



FRIENDS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY

Minutes of FONC Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 29 June 2024
The Anglican Chapel, Nunhead Cemetery, SE15 3LP

Present: Trustees

Jeremy Partington (JP)
Carol Stevenson (CS)
Ann Coley (AC)
Jeff Hart (JH)
Jane Hart (JCH)
Teresa Neary (TN)
Keith Turpin (KT)
Garry Wiles (GW)
Ron Woollacott (RW)

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Treasurer
Co-ordinator
Minutes Secretary

Ten ordinary members were also attendance.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from: Trustees Oliver Lomer, Simon Mercer and Charles Newman and ordinary members Michele Burford, Pete Holmes, Karen Le Ball, Linda Martin, Valerie Newman, Marion Romero-Jones, and George Young.

2 Chairman's welcome and report

The Chairman, Jeremy Partington, welcomed all present to the Annual General Meeting. He thanked all Trustees and volunteers who assisted in the cemetery, whatever the weather, not forgetting those who have helped in preparing and distributing FONC News, the website and other FONC administrative tasks. He also thanked idverde and Southwark staff for their work in and for the cemetery over the past year. He noted that FONC volunteers had continued enthusiastically on progressing clearing vegetation and other work in the cemetery. Following winter storms, coupled with increased light reaching the ground and wet weather, vegetation had grown rapidly this spring. FONC had organised its first Carol concert in December in the Anglican chapel which had proved to be very popular. More recently, pupils from Ivydale School had attended the cemetery as part of their study of Victorian period. This had been supported by volunteers. FONC had participated in the Big Help Out volunteering day again this year attracting 9 new volunteers who had cleared vegetation on the West Hill and undertook monument inscription recording. The Chairman highlighted that the 2024 Open Day, held in May had been very well attended and, although some new volunteers had helped set up and take down, more volunteers were needed. Finally he reported that the application for delivery phase funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for the restoration of the East Lodge had been successful – thanking Jane and Jeff Hart and London Borough of Southwark officers for the considerable amount of work that they put into progressing the application. Work on the project would commence in the Autumn with the provision of a new modular cabin for FONC volunteering and in the restoration of the East Lodge providing a café, community space and an office for FONC as well as accessible toilets.

3 Minutes of the previous Trustee meeting held on 15 June 2023

2.1 Matters of accuracy

No matters of accuracy were identified and the minutes were adopted.

2.2 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Adoption of the minutes – proposed by Jeremy Partington, seconded by Carol Stevenson.

4 Annual Report of the Trustees

JH presented the Annual Report of the Trustees for the period 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024. He noted that the Annual Report was submitted to the Charity Commission, highlighting the work FONC carried out. He reported on the considerable amount of work Simon Mercer, as FONC Membership Secretary, had done over many years to

maintain the FONC Membership database. During Simon's current indisposition FONC had been very fortunate that Carol Stevenson with the help of Ann Coley (for electronic newsletter distribution) had been able to take on Simon's work. He noted that FONC had adopted new financial policies which formally document the way financial processes were handled. The Trustees continued to review FONC's communication strategy and noted the great work Trustee Oliver Lomer had been undertaking on improving communications, in particular Instagram. The FONC Publications & Enquiries Desk continued to have a presence when FONC tours and practical work volunteers were on site. FONC News, the quarterly journal continued to keep members informed on issues affecting the cemetery as well as FONC activities. A new FONC publication, produced by Ron Woollacott and Michele Burford 'The Entertainers' had been published and had sold well. 'The Short Guide to Nunhead Cemetery' had been reprinted with updated photographs and FONC had amalgamated and updated the two Walworth Boy Scouts titles by Rex Batten and added new illustrations. FONC continued providing a full programme of tours and events with the 2024 Open Day being the most successful Open Day yet with a record attendance of over 5,350. FONC also continued to support the Peckham and Nunhead Free Film Festival which was licenced for an attendance of 300. It proved extremely popular with over 150 people having to be turned away on the evening due to over demand. Garry Wiles had been managing an enthusiastic band of monument inscription recording volunteers who were using the new inscription recording template to record inscriptions and photographs with many completed over the year. The intention was to make these records available digitally. Southwark Borough Council had been active in managing the cemetery over the past year though enforcement of the Public Space Protection Order to encourage responsible dog management continued to be problematic. Improvements to the cemetery continued during the year but unfortunately someone had taken it upon themselves to move a number of common grave stones to form path edging. The movement of gravestones was illegal and Southwark Council was very concerned about this development. With a grant from the Southwark Cultural Celebrations Fund, FONC had purchased a new ramp to enable step-free access to the chapel and a PA system. Fulker Contractors, working with Southwark Council, had undertaken a number of repairs to monuments on site, all to a high standard. Work on the Limesford Road boundary wall had finally started and would be completed next Spring. The feasibility study on the possibility of reroofing the Anglican Chapel had yet to start. After a lot of hard work during 2023, the application for delivery phase funding for the East Lodge – from Ruin to Revival – was submitted and FONC was thrilled to hear that we had been successful in securing a £3.7m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project would restore the East Lodge as a new hub for community activity providing a new café, community space and accessible toilets. A new modular building, replacing the existing dilapidated FONC cabin would provide a base for the volunteer practical activities. A new salaried role, the Outreach and Development Manager, would be created to lead and grow activities within the cemetery, building on current FONC work.

JP thanked JH for his report and invited questions from those present.

The question of whether the Anglican Chapel should be reroofed how or left as a romantic ruin was raised. JH noted that the most recent biennial survey of the Chapel walls had clearly identified that the building would continue to deteriorate unless it was reroofed and as the Chapel was on the English Heritage At Risk Register, the design of any roof would need their approval. With space being made available in the East Lodge for FONC-led activities, a question was asked whether additional space in the chapel would be needed. It was noted that the space in the East Lodge would be managed by a third party and that there was an increasing demand for events in the chapel.

JP then moved to the formal adoption of the report.

Proposer: Jeff Hart

Secunder: Ann Coley

The report was adopted.

5 Practical onsite work report

CS presented the report, noting that volunteers had added nearly 200 more hours of practical work in the cemetery compared with the previous year. The volunteers had spent a lot of time clearing branches and trees which had come down due to winds. She noted that all wood remained on site as habitat piles. Some work had included clearing areas in the East Lodge compound to enable inspection of monuments to take place and also in clearing areas within the cemetery to help the monument inscription recording volunteers gain access to monuments in more overgrown areas by clearing vegetation.

JP thanked CS and invited questions from those present. A question was asked regarding the increase in volunteering hours but not in volunteers. It was noted that volunteers had tended to stay on site longer during their volunteering visits and extra days had been worked.

The report was noted.

6 Treasurer's report

AC presented the report, noting that the accounts were presented on a receipts / expenditure basis. She noted that she had produced a written report that would be made available on the FONC website. She thanked Simon Mercer and Cathy Mercer for their management of membership and JCH for managing the publications desk receipts. She noted that FONC had always had financial policies but these had not been formally documented. This had now been done.

She explained the reasons why the FONC surplus had gone up over the past year – as this included a bequest of £25,000 from a member in his will, a donation from a member of £2,000 and a grant of £7,997 from the employer of one of the Trustees. Expenditure had included timber for repairs to steps in the cemetery, a new printer and printing costs for the new / updated publications. AC further noted that FONC had a reserves policy which included money for monument repairs each year. This had not been possible this year but due to a change in arrangements, FONC had now reached an agreement with Southwark to contribute to the monument repairs with the intention that FONC would contribute £12,000 to repairs in the coming year. She also noted that, although the Charity Commission did not require an audit or a review of the accounts, FONC considered this to be good practice and had an independent examiner report that had been tabled with the AGM papers.

JP thanked AC for her report. A question was raised about money from filming in the cemetery. It was noted that some time ago, payments from filming were used directly for the benefit of the cemetery but more recently arrangements had changed with Southwark Film Unit collecting any income from filming. However FONC had recently received a donation from a filming event. It was further noted that with regard to maintenance of the restored East Lodge, since Southwark Council owned the building, their intention was to franchise out the operation of the building which should provide enough income to pay for the running costs, including maintenance of the building.

JP moved for the formal adoption of the report.

Proposer: Carol Stevenson

Seconder: Teresa Neary

The report was adopted.

7 Independent examiner's report

JP noted the independent examiner's report, prepared by George Young. It was noted that George had undertaken this onerous role for the past 25 years and had indicated that he would now step down from this role. JP proposed a vote of thanks to George Young. AC noted that she was aware of a couple of people who might take over this role but asked if anyone was either interested in the role or was aware of someone who might be interested, she would love to hear from them. An appointment would be made by the Trustees.

8 Appointment of Trustees

JH explained that in accordance with clause 13 of the FONC Constitution, a third of the Trustees were required to stand down but could seek re-appointment. Ann Coley, Jane Hart and Garry Wiles were standing down following their three-year term but were seeking re-appointment. He noted that Teresa Neary was also standing down but was not seeking re-appointment.

It was agreed to take the nominations as a group.

All were duly appointed by unanimous agreement.

The following Trustees would automatically continue their terms – Jeff Hart, Oliver Lomer, Simon Mercer, Charles Newman, Jeremy Partington, Carol Stevenson, Keith Turpin and Ron Woollacott.

9 Motions

No motions were proposed.

10 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

There was a break for refreshments (provided by a number of Trustees).

This was followed by a crypt visit led by Jeremy Partington.