

The Brookwood Express

The Newsletter of the Brookwood Cemetery Society



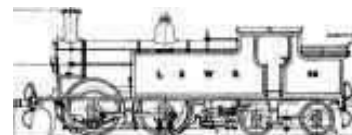
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❧ No. 107 FEBRUARY 2017 ❧

Winnie Melville 1891-1937

Winnie Melville was a famous opera singer, (a metzo soprano) and actress, who was so well known that the British yachts dipped their colours in her honour, as she departed to New York.

Born Winnie Camilla Challis she is buried in Plot 16, with her brother Jack Amos Challis (1904-1940), and their mother Mrs Emma Alice Challis (1868-1946).



Winnie was baptised at St Andrew's Stoke Newington on the 5th May 1891, and was one of the seven children of Edward Beardmore Challis (1866-?) and Emma Alice née Sanders; who married in 1888. The family lived at that time Nightingale Road,

Clapton, and her father was the chairman of the family firm of boot and shoe manufacturer and shopkeepers. This business was based in East London and the firm was voluntarily liquidated in 1911. The family lived at further various addresses in London and spent time in Lancing, Sussex. Some of Winnie's education was at a boarding grammar school in Great Clacton, Essex.

Her London debut on the stage was in 1916, as a concert singer in the musical *See Saw*, showing at the Comedy Theatre. She continued to work at this theatre through 1917 and 1918 in *Bubbly*, and then moved to Paris in 1919, to perform at the Folies-Bergères, in a production of *Zig Zag*. On her return to London in 1919 she performed in the shows *Joy Bells* and *Jig Saw*, *Sybil* and *Cairo*.

It was whilst performing in *Whirl Wind to Happiness* in August 1922 at the Lyric Theatre, that she met fellow performer John Stephens Oldham aka Derek Oldham, and they were married in Westminster, London in 1923.



After her marriage, she retired from the stage for three years, but returned in 1926 to perform in the *Student Prince* and in the next two several productions with her husband, including *The Vagabond King*.

In 1929 she joined the famous D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and performed in six of the company's production that year. These included *Yum Yum* in the *Mikado* in which her husband played Nanki-Poo, and the *Gondoliers* as in the above picture.

In 1930 she left the D'Oyly Carte Opera company and played mainly in vaudeville and variety houses, but also toured with the shows

Blue Eyes and *Forever After*. Her marriage to John Stephens Oldham ended in divorce in 1933.

In August that year she travelled to New York with her mother, to star in an operetta written by Mr. Russell Janney and with music by Franklin Mauser which per the interview with Winnie in the New York Evening Post of August 19th 1933, was yet to be titled.

A recording of Winnie's singing can be found on U Tube "*The Pipes of Pan*" and she and her husband recorded songs; such as Ivor Novello's "*The Thought Never Entered my Head*" and many more. She can therefore still be remembered for her lovely voice nearly 80 years after her death. She also was featured in a series of cigarette cards that were fashionable at that time.

She was taken ill suddenly and died on 19th September 1937 at St Mary's Hospital, London age 46 years and was buried on Wednesday 22nd September 1937. The burial bill was sent to her mother. The undertakers were Kenyon of London and there were four bearers for the coffin. Her obituary in the Yorkshire Evening Post of the 22nd September 1937 states that there were emotional scenes at the burial. The grave is in a prominent position on St Michael's Avenue, and is of rustic stone with a bird bath on which is Winnie's memorial.



The grave of Winnie Melville

Her brother **Jack Amos Challis** (1904-1940) married Portia Menzies-Calder in 1931. They

lived in London and at the Cottage, Grove Road, East Molesey, Surrey and he died on 27th April 1940 just 36 years old. Later that year his widow married Kempton G Lefly.

Mrs. Emma Alice Challis was born at Cambridge Heath, London the daughter of Amos Sanders, a man of many vocations and Emma née Ferdinando. Emma Alice had four brothers and sisters and continued to live in East London. After she married Emma worked in the Challis family business as a shopkeeper. She died in London on 14th June 1946 and two of her children; Pat Augusta and Joan Molloy Challis were her executors. There is a small memorial plaque on the family grave above.

In the left adjacent grave on the left, is a similar styled memorial and this is to the third daughter of Emma Challis, **Phyllis Adelaide** (1896 - 1993) and her husband **John Bapiste Bignamy** (1882-1959). The couple married in 1921 and lived in London, Dorking, Surrey and at the time of Jean's death they were living in Ripley, Surrey.

Margaret Hobbs, Barry Devonshire & Kim Lowe

Sources:

Yorkshire Evening Post 22nd September 1937

New York Evening Post 19th August 1933

Ancestry

www.gilbertandsullivanarchive.org

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL
2017-2018**

The Committee hope you have enjoyed your membership.

Membership renewal is due on the 1st February 2017, and a renewal form is enclosed with this issue.

If a member joined after August 2016, their membership will be valid to the 1st February 2018.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES: WALKS & OTHER EVENTS

All walks now start from the Cemetery Office entrance, off Cemetery Pales. A donation would be most welcome. We look forward to meeting you. Walks start at 2pm unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 5th March 2017: Railway Walk led by Ian Devine. This walk is back by popular demand, and will follow the route of the old Necropolis Railway.

Sunday 2nd April 2017: St Saviour's Southwark Walk led by Barry Devonshire. **NEW!** This walk will highlight burials in both plots of this London parish.

Sunday 7th May 2017: Prominent Women Walk led by Kim Lowe and Jenny Mukerji **NEW!** This walk will highlight important women buried in the Cemetery and will cover both sections.



Society and Cemetery Update

Lodge

The last year has brought a welcome change to the Society, with the use of the new lodge from the summer, and the benefits this has brought.

These include being able to have a permanent display for our publications, and a kitchenette for serving refreshments. A secondhand cabinet has been purchased for added storage of china, and to serve as a counter for serving refreshments. The lodge is also now a place to hold Committee meetings.

Walks

The Halloween Walk in conjunction with the Cemetery management, was a great success and very well attended. The Society would like to thank the management for all the excellent refreshments.

This year the Committee will be busy researching new walks and as you can see from the previous column there have two new walks for April and May. Two further new walks are being research, for August; British Colonials and Muslims, for September; Sculpture and Symbolism.

Private Walks

Bookings for private walks around the Cemetery and talks for 2017, were being taken before Christmas; this is the first occasion this has happened. A new booking form has been designed to help formalize any private bookings.

But there is also some sad news:

Bridget Smith

The committee has only recently heard of the death of society member Bridget Smith, in January 2016. She will be remembered for her staunch support at the monthly walks, and her help with sales and refreshments. Her memorial service was held at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Maurice Lawson

And the sad death in October 2016 of Maurice Lawson, who was a member for many years and the Society's Treasurer from August 1998 to May 2005. His ashes have been interred in the family plot, in the old non-conformist section. He will be missed.

Queen Marie of Yugoslavia

Father Alexis has reported that the tombstone of Queen Marie of Yugoslavia, has been deposited in the Serbian Cemetery at Brookwood Cemetery. It has been placed near the hedge, that separates the Brotherhood's section from the Serbian Plot.

Marie was a Romanian Princess and the daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie of Romania. She was the Queen of Yugoslavia, as the wife of King Alexander from 1922 until his assassination in 1934.

She was the mother of Peter II of Yugoslavia, the last king of Yugoslavia.

She was previously interred at the Royal Burial Ground, Frogmore, Windsor; but in 2013 her remains were taken to Serbia, and her tombstone therefore became redundant.

New Bench

The wooden bench purchased in 2014 did not weather well, and is being replaced with one of recycled eco plastic, which hopefully will withstand the English climate.

St Edward Brotherhood

The Brotherhood celebrated the Orthodox Christmas on the 7th January, followed by refreshments in Pirbright Hall.

The old Mortuary Chapel is in the final stages of renovation both outside and inside, and is looking extremely nice.

The New Workshops

The building work on the erection of the new workshops, at the back of the Cemetery Office is continuing, but has been hampered by the wintery wet weather.

John Stuart HORNER (1855-1923)

*Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner
Eating his Christmas pie
He put in his thumb
And pulled out a plum
And said "What a good boy, am I?"*

Despite the controversy surrounding the origins of this nursery rhyme, the name of the family of Horner who lived in Mells, Somerset has always been mentioned as its inspiration. In Brookwood's Plot 29 there is a seriously damaged Compton terracotta memorial to John Stuart Horner of Mells, Somerset and his wife Emily Green Horner, nee Birch and later Goodman.

John was the son of Rev John Stuart Hippisley Horner and Sophia Gertrude, nee Dickinson. Brookwood's John had a number of siblings, one of whom was Sir John Francis Fortescue Horner who married Frances, the daughter of William Graham, the patron on Edward Burne-Jones. As a result Frances grew up to be a Pre-Raphaelite beauty and was drawn by Burne Jones (she was a model for his *The Golden Stair*) and Rossetti many times. Her moving in these circles led to her association with Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Alfred Munnings. Both of whom were responsible for memorials in Mells to the fallen of the Great War and especially to Frances's son, Edward who was killed in France in 1917. In the Horner chapel of St Andrew's Church, Mells there is a large bronze statue of Lt Edward William Horner, 18th (Queen Mary's Own) Hussars on a horse by Munnings on a plinth by Lutyens.

Also in this chapel is a memorial to Brookwood's John Stuart Horner. He was born in London and his obituary in *The Times* on 4 January 1924 (he died on 27 December 1923) tells us that he was

educated at Eton and then went up to Balliol College, Oxford where he took honours in Mathematics and rowed for his college. John then worked at the London School of Mines for three years and subsequently joined the firm of John Birch & Co, engineers where he later became managing director until 1920. He took part in the reconstruction of Egypt and was also chairman of the Charity Organisation Society in Southwark. John travelled considerably on the Continent and studied languages and literature. In 1887 he married Emily Green Birch, (daughter of Colonel J F Birch of the 3rd West India Regiment) who was born in Ireland on 13 September 1861.

They had four children, including Lady Olivia Barker (second wife of Sir Ernest Barker, the political scientist) and David Horner (friend of Sir Osbert Sitwell). During the Second World War David was a squadron leader in the RAFVR and he died in 1983, being buried in Putney.

At the time of his death, John had a business at 283 London Wall Buildings, London and lived at Caverleigh, Maple Road, Surbiton where he died. Emily is also buried with John in Brookwood. After John's death she married Roger Neville Barker, a doctor, in 1932 and she died on 14 January 1952.

Another link with Brookwood comes with the fact that John Singer Sargent is known to have painted two portraits of John's niece, Ciceley Horner, (later Mrs George Lambton). Ciceley's sister, Katharine married Raymond Asquith, the eldest son of Herbert Henry, the prime minister and her son, Julian inherited Asquith's title of Earl of Oxford. The Asquiths are another interesting story, but not one for the Brookwood Express!

Jenny Mukerji January 2017

St. Peter's Homes Exhibition

Until 26th February 2017 there is an exhibition at the Lightbox, Woking of items on the history of St. Peter's Homes. This was a convalescent home in Maybury, Woking, and run by the St. Peter's sisterhood. The community have a burial plot (55) at Brookwood Cemetery with a once gated entrance. Admission to the Lightbox is free.

From the National Trust

"A rare John Singer Sargent portrait will go on display at Ightham Mote, Kent, this spring. It returns for the first time to the spot in which it was painted over a century ago.

A Young Lady in White features in a new exhibition, Queen of Ightham Mote: An American Interlude, focussing on Ightham Mote's time as a hub for the Aesthetic Movement elite from 1887-1890.

The portrait is on loan from the Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs. It features Elsie Palmer whose family rented Ightham in the late nineteenth century. The linen-fold backdrop is still visible today.

The exhibition includes other loan paintings and extends onto the North Lawn with an interpretation of one of Sargent's other respected works, Game of Bowls.

4 March - 23 December 2017"

The views expressed by contributors to this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the editor and the society.

A visit to Auschwitz

When we think about a crematorium, we have a picture of sad but quiet, serene surroundings where we can say goodbye to our loved ones in a dignified way.

A recent visit to Auschwitz and Birkenau brought home to me how different it was for the wretched prisoners transported and gassed in such a barbarous way by the Germans during World War 2. There was no chance to say goodbye to their loved ones; in fact men and women were wrenched apart from each other and their children on alighting from the inhumane cattle trucks, and those picked to die were sent straight to the gas chambers, not knowing that they would never see each other again. It is reckoned that seventy to seventy-five percent of transports were sent directly to the gas chambers without being entered into the camp's records. The crematorium was a stinking factory, stoked by prisoners. No fond farewells, only murder and indignity.



The Entrance to Auschwitz Birkenau

Precise numbers are still debated, but it is believed that at least 1.1 million Jews were deported to the camp. Other victims included approximately 74,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma, 15,000 Soviet POWs and at least 10,000 other nationalities. More people died at Auschwitz than at any other concentration camp, and probably than at any death camp in history.

Before the Russian Red Army arrived, the Germans began eliminating the traces of their crimes in 1944. Documents were destroyed and some sites dismantled, gas chambers blown up.



Reconstructed Ovens

The crematoria have been reconstructed at Auschwitz 1 (the original camp) as part of the museum, with a model showing how the bodies were tossed brutally into the ovens after having any gold teeth removed.

The crematoria at Auschwitz 2 (Birkenau) were blown up by the Germans just before they evacuated the camp, taking the prisoners able to walk on a forced death march of 35 miles toward Wodzislaw Slaski. From 17- 21 January 1945, 56,000 prisoners were led on foot from



Destroyed ovens

Auschwitz and its sub-camps. Approximately 15,000 prisoners died on the way.

The remains of the crematoria can still be seen, and we were told that some of the prisoners ordered to destroy the buildings and documents (and who would have been murdered afterwards) managed to sneak off to join the departing death march. Some of those survived and were later able to pass on the information about the gas chambers and crematoria and how they were used.

We stood on the huge grey flat area of Birkenau in freezing cold on a November day with other shivering visitors, staring at the row upon row of practically unheated huts, some of brick and some prefabricated of wood, containing row upon row of shelves where prisoners huddled together for warmth, trying and failing to imagine how any of them could survive these sorts of temperatures clad in their flimsy cotton uniforms. (If they found and wore any extra clothing they were shot). The prefabricated huts were originally designed to house 20 horses, but 150 prisoners were squeezed into each one. Our guide explained that women who were too ill to continue working were taken to a particular hut and left there until there were enough of them (1000) to fill the gas chamber. This meant that women were left lying in the hut (and outside on the ground if the hut was full) for days, without any food or water. The inhumanity was shocking.

At Auschwitz 1 we were shown a room where the prisoners were given a mock trial (the punishment was always death) and the wall outside where they were then shot. Immediately next to the wall was the building where doctors practised experiments on women, including sterilisation. The shutters of this building were nailed up so that the women could not see the executions. Nearby were the gallows where prisoners were hanged and their bodies left there as a deterrent, and an area of the electric fence at which many prisoners who were unable to struggle on threw themselves in order to commit suicide. We were also shown underground chambers where prisoners were tortured to death by starvation and suffocation.

When the Soviet troops arrived at Auschwitz they found about 7,000 starving prisoners still alive, along with millions of items of clothing, piles of shoes, suitcases and human hair. Thousands of innocent people, worked and gassed to death. An inhumane use of a crematoria which we should not be allowed to forget.

Helen Reeves January 2017

George Henry Hames FRCS 1852-1909

In St Agnes Avenue is a very large granite memorial to George Henry Hames FRCS, a prominent Victorian surgeon.



The Grave of George H Hames

George Henry Hames was born in Leicester in 1852, the fourth son of Francis and Mary Hames. His father worked as a saddle maker and horse dealer.

He began his studies in medicine in 1871 at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and quickly distinguished himself, and was awarded the Foster Prize for anatomy in 1872.

During the years 1873-1874, he became the *Prosector for the Royal College of Surgeons.

In 1875, George was a Brackenbury Medical Scholar, a Kirkes' Scholar and Gold Medallist. In that year, he became a House Surgeon to G.W. Callendar (a specialist in bone fractures) and a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons. In the following year until 1877, George was a House Physician to Reginald Southey, and made a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians. He was also the Honourable Secretary to the Abernethian Society.

On leaving St Bartholomew's Hospital he continued his studies at the at the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin. Later George was the Chloroformist at the newly founded Cheyne Children's Hospital. This hospital had been founded in 1875 for sick and incurable children, suffering from chronic or incurable spinal or hip conditions. He also worked as a Surgeon to the Western General Dispensary, London.

George was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1878 and he was elected to the Obstetrical Society in 1881. He also contributed to ***The Saturday Review*.

In 1879, he married Emma Mary Case (1853-1901) in Marylebone, London, when George was working as a General Practitioner in Paddington, and this is where they started their married life. Emma was born in Liverpool, and was the daughter of Robert Case a stockbroker and Esther née McMillan.

George Hames decided to devote his life to General Practice, and his practice must have flourished, as by 1891 the couple were living at 29, Hertford St, Mayfair, London. They did not have any children, and Emma died on the 15th April 1901. Two years later he married Florence Mary Hood-Ricardo on 6th June 1903, but she predeceased him and died in 1905.

George died while living at 11, Park Lane, Mayfair, on 28th May 1909 and is buried with Emma and Florence.

Margaret Hobbs

**Prosector: A person who dissects dead bodies in preparation for an anatomical lecture*

***The Saturday Review of politics, literature, science, and art was a London weekly newspaper established by A. J. B. Beresford Hope in 1855.*



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(The Newsletter exists to promote contact between all members about all things regarding the Society. Margaret welcomes short personal contributions and aims to keep the content of the Newsletter current, varied and informative.)



**Newsletter printed by MAIL BOXES ETC
22 Eden Street Kingston upon Thames
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