

The Restoration of Wallace's Grave

On Saturday 15 April 2000 the Linnean Society took over the lease on the recently restored grave of Alfred Russel Wallace in Broadstone Cemetery, Dorset. The grave is marked by an unusual and striking monument – a 7 foot tall, fossilised conifer trunk from the Portland beds, mounted on a square base of Purbeck stone.

The A.R. Wallace Memorial Fund (see *The Linnean* 15(3): 14) not only bore the cost of transferring the lease to the Linnean Society but also of arranging for continuing professional maintenance of both grave and memorial. Their actions ensure that the tomb has become an Historical Monument and, more importantly, prevents the resale of the plot for future burials.



The Broadstone Cemetery Meeting 15th April 2000.

Speakers standing in front of the newly restored grave of Alfred Russel Wallace.

From left: Prof. Brian Gardiner PPLS, Dick Wallace (grandson); Dick Vane-Wright FLS, Sir Ghillean Prance PLS, Dr George Beccaloni FLS, Dr John Wilson FLS, Dr Sandra Knapp FLS, Dr Peter Raby and John Wallace (grandson).

Cemeteries developed around London in the 1850s as the various church graveyards became filled. The earliest were privately owned but towards the end of the century there was a rapid development of municipal cemeteries. In private cemeteries the plots were purchased in perpetuity. Here, although some graves and tombstones continue to be maintained (viz: Karl Marx – Highgate Cemetery), others such as that of Robert Brown, in Kensal Green Cemetery, whose death precipitated the July 1st 1858 Special Meeting at which the Darwin-Wallace papers were read, are slowly subsiding and will eventually collapse. A similar fate will eventually befall the family tomb of our founder – Sir James Edward Smith in the churchyard at Lowestoft.

Following the handing over of the lease at the grave side, a short libation was held in which a glass of champagne was poured on the tomb and a toast drunk to Wallace's memory.



Robert Brown's grave (right) in Kensal Green Cemetery,
together with that of W.J. Broderip who died in February 1859.
(Photograph by David Pescod.)
