

*Introduction for the Surrey Advertiser article regarding the opening of the new Necropolis Company Station, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1902.*

“The London Necropolis Company Station and Headquarters was opened in 1854, the small, private station was designed to accommodate mourners and hold funeral services before coffins were transported for burial at Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey.

The original station building was demolished in 1902 to make way for the expansion of Waterloo; its successor was destroyed during an air raid in 1941 and never rebuilt.

The following article from the Surrey Advertiser dated 16<sup>th</sup> April 1902 was written after the journalist was invited to attend the opening of the new building at 121 Westminster Bridge Road.

A number of Faiths are recorded in the article, over the years many more have chosen the peace of Brookwood as a final resting place for those they have lost”



**THE LONDON NECROPOLIS COMPANY**  
New Station and Head Offices  
Brookwood Cemetery

The London Necropolis Company's vast and silent "City of the Dead" at Brookwood is acknowledged to be one of the largest cemeteries if not the largest in the world, and it is certainly one of the most beautiful. It was first laid out a little more than half a century ago, when the crowded churchyards of London were closed on sanitary grounds, and it became necessary to find some additional burial place on the outskirts of the Metropolis.

Some of the cemeteries which then sprang into existence are now almost in the same condition, and open to the same objections as those which were closed by Parliament. They are overcrowded, and closed on all sides by dwelling houses. Those who formed the London Necropolis Company looked further abroad. They sought and found a site, the soil of which was peculiarly fitted for internments, which was situated in an open and beautiful country, which was large enough to meet all possible requirements for a very great number of years, and which, while it was far enough from London to be beyond the reach of that widening circle of buildings which form the Metropolis and its suburbs, should yet be within easy and convenient access. Of the very

large estate purchased from the then Lord Onslow no less than 500 acres of land, covered with gorse and heather and pine, were enclosed, and here, for half a century, increasing numbers, and seemingly without making any appreciable encroachments upon the great area of this park-like

#### GARDEN OF SLEEP.

Brookwood Cemetery is in some respects unique. There is no burial-place in England wherein rest together persons of so many different creeds, and where almost every profession and class has its separate "area" though the separation is not obtrusively marked. Almost hidden among the aromatic pines stands a Parsee temple and curious gate, such as can be seen nowhere else out of India, and round it be interred many who belong to that faith. Near at hand the devout Mohammedan has his own special enclosure, and very precise indeed are the instructions as to the internment in the orthodox manner of the followers of Mahomet who die in England. The Order of the Reparation has its own little chapel and plot, The Established Church, the Nonconformists and the Roman Catholics likewise have distinct chapels, the last named having a portion of the cemetery reserved, as have also the Oddfellows (whose plot is marked by a handsome monument), the foresters, the Corps of Commissionaires, the Chelsea Pensioners, and the Swedish Church in England; while there is also and "Actors Acre." A large number of the London parishes and churches have portions specially reserved for them, so that there are, as it were, in this one great Necropolis a large number of small distinct cemeteries. In yet another portion of the ground lies the dust of tens of thousands of

#### LONDON'S ANCIENT DEAD

those who had for years been sleeping in their last long sleep in the crypts and churchyards of London, and when those remains have, by order of the Privy Council, been transferred to quiet Brookwood. Some of them had lain undisturbed for centuries in the centre of the city where they had passed their lives. The records on the monuments which have been erected at Brookwood show that some of those who lie beneath lived between 300 and 400 years ago, from the time of Queen Bess and the gallant sea-dogs, to quite modern times. Many of those whose dust has been brought here were contemporaries of Shakespeare; some doubtless witnessed the execution of Charles 1; others experienced the horrors of and perhaps fell in the Civil War; some groaned under the intolerance of Puritanism, and were then disgusted at the profligacy of the Restoration and welcomed the Prince of Orange. And so one might wander on. Here they lie, with many great ones who have distinguished themselves under a greater than Queen Elizabeth. And a more beautiful and peaceful resting-place it would be hard to find. Art has done much to beautify the grounds, but happily Nature has not been effaced. The heather still blooms as freely inside as outside the grounds, silver birches and sombre pines give striking contrast, and the magnificent Wellingtonias which are a feature of the cemetery rear their heads high over all. Scattered throughout the grounds are very handsome and costly mausoleums and monuments, among the finest of which is the exquisite memorial which Lord Pelham Clinton had erected over the grave of his wife, and the cost of which ran well into four figures. The Necropolis Company have their own private stations in the grounds, which are in every respect admirably kept.

#### THE HEAD OFFICES

For many years the company had their head offices on the east side of Westminster Bridge Road in London, and, as is well-known, they had a private station whence the funeral parties were conveyed in special trains to Brookwood. The London and South Western Railway Co's contemplated extensions at Waterloo compelled the company to seek a new home, and there has now arisen on the other side of the road a little further south, a very handsome structure which contains not only the new offices, but a new railway station, with waiting rooms, etc., fitted up in the most complete manner under the direction of the company's architect, Mr. Cyril Tubbs. These new offices, etc., have just been opened, and were on view on Tuesday last, when a representative of the "Surrey Advertiser" responded to an invitation to make a visit of inspection. Anything like a detailed description of the premises is quite out of the question in the space at our command. The whole building is admirably planned, and very substantially erected, and considerable originality has been shown in a great many directions. The offices are all that could be desired as such, and are handsomely furnished throughout. But of course the chief object has been to do all that is

possible for the expeditious, yet quiet, respectful and reverent carrying-out of the necessarily sad arrangements in connection with interments. And in this the architect has been most successful. Entering the main gateway, the funeral cortege is at once shut off from the gaze of the curious and careless onlooker in a lofty hall, glass roofed, and with white tiled walls. From the end of this hall, a handsome wrought-iron staircase leads to

#### THE RAILWAY STATION

Here, on the right-hand side of the platform, is a private chapel of an imposing character, with a handsome oak catafalque and stalls for the clergy and congregation. This will meet a much felt want. It can be used for lying in state, or as a place where friends can attend the first portion of the burial service when they cannot journey to Brookwood for the actual interment. On the platform are several waiting rooms, one of which is reserved for each funeral, and all quietly but artistically fitted up. Where there are-as often happens-several funerals of a different character-arrangements have been made so that each is kept distinct, there is no intermixing and consequent confusion, and each party of mourners travels in specially reserved carriages in perfect seclusion. There are on the ground floor several spacious mortuary chambers, which have nothing gloomy about them, and the whole building is lit with electricity, and is supplied with an elaborate system of telephonic communication to every single department. The necessary work-rooms in connection with such an extensive business are all on the premises, and here the work of funeral furnishing is carried out from start to finish. In connection with the new station it is worthy of mention that arrangements have been made with the Railway Company for the supply of carriages similar to those used on the main lines, and the tickets will be made available to return by any train, instead of being limited to the special funeral train, as before. Nothing whatever is wanting in the arrangements of the building for the dignified and reverent discharge of the mournful duties which devolve upon the officials, and for the comfort and convenience of the mourners.

#### THE OPENING OF THE BUILDING

There was a quiet and informal luncheon last week, when the buildings were opened, Mr. Edward Ford North, the chairman of the directors, presided and he was supported by Mr. J. B. S. Lancaster and R. J. Francis (directors), Mr. J. B. Walker, the General Manager, Mr. C. Tubbs, the architect, etc. After the excellent luncheon, provided by Mr. Chas. Best, there were one or two brief speeches. The Chairman remarked that, though the business of the Necropolis was not a cheerful or lively one, it was a very necessary one. He traced briefly the origin of the company, which has been referred to above, and the difficulties under which it laboured in the early days of its existence, owing to the fact that the London cemeteries, though condemned by public opinion, were permitted to remain open. The speaker touched upon the conditions essential for a sanitary and proper burial ground, alluding particularly to the system of perishable coffins and internment in sandy soil, and he remarked that the object of the company had always been to do that which was satisfactory to the outside world, respectful and proper to those who were departed, and which would not cause any unnecessary affliction to those left behind.

That they had succeeded they had ample proof in the numerous letters they had received from the relatives. The Chairman paid a warm tribute to the manner in which the staff supported the Board in their work. Mr. Tubbs, the architect of those buildings and their estate agent at Woking, had the interest of the public, as well as of the company, at heart. Their general manager, Mr. J. B. Walker, had been with them for a number of years. He had carried out admirably the work begun by Mr. Tubbs, he had given his heart and soul to the work, and it was due to his efforts that they had letters expressing satisfaction from everybody who came to them. He did not think there was anybody in London who could beat him in his business. Mr. Smith, in attending to interments, did all he could to study the feelings of the relatives, and the company very much appreciated what he did.- On the proposition of Mr. Chinn, the chairman's health was drunk, as was also that of Mr. Tubbs, Mr. Walker and Mr. Smith, all of whom briefly replied.