



# PROGRAMME OF LOCAL EVENTS

## LOCAL HISTORY

**3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays 7.30pm at the Upper Norwood Library – Westow Hill**

**Entry is free, but a donation towards the cost of tea and home made cakes would be much appreciated.**

### **Norwood Society Local History 2014**

June 19th	The Concrete Church & Bevingtons.	Norwood Society Chairman, Richard Lines will introduce us to this pioneering building in Waldegrave Road and the closely connected Bevington family who are also associated with Bermondsey.
September 18th	Local War Memorials	As part of our contribution to Lambeth's Heritage Month and the theme of W.W.I., Norwood Society member Jerry Green will introduce us to the memorials of the area and some of the people who are remembered on them.
October 16th	From Fire Station to Theatre	Bob Callender of the South London Theatre Centre will relate the history of West Norwood's old fire station, the fire service and the transformation into the Theatre Centre..
November 20th	Lambeth's Archives	A member of Lambeth Archives will introduce us to the vast wealth of material they have about Norwood and the Borough of Lambeth
December 18th	Party Night.	Join us to celebrate the last year's meetings and a chance to revisit some of the items of interest in early copies of the Norwood Review.

### **2014 Walks Programme - Norwood Society.**

**June 29th: North of the Triangle & Gipsy Hill Circular.** (approx. 90 minutes).  
4.15 Crystal Palace Station. Alun Thomas Norwood Soc. in conjunction with the Overground Festival.

**July 20th: Norwood New Town & Beulah Spa circular.** (approx. 90 mins.)  
2.30 - Outside Sainsbury, Westow Street, SE19 3RW. Richard Lines, Norwood Society

**Aug 10th: Norwood High Street & Elder Road linear walk.**  
2.30 St Luke's Church, West Norwood, SE27 0DT ending at Norwood Park. Jill Dudman, Norwood Society.

**Sept. 14th: West of West Norwood & Tulse Hill circular.** (approx 90 minutes)  
2.30 St Luke's Church, West Norwood, SE27 0DT. Alun Thomas, Norwood Society/  
Lambeth Heritage Festival.

### **CRYSTAL PALACE FESTIVAL – 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

**[crystalpalacefestival.org](http://crystalpalacefestival.org)**

This festival is now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year and, spread over many venues and 4 days, it continues to grow in variety and quality. There will be events and activities for all tastes. We hope to see you in Westow Park on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June at the Norwood Society's stall. Click on the above link for a detailed programme.

# THE NORWOOD REVIEW

Official Journal of the Norwood Society

No. 205

Summer 2014

## CONTENTS

- 2. Annual Report
- 5. Obituary David Khan
- 7. Mystery Houses & Other Places
- 8. Local History News
- 9. Gordon Jacob
- 13. Clockworks
- 14. Lavengro Road

## FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

*Kingslyn (see Mystery Houses & Other Places)*

## THE NORWOOD REVIEW

The Norwood Review is published four times a year, in Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. The deadline for each issue is one month earlier. The next edition of the Review will appear in September 2014. Contributions should be sent, no later than 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014, to the Editorial Board, The Norwood Review, 47 Ross Road, London SE25 6SB or [secretary@norwoodsociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@norwoodsociety.co.uk) (020 8653 8768). Would contributors please give their 'phone number, address and e-mail address.

## NORWOOD SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

I am pleased to report that the Norwood Society enjoyed a successful year with a number of positive achievements. These are reflected in the accounts which show a surplus of £437 in 2013 after a deficit of £852 in 2012. The Norwood Society celebrated its Golden Jubilee at the beginning of this decade, so it is now one of the older local societies. We are not the only amenity and local history society in the area, but our attitude to the other (younger) societies is one of friendly co-operation rather than one of rivalry. John Payne and Mike Warwick of the Crystal Palace Community Association (CPCA) have served on our committee this last year and we are most grateful for their help in many different ways. Anna and I are members of the Crystal Palace Foundation (CPF) and of the CPCA, as I am sure many other Norwood Society members are. It was especially pleasing that speakers from the CPCA, the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery and the CPF gave excellent talks to the Society at its new venue at the Upper Norwood Library in the early months of 2014. More of this anon..

Four issues of *The Norwood Review* were published. This is as venerable as the Society itself and it is encouraging that in our internet age a small print journal still continues and is read and appreciated by members and others. Many thanks are due to the editor, Eric Kings, his assistant, Society Secretary Anna Lines, to all its contributors and to the printers. John Brown, who has for some years laid out, provided extra illustrations and arranged for the printing of the *Review*, was unable for family reasons to organise the printing of the SUMMER 2014 issue and that and the Spring 2014 issue have been printed by Printinc. of Wallington, an arrangement that has proved most satisfactory. The editor is always on the lookout for new material and if you have some item of local or family history relating to any part of Norwood that you would like to share with others, do get in touch with the editor.

The website, maintained by James Slattery-Kavanagh, has continued to be the Society's flagship and 'window on the world'. One of its most attractive features is an archive of selected articles from *The Norwood Review* stretching back over fifty years. The website is, of course, open to all, but it does bring us in new members and prompts new articles, as well as giving guidance to those embarking on research. Alun and Barbara Thomas, the Secretary and I have dealt with a number of local history enquiries over the past year. A particularly interesting one concerned the location of 'Roselawn' on Beulah Hill, the home of Thomas Attwood the composer and organist whom Mendelssohn visited in the early 1830s. This enquiry from a professor of music history in the USA led to a protracted and interesting correspondence. It is pleasant to see the help given to researchers rewarded by mention in a published work. I was delighted to receive in December a copy of the *George Borrow Bulletin*, the journal of the George Borrow Society, containing an article by Dr Kedrun Laurie entitled 'Lavengro Road, London

SE27' about the Norwood Gypsies and this road named in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century after the then famous book about Gypsy life by George Borrow (1803-1881). Help given by staff of the Lambeth Archives and by the Norwood Society was acknowledged in the article. I hope to write a more detailed note about this for our own review.

Philip Goddard and his small sub-committee have continued to monitor planning applications in the Norwood part of the London Borough of Croydon. He produces detailed reports for the committee and planning notes have appeared in two issues of *The Norwood Review* in the last year. We are in need of a volunteer(s) to monitor planning applications in the Lambeth, Southwark and Bromley parts of Norwood.

A particular concern of the committee during the year has been the location, preservation and organisation of the Society's archives. For some years most of our archives have had a 'temporary' home at the Upper Norwood Library, while other material has been held, also on a 'temporary' basis, in the basement of Kingswood House, a property belonging to the London Borough of Southwark. In the spring of last year the library management asked us to make arrangements to remove our archives, held in four large steel filing cabinets in the basement meeting room. After talks with Carol Lewis and Rita Chackraborty of the library management in which John Payne and Bryer Scudamore (library trustee) took part, it was agreed that the Society's archives could remain in the library more suitably stored, so that the cabinets can be removed. A sub-committee consisting of the Society's Vice-Chairman Jerry Green and Alun and Barbara Thomas was appointed to be in charge of the Society's archives and they have begun the task of sorting the material with a view to making digital copies and making the valuable archive material more accessible to researchers and available to be used for public exhibitions.

A happy result of the discussions with the management of Upper Norwood Library was that we were invited to hold Society meetings in the library. In November 2013 the committee decided to move the local history meetings, previously held at the Phoenix Centre, to Upper Norwood Library from January 2014. Alun and Barbara Thomas agreed to organise the meetings. So far, Alun and Barbara have organised four very successful and well-attended meetings. In January they organised a panel of different speakers about books when Jonathan Main of Bookseller Crow on the Hill spoke about modern novels that feature Norwood and Crystal Palace and Audrey Hammond talked about the production of the book *Crystal Palace - Norwood Heights* (1988). Nicholas Reed, author and a former editor of *The Norwood Review*, and Alun Thomas also spoke. In February Jerry Green gave a presentation on the Norwood Pre-Raphaelite artists Henrietta Rae and Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale. In March Colin Fenn of the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery gave an illustrated talk on highlights of the cemetery and in April Philip Emery of the Crystal Palace Foundation spoke about the history of the Palace from Hyde Park in 1851 to Upper Norwood in 1854 and on to the disastrous fire

in 1936. Barbara Thomas and Anna Lines have baked delicious cakes which are served with tea or coffee in the interval and a bookstall has been set up on each occasion. No charge is made for entry, but donations are encouraged and these, together with book sales, have more than covered the costs of the meetings so far. This new initiative augurs well for the future of the Society.

Of major concern to all who live in the area is the potential development of the Crystal Palace 'top site' by the Chinese group ZRG. I have reported on this in the Spring 2014 issue of *The Norwood Review* and at the moment of writing have nothing to add. If the proposal proceeds to the planning application stage the Society will play its part with other local societies in fighting for the best interests of the district and its inhabitants.

In 2012 the Society made a donation of £500 to the CPCA to assist the legal challenge brought by John Payne and one other against the 'Masterplan' for the future of Crystal Palace Park. Although the legal challenge failed in the Court of Appeal in 2013, our donation towards costs was not in the event needed and the donation was returned. We were, however, pleased to make a donation of £500 to a new group, the Friends of the Subway, who have obtained planning permission to provide limited public access (from the Southwark side) to the magnificent Victorian 'Byzantine' subway entrance to the Crystal Palace. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September some of us made a special visit to the subway organised by the Friends as part of Open House weekend. Progress in implementing the planning permission has since been delayed because of the ZRG proposal.

Nearly £1,000-worth of books was sold during the year. There were repeat orders from Bookseller Crow on the Hill, individual sales, and sales of books and pamphlets at local events. The Society ran a bookstall in Westow Park as part of the Crystal Palace Overground Festival at the end of June and Keith Holdaway sold books at Kingswood House during the Open House weekend and at the Minet Library on Lambeth Archives Day at the end of September.

It remains to thank the other officers and committee members for their support during the year. Jerry Green has been an excellent Vice-Chairman and Anna Lines has once again been an indefatigable Secretary. I would like to give special thanks to Christine Brandon who has helped the Secretary with 'mail merge' and other IT issues. Many thanks are due also to Bridget and David Bentliff for graciously hosting our committee meetings at their home.

**Richard Lines (Chairman)**

**25<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

**DAVID KHAN**

19.04.1940 – 07.04.2014

The Society has lost a very interesting member in the sudden death of David Khan. Unusually, he was born in Jerusalem where his father served – with distinction – in the Royal Air Force. When David was 7 he was flown with his family to England when the British Mandate over Palestine ended – he claimed that for part of the flight he was given the opportunity to sit in the cockpit – obviously an experience that remained in his memory for the rest of his life. David was a man of culture and had many interests, classical music in particular. Although he did not play the piano he had a grand piano in his lounge and claimed that when listening to classical music the sight of the instrument added to his enjoyment.



David was no friend of authority, and welcomed a challenge. He won an appeal against a parking ticket almost solely, I think, by charming the officer dealing with it. He was very eloquent in many situations, and took on the Croydon Planning Committee at a meeting. The person most affected by the planning application said ‘I want David to speak for us because he can do it so well’. David duly obliged, and that planning application was refused. An appeal was lodged, but once again David put the case and the appeal was also refused.

Rather closer to home David developed the legal research and strategy to resist a scheme to erect a block of flats on the Whitehorse Lane corner of the private land behind his house called The Meadow. His scale drawing of a double-decker bus against the frontage of the proposed block of flats proved very effective in showing the excessive height, and he led a team which successfully defeated the scheme. David went so far as to call one evening on the owner and would-be developer of the land at his private home, and no doubt used his considerable negotiating skills (and personal charm) to get the land sold with the existing houses retained.

A much larger scheme was proposed on the estate (Cumberlow Lodge) of William Stanley, who donated and built the Stanley Halls and the adjoining school. Stanley's house was part of the rear of the estate and the developers incurred the displeasure (to put it mildly) of local folk by demolishing Stanley's house the day before it was due to be considered for preservation. Then followed the usual train of planning applications and appeals, and David once again played a major role by producing a visual aid for the Appeals Inspector, this time showing how the land involved would suitably as a sports field. Although the appellants used a prominent QC and to some extent won the day, the Inspector decided that a substantial part of the site should have community use, and that family houses should to a large extent replace unsightly blocks of flats. There is now a high-quality care home on the site reserved for community use, and a substantial donation by the developer to help with the costs of renovating the Stanley Halls.

I could never persuade David to get a petition together to move the Ross Road letter-box from its current position to midway between our two houses – we would both then be nearer to it. He treated this as a joke (he was fond of them and this was one) and generated many himself – often by e-mail. We are sad to have lost a good friend and staunch ally, and offer our condolences to his wife and family. Ross Road will not be the same without him.

Eric Kings



## Mystery Houses



These two “mysteries” did not take long to resolve

**Julia Heard** immediately recognised the shop as no. 58 Church Road. The building is more or less in its original state; at the moment there is an estate agent on the ground floor and it has a modern shop front.



**Alice Meakin Grigor** wrote:-

*“The photograph of the house with the lions is no. 14 Fox Hill. How my two sisters and I longed to climb on their golden backs as we toiled up the steep incline of Fox Hill from our home in Auckland Road, toward our ballet classes which were held in a Nissen Hut in Westow Park.”*

Alice, you and your two sisters will be pleased to hear that the pair of kindly lions are still waiting for you to climb on their by now weatherbeaten backs. Go on, just ring the doorbell and ask! The house is undergoing extensive refurbishment (which makes me hopeful for the lions’ coats) and has had a side extension built.

We have two other images which may be mysteries to many of you yet may stir the memories of some.



**Andrew Ford** has sent us this picture of the logo of the South Norwood Volunteer Fire Service. Any comments would be very welcome. As you may have seen in the front inside cover, **Bob Callender** will come and speak to us on the topic “From Fire Station to Theatre” on the 16<sup>th</sup> October.

On the front cover we have a picture of Kingslyn such as it was before demolition. (see articles in Norwood Review issues 186 and 188 [www.norwoodsociety.co.uk](http://www.norwoodsociety.co.uk)). We thank **Terry James** for this. The picture is on the cover of a sales brochure dating either from 1895-1899 or possibly 1929. He also kindly sent us an image of Old Spa House which stood on the site of Spa Close and the parade of shops at the top of South Norwood Hill.

*Anna Lines*

Old Spa House



## Local History News

The Society's monthly local history meetings at the Upper Norwood Library continue to be successful and popular with an average attendance of 45. Of these two thirds seem to be fairly regular - and a third new each time. Those attending have been generous with their donations so that the meetings are self-supporting. This is helpful as we shall need to buy equipment to assist our speakers and wish to minimise the drain on Society funds.

In March Colin Fenn, vice chairman of the Friends, gave a very informative talk about West Norwood Cemetery. Colin also does much in researching the history of West Norwood. We were fascinated by the monuments and people buried within the Cemetery, and listening to Colin we were reminded of its importance in Britain, and how privileged we are to have it in our locality.

In April we addressed the Crystal Palace in Norwood. Philip Ellery inspired us with recounting the glory days of the Palace. The enthusiasm for that time, when Upper Norwood was the cultural capital of Britain, infected us all, and made us feel proud to live in this area. It is hoped that as a result, many who heard Philip speak will now become members of the Crystal Palace Foundation of which he is a trustee. This is an organisation with which we have strong links.

For May we turned again to West Norwood when Alun Thomas gave an illustrated talk on why this was a place of change. Photographs from the Wilson Collection were the basis of the illustrations and the talk was centred around the memoirs of W.T.Phillips published in 1912, which Alun found in our archives.

We have a further talk in June about the Concrete Church in Waldegrave Road and its founder by Richard Lines, our Chairman. During the couple of months' break there will be several local walks. We will also have a significant presence in the Overground Festival, with a stall, a walk and an extra talk. Seek out both the Festival programme and the Lambeth Local History Forum Heritage Walks leaflet.

We continue to answer enquiries about local significant residents of the past and take a full part in both the Lambeth and Croydon Local History Forums. We have also assisted with financial help toward Lambeth's Lambeth Heritage month in September.

Barbara Thomas  
16 May 2014

## Gordon Jacob, Norwood composer & his memories of World War 1

While searching in Upper Norwood's 1911 census I stumbled across the name Gordon Jacob at 46 Victoria Road, the road running down to Gipsy Hill by the station. My interest in music and having a son and a father who were clarinetists, this name meant much to me. Gordon Jacob is one of Britain's most significant 20th century composers publishing over 400 pieces of music. He provided music for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and two years later arranged the National Anthem with a fanfare for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Sadly his music is out of fashion and rather neglected since his death in 1981. Google led me to the Gordon Jacob website from which I found that Gordon had written a memoir including his interesting experiences as a prisoner of war in WW1. In remembering that war, we often disregard what the survivors went through. In this year of commemoration it seems appropriate to publish some of those memories of Gordon Jacob's as well as celebrating him as an important British composer. I have received enormous help from Gordon's widow, Margaret Jacob (nee Gray), whom he married in 1959. This was the same year that another Upper Norwood resident, Ken Russell, made a film about Gordon Jacob. Margaret Jacob has kindly copied and sent me large sections of the memoirs from which I quote below.

Gordon Jacob was born in the house (right) on July 5th 1895. He was the seventh son and the last child in a family of ten. His parents were Stephen and Clara Jacob (nee Forlong). Stephen Jacob had been a recipient of the Star of India, being the Auditor-General in India, and died in India when Gordon was only 3. Gordon was educated at Dulwich College, continuing to live at



56 Victoria Road, Gipsy Hill.

Victoria Road with his widowed mother. Immediately after leaving school, Gordon went on a seaside holiday with a friend called Beer. During this time war was declared and the two young men were "enjoying a sea bathe and he (Beer) said 'I suppose we'll have to join up'." The two cut short their holiday in order to do so, but only a little over a year later Beer was dead. "I (Gordon) joined up on August 26th 1914 in the Field Artillery, where I was told that educated men were needed. They may have been needed but that's as far as it went." Having been sent to Woolwich, Gordon picked up lice which he soon learned "was the military parasite par excellence". At the Shorncliffe camp at Sandgate,

to which Gordon was moved, he found that the majority of his fellow recruits “were a pretty sorry lot. Some were criminals...and all were rough, uncouth fellows.” One of his fellow recruits even murdered another with a tent mallet. November 14th 1915 found Gordon at Etaples in France, and a week later he was on the front line. “Nothing heroic about that”.

It was at the battle of the Somme on September 18th 1916 that Gordon’s brother Anstey, to whom he was closest, was killed. “A telegram from home was handed to me when I was on parade ...informing me of his death. I could not speak but could only step out of the ranks and hand the telegram to my platoon sergeant”. Gordon was granted a few days leave at home and he writes kindly about Major Grigson, his battalion C.O. Gordon recalls the Major’s lectures on etiquette in which he said “that such and such a thing was ‘absolutely nevah, nevah done’. Such things were...placing a half-burnt cigarette behind one’s ear...and actually embracing a female in public”.



Gordon recounts many of his experiences of battle. These culminated in an attack on April 23rd 1917 in which his battalion were only a few hundred yards from the German trenches. In this attack 740 British soldiers were killed, but in his trench they survived only to be faced with running out of ammunition, reinforcements being unable to reach them. “..when they (the grenades) were finished there was nothing left but to use the canvas bag as a white flag and give ourselves up”. They expected to be killed but “the camaraderie between front line troops held”. After being relieved of their chocolate and cigarettes and disarmed, they were marched some 20 miles to rest. In time they moved deeper into Germany and after being interrogated at Karlsruhe, the prisoners ended up at Strohen, a camp for officers in the north of Germany near the River Weser. While being interrogated

by the gullible Germans, a comedian in the British squad told them that the British had developed an aeroplane with a wing-span of a quarter of a mile known as the “Crosse and Blackwell”.

Gordon recalls “at Strohen there were a number of very bold, brave and ingenious attempts to escape. The camp was within a week’s walk of the Dutch frontier and by walking by day and hiding by night... it was possible to regain freedom”. These bold attempts included tunnelling out of the camp and cutting barbed wire with smuggled wire cutters. Gordon felt obliged to ask his mother to send wire cutters in his food parcels but was relieved she refused to do so. She, like him, probably knew that being caught would result in being shot. The result of these efforts was that all food parcels received were emptied out in the “tin-room” before collection by the prisoners. This exercise included opening any tins and cutting cakes in pieces. A further consequence was that the prisoners were moved to a camp further away from the Dutch frontier in 1918.

This camp was Bad-Colburg nearer to the Czech border. This camp was a great improvement as it had been a spa before the war “and in a main hall the health giving chalybeate waters still flowed”. Gordon then writes “I managed to get one of the three pianos in the place transferred to the wooden hut I shared with half a



The Bad-Colberg Orchestra with conductor Gordon Jacob.

dozen others. It was here that I was able to form a small orchestra of 4 strings, 3 wind and piano. The players were keen and not bad and it was exciting to have them to write and arrange for, and to conduct”. In the previous camp Gordon had been able to pursue music including some composition, and put on musical performances with others.

Gordon recalls the walks taken, under guard, in the Thuringian Forest, and the very few attempts at escape. The food was not good but little worse than that which the Germans had for themselves. He also wrote about the wide range of talent and expertise in the arts and crafts of the prisoners. This enabled shows to be produced such as that illustrated below.

Armistice Day came and went on November 11th 1918, but Gordon and his fellow prisoners were forgotten by the British military. The Kommandant was not popular with some of the guards, so it was “no wonder he had to slip away when the Armistice



Pholies Concert Party

came and the troops rounded on their officers”. The next day “a small group, composed of some of the guards and some of the farmers from the village, appeared ...saying the German people wanted to be friendly with us and hoped we would carry pleasant memories back to England of our stay in Germany, at which we laughed a great deal. Actually we did not leave Germany until New Year’s Eve.” In the meantime they were given a degree of freedom but warned not to go too far because revolution was in the air with some shooting.

After a flirtation with journalism Gordon studied at the Royal College of Music with Stanford, Parry and Vaughan Williams. In 1926 he returned to the RCM as a lecturer where he remained for 40 years, his pupils including Malcolm Arnold and Elizabeth Maconchy.

The musical life of Britain is fortunate in that Gordon Jacob was spared the cruel fate of his loved brother Anstey and that, against all the odds, he survived to compose so much fine music, now sadly neglected. In writing this I hope something more can be done to celebrate the life of one of Upper Norwood’s and Lambeth’s forgotten important people.

Alun Thomas  
16th May 2014

## THE CLOCKWORKS MUSEUM

In Nettlefold Place, just off Knight's Hill and behind the old post office, you can find The Clockworks—a museum, workshop and specialist library devoted to clocks and their history. But not just any clocks—The Clockworks is unique, worldwide, in being devoted to the field of electrical timekeeping, beginning in about 1840, and running through to the second half of the twentieth century ([www.theclockworks.org](http://www.theclockworks.org)).

From the 1840s onwards there was an increasing need to synchronise and provide distributed time. The railways are frequently cited as the driver in the development of synchronised time (emphasising safety and the need for a single rail network time) but in fact there were many other drivers over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, including the adoption of licensing hours, the time-sensitive demands of finance and commerce, the need to regulate factory working hours, and, in science, the need to record observations and track distant events to within fine tolerances (such as telescope work, or psychological experiments using electricity).

If telegraphs opened the path for information to be transmitted rapidly over a distance, so fields beyond message transfer adopted the use of wired linkage, including fire alarm systems, and time distribution networks. The Clockworks has an unrivalled collection of early electrical timekeepers, used originally in observatories, factories, offices, scientific establishments, and offices. Many of these are on display and working in a gallery that communicates openly with the in-house workshop, which itself forms part of the display, rather than being hidden. The associated library of materials offers a tremendous resource to scholars and collectors in the field of electrical horology.

One of the earliest exhibits is a remarkably rare clock by Alexander Bain, a prolific inventor and founding father in the electrical timekeeping and telegraphic worlds—indeed he even secured the first patent for a practical fax machine, in 1843. Experimenting in the 1840s, Bain managed to synchronise clocks electrically across the fifty miles separating Glasgow and Edinburgh. The clock was originally powered using an 'earth battery'. Similar to the principle driving a child's potato clock, two electrodes, of carbon and zinc, buried a metre underground, will produce 1.1 volts, sufficient to drive the seconds-beating clock for many years.

The Clockworks is the brainchild of historian Dr James Nye, a Norwood resident, who is a fellow of King's College London. His curator in residence is the gifted young Dutchman, Johan ten Hoeve, graduate of West Dean and responsible for the fine Tompion year-going regulator replica in the Octagon Room at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. The museum opens to the public just once each year, during the Open House London event, in September, but owing to the delicate nature of the exhibits is normally open only by appointment. Notwithstanding, it is host to regular visits from individuals, who travel from all over the world, as well as interest groups, perhaps including collectors, but also groups such as the friends of the V&A.

## Lavengro Road, London SE27

Back in September 2012 I was approached by Dr Kedrun Laurie, an independent scholar living in Belgium, seeking to buy a copy of Alan Warwick's book *The Phoenix Suburb*. I duly supplied the book and some email correspondence between us ensued. Dr Laurie told me she was writing an article for the *George Borrow Bulletin*, the journal of the George Borrow Society. I knew about George Borrow and had read long ago his famous semi-autobiographical novel about Gypsy life, *Lavengro*, a book which is still on my shelves together with its sequel *The Romany Rye*. George Borrow (1803-1881) was articled to a solicitor in Norwich before adopting literature as a profession. He travelled widely, particularly in Russia and in Spain where he acted as agent for the British and Foreign Bible Society. He published his delightful book *The Bible in Spain* in 1843. After returning from Spain he married a well-to-do widow and settled near Oulton Broad in Suffolk. There he published *Lavengro* in 1851, *The Romany Rye* in 1857 and *Wild Wales* in 1862. 'Lavengro' means 'philologist' in Gypsy language and was a name supplied to Borrow in his youth. He was certainly an adept linguist.

Dr Laurie promised to send me a copy of the article when it was published and I thought no more about the matter until last December when the Autumn 2013 issue of the *George Borrow Bulletin* arrived in the post with a hand-written note by Dr Laurie. Lavengro Road adjoins Lancaster Avenue and is not far from Tulse Hill



Station. The name was approved by the London County Council in 1906 and houses there began to be built in 1915. Dr Laurie suggests that the name 'Lavengro' was 'the astute choice of a developer who capitalised on Norwood's well-established reputation as a haunt for Gypsies and combined it with Borrow's book for the sake of its descriptions of Gypsy life'. She points out that the name was 'calculated to appeal to the same segments of the population who were then in their thousands buying *Lavengro* in cheap, cloth-covered



editions'. She refers to the character Leonard Bast in E M Forster's novel *Howards End* (1910) who was a reader of Borrow and had moved with his wife from Camden Road in North London to Tulse Hill. Dr Laurie gives a detailed account of the Gypsy settlements in Norwood and quotes *The Phoenix Suburb* on several occasions as well as John Coulter's *Norwood Past* (1996). She goes on to give information about some of the early residents of Lavengro Road and a description of some of the houses. After noting that a hundred years on Borrow's book is 'almost forgotten', she concludes:

'It would be interesting to discover how many of those who live in Lavengro Road today know that their street is named after George Borrow, the *gorgio* word-master, whom the Gypsies called *Lavengro*'.

Dr Laurie visited Norwood to pursue her research and the article is illustrated with photographs taken by the author. Acknowledgements are given to Zoe Darani and Jon Newman of the Lambeth Archives and to me (my name being coupled with the Norwood Society) for help in the writing of the article. It is always a pleasure to assist a scholar with research, but it was especially so in this case. My own interest in Borrow has been revived and I have been reading *The Bible in Spain* with relish and I have joined the George Borrow Society.

### *Richard Lines*



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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# NORWOOD SOCIETY BOOKS

<b>BOOK</b>	<b>PRICE</b>	<b>By POST</b>
<b>The Phoenix Suburb</b> by Alan R. Warwick	£ 9.99	£12.60
<b>Norwood – A Second Selection</b> by John Coulter	£12.99	£16.50
<b>Biggin Wood</b> by Betty Griffin	£ 3.50	£ 5.60
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<b>The Story of Norwood</b> by J. B. Wilson	£ 6.95	£ 9.95
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**The**  
**NORWOOD**  
**SOCIETY**

Represents the interests of the people who live or work in Norwood to local authorities and government agencies.

Researches the history of Norwood, publishes literature and sponsors publications about its history and culture.

Communicates informations through talks, exhibitions and the Norwood Review, our quarterly journal.

Although the Norwood Society cannot provide expert advice on planning, transport, trees and open spaces, it takes a close interest in these matters, and would welcome information about them in the Norwood area. It may not be able to become directly involved in all of them, but would be able to advise on suitable sources of help and possible strategies.