for issue in June when the President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society is to visit the memorial and some of the other places in the town connected with Bell's last days in 1859.



## Publications update

### In print (£2 each):

*20 Noteworthy people commemorated in monuments set in WPC*

*The trees of WPC – a walk*

*The story of Clayton Stanford Willicombe*

### In preparation:

*The smaller wildlife of WPC*

*William Willicombe – the Cubitt of Tunbridge Wells*

*Clergymen of WPC: 1. William Law Pope and Henry Bishop*

*Jacob Bell – a useful and honourable life.*

## AGM and annual subscriptions

Formal notification of the May AGM is enclosed along with a call for nominations for the Executive Committee. Do put your name forward if you would like to help steer the efforts of the Friends. It is a rewarding and practical way to preserve an important piece of local heritage.

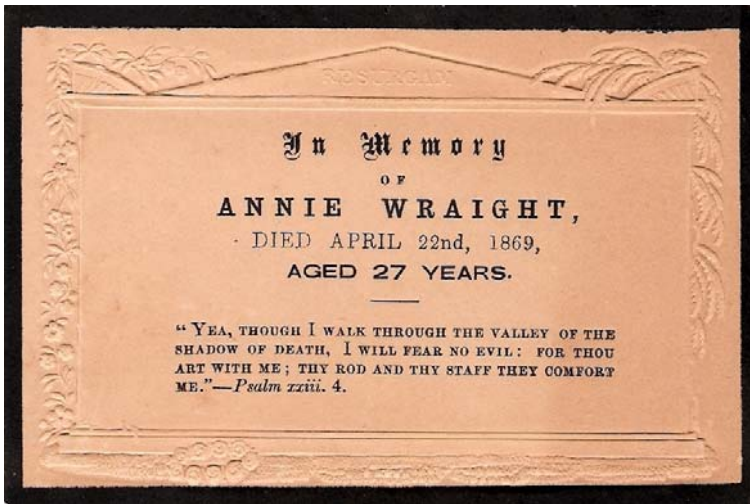
Subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> April. Regretfully the annual subscription for 2009–10 must rise to £8 so as to keep pace with rising costs. It would be a great help if renewals could be sent to the membership secretary before the May AGM or, at latest, paid that evening.

## Dates for your diary

- Fri. 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2009: *Pembury workhouse and Woodbury Park Cemetery*: talks by John Weeks & Steve Maslin  
7.30 pm, Camden Centre.
- Fri. 15<sup>th</sup> May: **AGM** followed by talk *Jacob Bell*  
7.30pm, Camden Centre.
- Fri. 5<sup>th</sup> June: Wild flowers & grasses — a walk with Keith Palmer  
6.30pm, Woodbury Park Cemetery.
- Fri. 26<sup>th</sup> June: Tree walk with Chris Reynolds  
7.30pm, Woodbury Park Cemetery
- Sun. 12<sup>th</sup> July: Children's mini-beast safari, with Dr Ian Beavis  
2.30pm, Woodbury Park Cemetery
- Fri. 4<sup>th</sup> Sep.: Moth trapping evening with Keith Palmer  
9pm, Woodbury Park Cemetery

## WPC Burials

### 3. Annie Wraight 1842-1869



Annie Wraight was a dressmaker who was only 27 when she was buried in Woodbury Park Cemetery in spring 1869. There is no memorial to mark her grave, where her father William Wraight, a gardener, was also buried nearly 30 years later. But we do have the announcement of her death and this picture of her. A surviving letter mentions the card being specially ordered by her father.

Her simple but fashionable best dress was no doubt one of her own confections. The sepia photographs of the day give no idea of the bright colour of Victorian clothes. By the 1860s the sewing machine had come into use and encouraged the addition of trimmings. Crinolines were shrinking and epaulettes were in, as were short waists emphasised by a belt.

Annie died of Haematemesis after 6 weeks illness, possibly from a perforated ulcer.

Dressmakers did not have an easy life. They worked very long hours and were poorly paid. She would have had to pay to be apprenticed at 14 to one of Tunbridge Wells many dressmakers, and worked without wages for 2 years as she learnt her trade. The regime of snatched 10 minute breaks at erratic intervals in a long day may well have helped create Annie's health problems.

Her father William died in 1898 in Rockdale cottage attached to the big house at the corner of Carlton Road where he worked as gardener for many years. His widow had to quit her home and got £1 6sh "from the parish starving work".



*"There is no class of persons in this country, living by their labour, whose happiness, health, and lives, are so unscrupulously sacrificed as those of the young dress-makers. They are, in a peculiar degree, unprotected and helpless ... there are no occupations, with one or two questionable exceptions such as needle-grinding, in which so much disease is produced as in dress-making, or which present so fearful a catalogue of distressing and frequently fatal maladies." Parliamentary Report, 1843*

## Useful Contacts

Saturday afternoon working parties: Angela Swain, [angelaswain@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:angelaswain@tiscali.co.uk) 01892 541881  
 History research: Jan Holly, [jan.holly3@virgin.net](mailto:jan.holly3@virgin.net) 01892 514833  
 Membership: David Bushell, [bushell327@btinternet.com](mailto:bushell327@btinternet.com) 01892 521114  
 "Adopt a grave" and general enquiries: June Bridgeman, [jbman@btinternet.com](mailto:jbman@btinternet.com) 01892 525578  
 Website: [www.fwpc.org.uk](http://www.fwpc.org.uk)