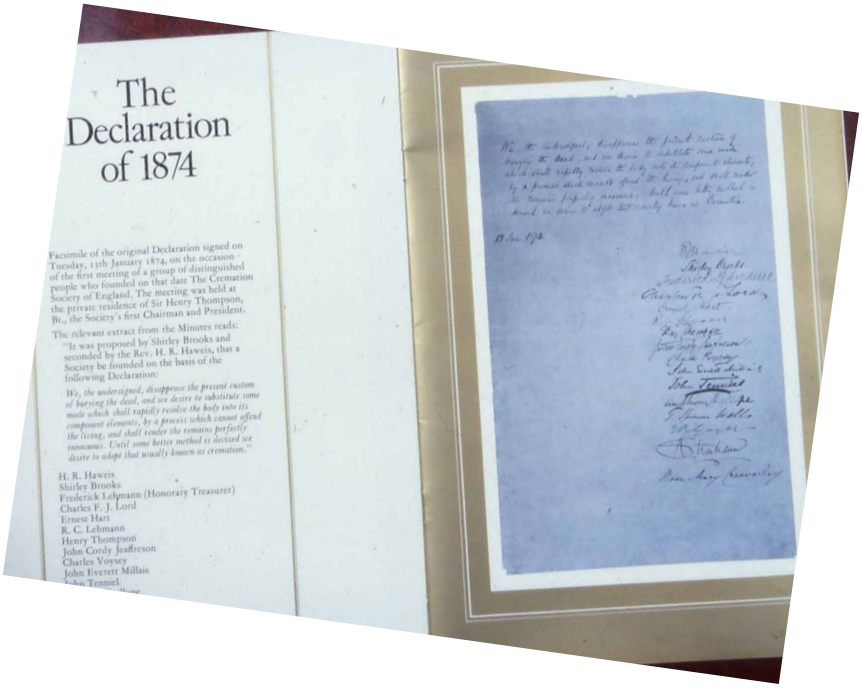
Founder Members of the Cremation Society



The Cremation Society was established in 1874 and the first formal step to establish it was taken by a small group of people who met at the home of Sir Henry Thompson on the 13th January, shortly after Thompson had published an article advocating cremation in Contemporary Review.

Those present at that meeting agreed that a Society should be formed on the basis of the following Declaration: 'We disapprove the present custom of burying the dead and we desire to substitute some mode which shall rapidly dissolve the body into its component elements by a process which cannot offend the living, and shall render the remains perfectly innocuous. Until some better method is devised we desire to adopt that usually known as cremation.'

At the next meeting on the 19th March, the group decided to insert this Declaration in several national papers and invite subscriptions.

To assess the impact this initiative had and how the cremationists hoped to achieve it, an obvious and necessary starting point is those who signed up. In fact, not all of those whose signatures appear beneath the Declaration were at that first meeting. If you draw a line beneath Charles Voysey then those above it were there, those below signed after.

A list of the Provisional Council was sent to the Home Office by the Cremation Society in February 1879 after a group of Woking residents had gone in a deputation to the Home Office to protest at the Cremation Society's purchase of the site of the crematorium there.

Obviously the list was sent to the Home Office to impress people there with the eminence of the supporters of cremation, but it betrays haste. One small error may not have been the Society's fault – Higford Bun should be Higford Burr. More importantly, by this stage the Society had a proper constitution. The days of the 'Provisional' Council had passed. More seriously still Professor Caines had died in 1875 and it is believed that Frances Power Cobbe had severed her connection with the Society by 1879. She was responsible for establishing the association which is now the RSPCA and she was devastated when the leaders of the medical profession (among them Sir Henry Thompson and Ernest Hart) successfully lobbied for amendments to the Vivisection Bill which changed it, as she thought, from a measure to protect animals into one to protect doctors.

Many of the names on the list will mean little to us today. Those that will be most likely to be recognised are, perhaps, Anthony Trollope, the novelist, and John Everett Millais, the artist. Two, with whose work people may nowadays be familiar even if they do not recognise their names, are George Du Maurier and John Tenniel. George Du Maurier was Daphne Du Maurier's grandfather and, like her, a novelist. Du Maurier was the author of *Trilby* and perhaps the best known film version was Svengali which John Barrymore made around 1931. He was also the social cartoonist of *Punch*. Tenniel was the political cartoonist of *Punch* and, amongst other things, the illustrator of *Alice in Wonderland*. In 1879 Tom Taylor was the Editor of *Punch*, and Shirley Brooks, the second signatory to the Declaration in 1874, had been Editor then. Brooks had long been a friend of Thompson and just before that meeting in January had written to another friend 'I am going to dine with Sir H Thompson on Wednesday and talk cremation; I suppose and hope that you are with us (I say 'us' because I have always been for it) in this matter… It is not a topic we can often touch in P but it may be well to have one profession of faith thereanent.' The result must have come as something of a surprise to readers of *Punch*.

In November they had been treated to a disquisition on the disposal in Bombay of the remains of a 'benighted Hindoo… by his equally benighted relatives after the fashion of the no less benighted Romans'. In the course of this 'the continued encroachment of cemeteries on commons and open spaces' was applauded as superior to 'the unphilosophical process of cremation' and as a testament to the superior enlightenment and greater civilisation of Britain. Readers may have raised an eyebrow and perhaps a smile when a short item in January about Thompson's paper predicted that the first crematorium would be in Berners Street and added parenthetically the hope that it would become popular. But they must have been very surprised to be told a week later, almost completely seriously that, as far as sentiment was concerned, the balance of advantage was with cremation and to be asked rhetorically 'Can sentiment be pleased to see commons and open spaces converted into cemeteries?'

It was Shirley Brooks who actually proposed the Declaration and signing it must have been almost his last act because when the group assembled again two months later he was dead. Brooks's son was also a contributor to *Punch* and in 1882 wrote in *The Sporting Times* that the body of English cricket 'will be cremated and the Ashes taken to Australia', thus coining the name for the trophy that English and Australian cricketers contest.

As the controversy over cremation was at a crucial stage in 1882, this was a joke not so much about English cricket, as we now think it, but about cremation.

Returning to the Declaration, the names known to the wider public, and to be the most active supporters of the cremationist cause, were Hugh Reginald Haweis, Frederick Lehmann, Ernest Hart, Henry Thompson, Thomas Spencer Wells, Charles Voysey, Rose Mary Crawshay and William Eassie (Honorary Secretary of the Society). This table is a record of attendance at Council meetings from 1874 to 1880 showing the frequency with which they attended meetings. They are arranged in the order in which they signed the Declaration and then in the order in which they first appeared at a Council meeting. The asterisks represent attendance, the 'c' chairing the meeting, following by the number of meetings they attended during this period.
As you will see, Henry Thompson attended every Council meeting and chaired all but one, Spencer Wells and

Shirley Brooks

Voysey almost every one, Hart and Haweis attended about half and Crawshay a little less. In the early days of the Society only Charles Lord (Medical officer for Hampstead and a neighbour of Hart), George Hawkins and Major Vaughan attended meetings more regularly than Crawshay. Major Vaughan was Major Hector B Vaughan of the Bombay Staff Corps and 20th Foot Regiment and he became a Lieutenant Colonel in 1878. Unfortunately, we have been unable to discover anything of George Hawkins.

Rose Mary Crawshay was the only female signatory and, after Frances Power Cobbe left the Society, the only female member of the Council. In 1874 she was 47-years-old and for 29 years had been married to Robert Thompson Crawshay, owner of the Cyfarthfa ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil.

It was from her experience of domestic management at Cyfarthfa that she developed a scheme, which she ran from an office in London, for reducing unemployment among governesses by securing jobs for them as 'lady-helps'. She was invited to give an account of this scheme to the annual congress of the Social Science Association in 1874. The congress was an extremely important event. It met each year in a different major city and attracted the sort of publicity that the annual conferences of the major political parties get nowadays.

In 1860 Crawshay's husband had a stroke which left him paralysed and permanently deaf. But he was not a very pleasant man and before this Crawshay had become estranged from him. She began to spend an increasing amount of time away from Cyfarthfa in London, Reading or Brighton cultivating her political and literary interests. She was an anti-vivisectionist and an ardent advocate of women's rights.

By 1873 she had become the Vice-President of the Bristol and West of England National Society for Women's Suffrage. She had also been involved in enterprises that led to the establishment of female colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. The School Boards required by the Education Act of 1870 were one of the first means by which women rose to democratically fill public offices. In 1871 Crawshay had become the only woman to be elected to the first Merthyr School Board, polling the second highest number of

Day		13	19	29	14	29	29	14	11	30	10	14	30	2	12	?	6	23	14	29	8	14	13	14
Month		01	03	04	05	05	07	01	02	06	02	12	05	08	03	?	05	06	07	07	08	01	02	06
Year 1800		74	74	74	74	74	74	75	75	75	76	76	78	78	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	80	80	80
Haweis	10	*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*			*									
Brooks	1	*																						
Lehmann, F	3	*		*					*															
Lord	14	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*		*	*				*	*			*			
Hart	12	*	*	*	*		*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*								
Lehmann, RC	1	*																						
Thompson	23	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	*
Jeaffreson	1	*																						
Voysey	20	*	*	*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Spencer Wells	20		*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Gayer	1		*																					
Strahan	3		*	*			*																	
Crawshay	7		*						*	*	*					*		*	*					
Hawkins	10		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*											
Vaughan	15			*	*			*	*	*	*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*			*	c
Shaen	3			*			*	*																
Bastian	1				*																			
Berkeley Hill	1				*																			
Dawson	1					*																		
Clarke	1							*																
Long	9									*			*	*				*		*	*	*	*	*
Burr	9									*	*	*	*				*		*	*	*		*	
Brooke Lambert	1													*										
Robinson												*			*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	
Wilson Tickle																								
Galton, D																								
Cameron																								
Farquharson																								
Ridley Smith																								
Swinburne-Hanham																								

Attendance at Council Meetings

By kind permission of the British Library

Rose Mary Crawshay

votes cast, and shortly afterwards she was elected to chair the Vaynor School Board. On the 10th January 1874, just three days before the meeting at Sir Henry Thompson's house, *The Graphic* carried a set of photos of the six women then serving on school boards.

In 1872 Crawshay's suitability for her positions on the school boards was questioned because she had circulated a pamphlet advocating euthanasia which had been written by S D Williams. The controversy generated by this was entwined with one about the place of religious education in schools, about which Crawshay had set out her views in two letters to *The Times.* She was unrepentant and the next edition of Williams' pamphlet, which appeared soon after the controversy subsided and whose publication she may have subsidised, came with a preface containing a defence of her actions. A fourth edition of Williams' pamphlet in the following year carried a fresh preface by her. She also contributed to a debate on the subject in the pages of *The Spectator.*

Crawshay numbered among her friends and intellectual acquaintances Emerson, Darwin, Spencer, Colenso, Robert Owen, Dean Stanley, Browning, Huxley, Irving, Jowitt, Lyell, Gray, Grove and the Garrett sisters. In 1882 she was to institute a prize for works by women about English literature and preferably about Byron, Keats or Shelley, and 10 years later she instituted prizes for oil paintings of incidents from their lives. The artistic prizes did not survive long, but the literary prize did and is now administered by the British Academy.

At the beginning of 1874, Sir Henry Thompson was 53-years old and a noted surgeon, having made his name with a novel technique for crushing gall-stones without cutting. The efficacy of prayer was a topic about which much was written around the 1870s (The John Templeton Foundation sponsored research in America on the efficacy of medical treatment by prayer) and in January 1874 Thompson would have been known as the author of another essay in the *Contemporary Review* in which he proposed putting prayer to the test by dividing hospital wards into two and having the recovery of the occupants of the beds on one side prayed for and those on the other side not prayed for. People who might have been surprised by Thompson's article on cremation might not have been surprised that it was he who had written it. Though his piece on prayer was published anonymously it was not much of a secret who its author was.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to find Thompson's diaries and some of the reminiscences he wrote. When Zachary Cope wrote his biography of Thompson in 1951 these were in the possession of Thompson's grandchildren.
Thompson came from a very strict Congregationalist background. His father thought that all doctors became infidels and thwarted his wishes to train as a doctor for at least 10 years. Thompson adhered, albeit in a more relaxed fashion, to his childhood creed but, more significantly, from an early age he took an interest in the civil disabilities of dissenters. One of the striking things about the development of cremation is that the established Church made no attempt to extend its partial monopoly over the dispersal of dead bodies by colonising cremation. Indeed, the Society's first attempt to build a crematorium in 1876 on land belonging to the Great Northern Cemetery was stymied when the Bishop of Rochester, whose consent had been applied for because the land was consecrated, refused it on the ground that he had no power to consent and would not consent, even if he had.

So, although Anglicans accepted that cremation was not necessarily unlawful in either civil or canon law, the Established Church did not show any particular eagerness to move into the cremation business,and it is conceivable that dissenters might have come to favour it more if their grievances about parish burial grounds had not been remedied in principle by the Burial Laws Amendment Act of 1880. Thompson's diaries and reminiscences might have shed some light on this.

It is conceivable that several members of the Provisional Council and perhaps some of the original signatories may not have been terribly fervent supporters of cremation, but were roped in by Thompson. Thompson was something of a polymath. By 1874, apart from being a surgeon, he was an accomplished painter. He and Millais painted each other's portrait.

Having found a lucrative niche as a lithotriptist Thompson stuck to that, taking a fair amount of time away from his practice to indulge passing interests. He became a notable collector of oriental porcelain, a novelist writer under the name Pen Oliver (the Museum at Framlingham Castle in Suffolk has a set of matchbox size illustrations he made for one of his books), an astronomer, horticulturist, poultry farmer, photographer and automobile enthusiast. He wrote books on diet and guides to the art collections of Europe. He campaigned for the Sunday opening of museums and art galleries.

So Thompson had many artistic and literary connections. In addition, although a teetotaller, Thompson was a famed entertainer. He was known throughout society for his 'Octaves', which he began in 1872. These were dinner parties to which exactly eight men would be invited to tackle eight dishes and do some serious talking meanwhile.

George Du Maurier

The menus were headed with a musical staff with the notes of C major on it, representing the guests. The menu for the 299th Octave is in the Manuscript Collection of the British Library and that for the 300th at Framlingham Castle the guests on that occasion included the Prince of Wales, Alma-Tadema, Arthur Conan Doyle and the Lord Chief Justice.

Thomas Spencer Wells and Ernest Hart were both doctors. Spencer Wells only missed three Council meetings and chaired the meetings on three occasions when Thompson was absent. Almost an exact contemporary of Thompson, his medical experiences had been rather wider ranging and had included a period as a naval surgeon, a short period in Paris after the Revolution

Cremation Society Provisional Council

Sir Henry Thompson, Chairman
(pro tem)
The Right Hon the Earl of Mar
Watkin Williams, Esq, MP
Mrs Crawshay, Merthyr
Miss Francis Power Cobbe, London
The Revd H R Haweis, ditto
The Revd Brooke Lambert, Tamworth
The Revd Chas. Voysey, London
The Revd James, Long Church
Missionary, Calcutta
The Revd Maurice Davies, MA, London
The Revd E Fisher, MA, London
The Revd W W Jackson, Fellow and
utor of Exeter College, Oxford
The Revd M Kirkham, Hampstead
G Du Maurier, Esq, ditto
F D Mocatta, Esq, London
John Marshall, Esq, J P London
E J Welby, BA, Trinity College, Cambridge
Geo. J Wild, Esq, LL.D, Barrister, London
Dr Humphrey Sandwith, CB &c
T Spencer Wells, Esq, London Ernest Hart,
Esq, ditto
Chas. F J Lord, Esq, Hampstead
Alex. Strahan, Esq, London
Frederick Lehmann, Esq, London, Hon.
Treasurer
Geo. Hawkins, Esq, London
W Shaen, Esq
Major Vaughan, Army and Navy Club,
London
Major H H Godwin Austen, London
Professor Caines, Blackheath
Francis Galton, Esq, FRS, London
Anthony Trollope, Esq, ditto
J E Millais, Esq, ditto
M Berkeley Hill, Esq, ditto
John Tenniel, Esq, ditto
Tom Taylor, Esq, ditto
Higford Bun, Esq, Reading
Titus Salt, Esq, J P, Saltaire
Dr Priestly, London
Henry Leslie, Esq, London

3rd February 1879

of 1848 studying gunshot wounds, and service in the military hospitals during the Crimean War.

Coincidentally with going to the Crimea in 1855, he had been appointed Editor of the *Medical Times* and *Gazette*, a position which he retained until 1862. By 1874, however, he was known as the leading ovariotomist in Europe. Ovariotomy was a largely discredited operation when he performed his first one and, although still controversial in 1874, had been much rehabilitated by him. The public was to be reminded of Spencer Wells' involvement with it in 1877 by the publication of the results of his examination of Harriet Martineau's ovarian cyst, which had been removed during her autopsy and sent to him for examination, and by his disputes with the anti-vivisectionists.

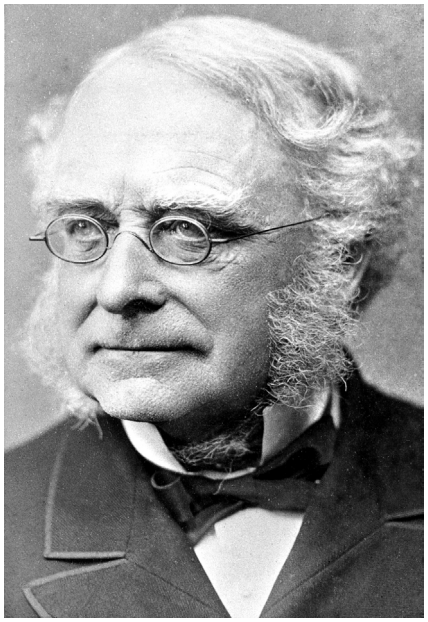
The other doctor was Ernest Hart. He was some 15 years younger than Thompson and Spencer Wells. He had become a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1856 and between then and 1868 had held positions in London hospitals, developing a specialism in ophthalmics. But his professional life thereafter was devoted entirely to journalism and campaigning for medical and sanitary reform. In 1858 he had been taken on to do editorial work for *The Lancet* and in 1867 was appointed Editor of the *British Medical Journal*, a position he retained until his death in 1898, apart from an intermission of some 14 months which began when he resigned in 1869 and ended when he was reappointed in 1870. The reason for his resignation remains something of a mystery, but it was almost certainly not, as medico-journalist folklore, supplemented by popular fiction, has had it, that he was about to be prosecuted for murdering his first wife who had been poisoned in 1861.

While Editor, Hart transformed the *Journal* from a lack-lustre periodical, inferior to *The Lancet* in both content and circulation, to the leading medical journal of the time, having a circulation that may have exceeded the aggregate circulation of all its competitors and providing the platform from which the British Medical Association raised itself to become the powerful pressure group that it did. He still awaits a biographer, but after 1868 his life was very largely his work. The historian of the *British Medical Journal* has described him as 'argumentative, egocentric, intolerant, ambitious, clever and devious'. Even if anti-Semitism had not fuelled some of the antagonism he aroused, he would have made enemies easily: indeed he thought it a merit in a journalist to do so. To his editorship of the *British Medical Journal* he added that of *The Medical Record* and of *The Sanitary Record* when they were started in 1873 and 1874 respectively, and in 1872 he had become the chairman of the British Medical Association's Parliamentary Bills Committee. These positions of influence

Sir Henry Thompson

made him an extremely important ally to the cremationist cause. In 1874 he would perhaps have been most noted for the part he had played in commissioning an undercover exposé of baby-farming which led eventually to the formation of the Infant Life Protection Society and, in 1872, to an Infant Life Protection Act. The fear that cremation would be used to destroy evidence of crime was one that was fuelled by baby-farming. He was a close friend of Thompson, whose interest in diet and oriental art he shared.

Obviously, as Thompson, Spencer Wells and Hart illustrate, there was a strong component of medical support – other doctors on the Council were Lord Priestly, Berkeley Hill, Higford Burr, Marshall (we think) and Sandwith. Another phalanx was formed by the clergy. We are not sure what scheme, if any, the list of Provisional Council members was drawn up, but it is notable how the Reverends are all grouped together. It was, of course, important for the Society to get across that there was nothing in cremation incompatible with Christian belief.



Thomas Spencer Wells

Of the clergy connected with the Cremation Society, it would be hard to beat Hugh Reginald Haweis and Charles Voysey for fame or notoriety. In the 1870s the Established Church was beset on several sides and from within. Non-conformists were attacking its privileges (in particular in the countryside over its monopoly on burial grounds), some of its members had joined or were flirting with joining the Roman Catholic Church, and others were seeking greater freedom in the interpretation of scripture and the development of doctrine. This all resulted in several highly publicised prosecutions of clergymen either for heresy or for engaging in unauthorised rituals, and many of the prosecutions ended up on appeal before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

One of the most important of these trials concerned a collection of essays called *Essays and Reviews*. This was published in 1860, just a few months after Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and it got caught up in the turbulence caused by that book's challenge to fundamental Christian beliefs about creation. Essays and Reviews was the idea of a future Archbishop of Canterbury and the Master of Balliol College, Oxford, who both contributed essays, and all but one of the seven essayists were Anglican clergymen. Amongst other things, the book contained denials both that the Bible was divinely inspired and that it should be taken totally literally, as, for example, when recounting miracles. It cast doubt on the doctrine of justification by faith and it denied the reality of eternal punishment.

Two of the writers were prosecuted in the Church courts on the grounds that such beliefs were incompatible with the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the Canons of the Church, all of which they, as clergymen, were obliged to uphold. The case eventually went on appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which, by a majority, acquitted the essayists on all charges. The result was very ill-received within the Church, not least because most of the Judicial Committee were laymen, two of the three clerics on the committee had been in the minority, and these two were the most senior churchmen in the land, namely the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. To those concerned for the identity and unity of the Established Church, the judgement seemed to allow far too much freedom for biblical and doctrinal criticism. The fraternity of those who welcomed and took advantage of the intellectual freedom the judgement permitted came to be known as the Broad Church. Both Haweis and Voysey were much influenced by *Essays and Reviews* itself and by what happened as a result of its publication.

Of the two clerics Voysey was the more assiduous attender at Council meetings, like Spencer Wells missing only three during the first 10 years of the Society. Whereas Thompson, Spencer Wells and Hart were pillars of their professional establishments, Voysey was the opposite. He was a convicted heretic, even, to some members of the Established Church, an infidel. He was born in 1828 and ordained in 1851. After holding a number of precarious curacies, from one of which he was dismissed after preaching against the doctrine of eternal punishment, he was appointed in 1864 to the perpetual curacy of Healaugh in Yorkshire, a small parish of some 250 people.

This was the year in which the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council acquitted the writers of *Essays and Reviews*. Perhaps thinking that the judgement gave members of the Church carte-blanche for biblical and doctrinal inquiry but, in any event, determined that its limits should be tested, he delivered a series of sermons which he then published annually in a series called *The Sling and the Stone*. The title's reference to the story of David and Goliath indicates the role in which he cast himself.

In 1869 he was charged with heresy on the following grounds: that he denied the doctrine of original sin, atonement, and reconciliation to God through the sacrifice and vicarious punishment of Christ; that he denied the doctrine of justification by faith; that he denied the second coming of Christ, the Trinity, and the incarnation and godhead of Christ; and that he denied the divine inspiration of the Gospels, and the authenticity of St John's Gospel in particular.

It is an interesting coincidence – or perhaps it is not a coincidence at all – that James Fitzjames Stephen, who made his important ruling at the Price trial, was counsel for one of the defendants in the *Essays and Reviews* case and helped Voysey prepare his defence. William Shaen, another member of the Provisional Council, was his solicitor on this occasion. Not that their help totally availed. Voysey was convicted and his conviction was upheld by the judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1871. He refused to recant and was deprived of his living. Immediately he accepted the offer from individual patrons of a salary to preach in London and at St George's Hall, Langham Palace, he established the first Theistic Church. Francis Power Cobbe and Rose Mary Crawshay both made financial contributions to it. The Church survived long after Voysey's death in 1912. Its first meeting was packed with 2,000 people, with more unable to get in.

Ernest Hart

Charles Voysey

Voysey became the London correspondent of the Ohio Index, a mouthpiece of the Free Religious Association, and in 1873 he wrote letters on euthanasia, burial rites and wearing mourning. In the first of these he praised the pamphlet that Crawshay had circulated and argued that, far from being wrong, killing to terminate intolerable and incurable pain was a positive duty. In the second he argued for chemical cremation to replace the 'barbarous practice of Christian burial'. The prayer book he produced for his Church was perhaps the first Christian prayer book to contain a service for the cremation of the dead.

One cannot know how the campaign for cremation was affected by the fact that two of the signatories to the Declaration were known advocates of euthanasia, even of compulsory euthanasia, but one cannot help thinking that people might have thought 'if it's cremation today, it will be euthanasia tomorrow', especially as cremation was seen as a solvent of other funerary practices regarded as in need of reform. In utopias created by novelists cremation was often preferred over burial as the method of disposing of corpses, and in the satirical utopian novel that Anthony Trollope wrote in 1882 just before he died, cremation and euthanasia were explicitly linked. In *The Final Exit* euthanasia is compulsory: citizens at the age of 67 enter a college called Necropolis to prepare for death, and by their 68th birthday must have submitted to euthanasia. Their bodies are cremated. Though the protagonist of the novel observes 'Cremation is no part of the Fixed Period' this is not an opinion shared by all characters in the novel. Trollope was one of the original signatories of the Declaration and no doubt drew on his connection with the Society for some of the details about cremation in his book.

The other cleric was Hugh Reginald Haweis, a churchman only slightly less broad than Voysey. In 1874 he was 36-years-old and a fashionable preacher, the incumbent of St James's, Westmoreland Street, in Marylebone. An infant prodigy on the violin, he had suffered in his youth from a disease of the hip which had come near to killing him, stunted his growth and left him with a club foot. During his recuperation he became a voracious reader and three years tutelage with a high churchman, two of them in Brighton where he daily attended St Paul's, left him with a passion for High Church ritual and a scepticism of High Church doctrine. At Cambridge he neglected truly academic studies, was gregarious, and indulged his passion for music and journalism. He graduated in 1859 and set out on a tour of Italy where he became a camp follower of Garibaldi, whose triumphal entry into Naples with his 'Thousand' he witnessed. While abroad he read *Essays and Reviews*, determined to enter the church, and on his return to England fell in with Denison Maurice, the leader of the Christian Socialists, whose funeral oration he was to preach in 1872.

Haweis's first curacy was in the East End of London, where, as rival attractions to the gin-palace and the music hall, he instituted penny readings, lectures on literacy and historical subjects, and musical evenings. Here he developed a talent for extemporary public speaking. In 1866 he moved to St James's, Westmoreland Street, which was unendowed and had no parish attached to it. It was tucked away behind Wimple and Harley Streets. It was completely run down with hardly a congregation, a considerable difficulty for an incumbency almost entirely funded by pew rents. A year after taking up his incumbency he married the daughter of the artist Thomas Joy, who had herself already exhibited at the Royal Academy. She was to acquire a renown, equal to her husband's, as a book illustrator, campaigner for female suffrage and animal protection, an authority on fashion, domestic management and interior design. With her help he refurbished the interior of the church. Gas heating and a new organ were installed and soon Haweis, in black gown and breathless haste, was instructing and entertaining a growing congregation with theatrical church services and controversial sermons and lectures on theological, political and social topics. Without parish duties he was able to supplement his income with journalism. He was among the first staff of the *Echo* and the *Contemporary Review*, to which he contributed throughout his life, and he became a prolific contributor to other newspapers and periodicals.

In the 1870s the middle and upper classes treated London churches as the cinemas of their age with the preachers as the star attractions. Indeed one member of the Cremation Society's 'Provisional Council', Revd Maurice Davies, produced a series of books, which were a sort of 'Good Church Guide', to help them decide which church to patronise each Sunday. By the time the Cremation Society began Haweis was filling his with audiences of more than 1,000, spattered with the leaders of political, intellectual and artistic life in the city. To these he preached a brand of liberal Christianity infused with spiritualism.

Haweis was to remain at St James's until his death in 1901, his growing reputation as an international lecturer and mouthpiece of the Broad Church, balanced by the subdued scandal of a financial improvidence and a sexual incompatibility with his wife which led to a fractious domestic life and an illegitimate child. Only his popularity prevented his being asked to step down from St James's.

John Tenniel

Lewis Harcourt, who was the son and private secretary of Vernon Harcourt, Gladstone's Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer, kept a very interesting diary. On Christmas Eve 1892 he recorded having lunch with Lady Dolly Nevill 'who was charming and amusing as usual but her company was not up to the mark as it consisted of Sir Henry Wolff who was in a bad temper and Mr and Mrs Haweis who are both rather mad.'

Lady Dolly herself wrote several books of reminiscences and Haweis appears in these: 'At one time I saw a good deal of Revd Mr Haweis, at whose parties one used to meet all sorts of different kinds of people… At [one] was given what I think was the first semipublic demonstration of the phonograph, which had just then been invented. I remember its being a complete failure… Mr Haweis was a most amusing little man. His sermons were quite unlike any others I ever heard, and were totally devoid of those ponderous and didactic qualities which render these discourses a sad trial to many an unfortunate congregation. He would preach on all sorts of unconventional subjects. One of his last sermons, I remember, was about cruelty to animals and the inhumanity of leaving unfortunate cats untended in London houses during the time that their owners were absent in the country. Some remarks which he added arousing unmistakable sounds of tittering among his congregation, he exclaimed: "What I have just said may possibly be amusing, but I will tell you one thing, it would certainly not make a cat laugh!".'

In 1873 Haweis had had a book of his sermons published and he was the author of *Music and Morals*, which was to run to 16 editions before his death. In 1875 he was to write *Ashes to Ashes*, the most entertaining of all Cremationist tracts. In the form of a cross between a Greek symposium, or perhaps a Socratic dialogue, a Le Fanu ghost story, and a Mills and Boon romance, it starts with the narrator, Mr Pomeroy, on 'a melancholy autumn night' strolling along a deserted sea shore, the site of a disused graveyard formerly well set back from the sea. He trips over an impediment, which, after two pages of what now reads like a parody of gothic horror, he reveals to be a human bone. This discovery sets the scene for a series of conversations conducted by the narrator's friend, Le Normand, 'a man of remarkable attainments and an

Hugh Reginald Haweis

omnivorous appetite for books', about the advantages of cremation. The conversations include the local clergyman and his daughter, 'a sweet English girl of 18'. During the progress of the story this English rose is dazzled by the intellectual superiority of Le Normand and becomes engaged to him. Shortly after the engagement Le Normand is appointed to a London hospital and, typhoid fever having broken out in its vicinity, he answers the call of duty and goes to London to care for the sick and to track down the cause of the fever. This turns out to be a tainted water supply and foul air caused by the disturbance of an overcrowded graveyard sold for building purposes. Mr Pomeroy is just as smitten with the beautiful Ellen Morant as Le Normand. As might be guessed, Le Normand catches typhoid. He summons Pomeroy to his dying bedside and enjoins him that no one, especially Ellen, be told of his condition: 'She is one whom fever would feast and revel upon. Those fresh childish bodies are the special food for this typhoid demon; he is ravenous for them.' Le Normand dies. Pomeroy, as instructed by Le Normand, explains to Ellen that it was out of love for her that Le Normand concealed his condition from her. Le Normand's wishes to be cremated are ignored and his corpse subjected to all the abuses against which he has inveighed earlier in the book. The book ends with Pomeroy marrying the English rose.

Frederick Lehmann was not a frequent attender at the Society's meetings for two reasons. The first is that at the second meeting he agreed to become the Society's first Treasurer. The second reason is that at one of the Society's former offices, typewritten notes about the original members were found and under the heading of Frederick Lehmann was written 'No information except as father of R C Lehmann'. At the time 'father of R C Lehmann' meant nothing to the current members of the Society. However, around the 1890s R C (Rudolf Chambers) Lehmann was Mr Rowing: amongst other things he coached the Oxford and Cambridge and Harvard University crews. From 1906 to 1910 he was Liberal Member of Parliament for Harborough (Leicester). He had been President of the Cambridge Union, founded Granta, and from 1890 to 1920 he was on the editorial staff of *Punch*. Still 'father of R C Lehmann' meant nothing to us. Had it said 'grandfather of Beatrix, Rosamund and John Lehmann' it would have meant more. Rosamund was a novelist, Beatrix an actress and John a man of letters. All these talents would have been very much at home in their grandparents' household.

The Lehmanns came originally from Hamburg. Augustus Freidrich (or Frederick as he came to be known in England) was born in 1826 and came to this country around 1844. He was first and foremost a merchant and became a partner in Naylor, Benzon & Co, of Ernst Benzon, who was also a German from Hamburg and the first Chairman of Vickers. Lehmann died in 1891 a wealthy man, his estate being valued at above half a million pounds. After living in America, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Sheffield he went to live in London in 1859. Although he was a driven business man and spent quite long periods away from his home on foreign tours in search of business, he had an artistic streak and was a talented violinist. It was through this that he came into contact with the Chambers family (of *Chambers Encyclopaedia*) while he was living in Edinburgh. In 1852 he married one of Robert Chambers' daughters, Nina, who was said by Wilkie Collins, a close family friend, to be the best pianist in England of her day.

Lehmann's grandfather had been an artist. Two of Lehmann's brothers were artists: one, Henri, was a teacher of Seurat, another (who also married a daughter of Robert Chambers) was Rudolf Lehmann, who settled in England in 1866 and became a fashionable portrait painter. Both Tom Taylor and Spencer Wells sat for him.

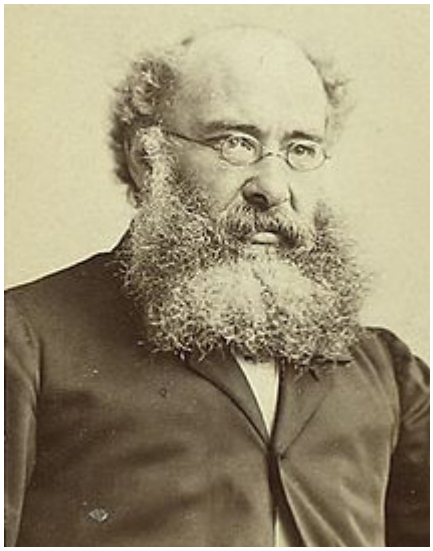
Like his partner, Ernst Benzon (who married his sister), Lehmann was famed

for entertaining the leading writers, artists and musicians of the day: Millais was a family friend and twice painted the portrait of Lehmann's daughter, Nina. Felix Moscheles's description of the Benzons could equally well have been applied to the Lehmanns, substituting Berkeley Square for Kensington Palace Gardens: 'They occupied one of those unique houses in that finest of avenues, Kensington Palace Gardens… Inside that hospital mansion all that was best in the world of art and literature would assemble… Dinner was usually followed by the most perfect music, for the gods loved to play to one another, and it needed no pressure to induce a Joachim to open his violin case, or to lead a pianist of the day to the piano…'

Much more of the details of Lehmann's literary and artistic friendships can be found in books by his son and grandson, based on Frederick's and Nina's letters and on some uncompleted 'Reminiscences' which Frederick began to write in 1884. Again, their whereabouts are unknown, possibly in America.

Lehmann stood twice unsuccessfully for Parliament as a Liberal in Middlesex in 1874 and in County Waterford in Ireland in 1877.

William Eassie, the Society's first Secretary, was not so much a founder or a member, but an honorary employee. He appears to have come upon the scene in time for the Society's third meeting on the 29th April, because he is not recorded in the minutes at any time as being a 'gentleman present' at a meeting and the minutes of the meeting of the 29th April are in a different and far neater hand than that of Sir Henry



Anthony Trollope

Frederick and Nina Lehmann

Thompson, who took the minutes of the first two meetings and who superscribed the minutes of the third 'Here appears Wm Eassie's writing for the first time'. At the sixth meeting on the 29th July those present agreed to ask Eassie to accept an honorarium of £25 as a 'slight recognition of his past services'. Now, given that this was a voluntary gathering and Eassie was not contracted to act as Secretary, this subservient role is perhaps explained by the fact that he was an engineer and thus of a lower social status to the others present.

His family came from Lochee in Forfar, where he was born in 1832. Some time between 1845 and 1849 the family came south and settled in Gloucester, where his father established himself as a railway contractor. Eassie became an assistant of Isambard Brunel – obituaries of Eassie say a 'favourite' one. During the Crimean War the wooden huts (or pavilions as they were called in the medical terminology of the time) which Brunel designed for the hospital at Renkioi in the Dardanelles were prefabricated at Eassie's father's works, and Eassie went to the Crimea to superintend their erection. He appears to have had another role at Renkioi as superintendent of the sanitary arrangements there. At Renkioi he worked under Edmund Parkes, described by the NDB as the 'founder of modern hygiene and famous throughout Europe in the field of military hygiene'. Parkes was somewhat unusual in favouring burial at sea over cremation as a solution to the burials problem. It is possible that at Renkioi Essie first met Spencer Wells, who went out to serve in the hospital at Smyrna in February 1855 and moved on to Renkioi as superintendent of its surgical division in October, remaining there until July the following year.

It was not unusual for staff at the hospitals which were not at the battle-front to spend their spare time in archaeological expeditions, and when the Crimean War ended Eassie led an expedition in search of the site of Troy. One of his obituaries reports that it was he who discovered the site rather than Heinrich Schliemann, the German merchant to whom the credit is conventionally given.

In 1858 Eassie published a book based on his experiences. He called it *Romaic Beauties and Trojan Humbugs* and he published it under the pseudonym 'Rathbrain'. What the significance of the pseudonym 'Rathbrain' is, but its similarity to 'Rattlebrain', the nom de plume of George F Halse, has led to Eassie being wrongly credited in the British Library Catalogue with a long piece of doggerel by Halse containing a few clever rhymes and illustrations by Phiz. The title of this is Sir Guy de Guy: A Stirring Romaunt. Showing How a Briton Drilled for his Fatherland; Won an Heiress; Got a pedigree; and Caught Rheumatism.

When Eassie's father died in 1861, he and his younger brother took over his business which they continued to run until his brother's death in 1875, when it was sold. He was elected to membership of the Geological Society and Linnean Societies in 1864. In 1868 he produced a plan for transporting Cleopatra's Needle to Britain, the main features of which, it has been said, were adopted by Sir Erasmus Wilson's engineers when the Needle was finally brought here 10 years later and erected on the Thames Embankment. In the meantime, he had editorial responsibility for the dairy engineering pages of the *Milk Journal.* In 1872 he published *Healthy Houses* and in 1874 *Sanitary Arrangements for Dwellings*. In 1875 he published the most organised British text on cremation *The Cremation of the Dead*. Together with Ernest Hart he founded *The Sanitary Journal.* He was elected to the Royal Society of Arts in 1876 and was a founder member and member of the council of the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain, which was established in the same year. He died in 1888.