

# FONC News

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*Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery*



Fallen beech tree in Nunhead Cemetery  
See pages 6 and 12. *Photo: Carol Stevenson*

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## ~ INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ~

**Membership including your contact preferences:** Membership of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) costs £2 UK (£10 overseas), renewable on the 1st April each year. Donations are always welcome. UK taxpayers are encouraged to sign a Gift Aid declaration. Please advise FONC if you wish to cancel your Gift Aid declaration, or if you change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on income and/or capital gains. Data is held by FONC to enable us to send members their copy of *FONC News* and also for the purpose of reclaiming tax. You can decide not to receive communications or change how we contact you at any time. *Please send your request to:* **FONC Membership** email: [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto:membership@fonc.org.uk)

**Further information** about FONC and Nunhead Cemetery can be found on our excellent website managed by Simon Quill at **[www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)**

**Cemetery Opening Times:** 1st April to 30th September, 8.30am - 7.00pm; 1st October to 31st October, 8.30am - 5.00pm; 1st November to 28th February, 8.30am - 4.00pm; 1st March to 31st March, 8.30am - 5.00pm. *Times are subject to change.* See notice at the cemetery entrances and Southwark Council's website. The cemetery may be closed without notice for safety reasons e.g. during very windy and stormy weather.

**Publications and Enquiry Desk:** The Publications and Enquiry Desk (PED) is open when FONC volunteers are in attendance. A wide range of books and leaflets about Nunhead Cemetery are available for sale at FONC's portacabin from 2.00pm to 4.00pm on Sundays when cemetery tours or workdays take place. If you would like to help on an occasional Sunday please contact Jane Hart email: [jane.c.hart@btconnect.com](mailto:jane.c.hart@btconnect.com).

**FONC Meetings and Events:** Meetings of the trustees that take place on the third Thursday of each month are currently 'virtual'. Meetings are open to members in a non-voting capacity. If you would like to 'attend' please e-mail [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com) for the Zoom web-site link. Other events are announced in *FONC News* and on the FONC web-site [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)

**Nunhead Cemetery Staff:** The cemetery staff can be contacted by phoning **020 7732 9535**. If unavailable please leave a message or call the main cemetery office at **Camberwell New Cemetery** on **020 7525 5600**.

**The cemetery's address is:**

**Nunhead Cemetery, Linden Grove, Nunhead, LONDON, SE15 3LP**

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**Editorial:** I should like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone involved in the production and distribution of *FONC News* during the last 18 months of pandemic lockdowns and restrictions. Our printers, Catford Print, have continued working throughout these difficult times, and Jeff and Jane Hart have continued to collect *FONC News* from Catford Print and deliver them to Linda Martin for enveloping and mailing to members, and to Nicola Dunn for distributing to our many hand deliverers. Thanks also to Royal Mail whose staff have worked throughout the pandemic, and to all those members who contributed articles and photographs for publication, and Gwyneth Stokes for her expert proof-reading. My involvement is by far the easiest - simply sitting in front of a laptop and drinking coffee.



In this issue we have another selection of interesting articles including one from Cathy Mercer about a famous Cockney music hall song; a botanical article by Roy Vickery about cow parsley, a common plant found in cemeteries (during May there's an abundance of it in Nunhead Cemetery); the sad demise of an ancient beech tree by Carol Stevenson, and an article by yours truly and daughter Michèle about Nunhead Cemetery's link to people commemorated or buried in the cemetery that were involved or connected in some way with Arctic exploration and searching for the North West Passage. And of course all the up-to-date news about the cemetery from Jeff Hart.

*Ron Woollacott*

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### ***Ann Mulcare of the Friends of Brompton Cemetery writes:***

As a volunteer at the FOBC I have recently commenced collecting and dealing with the mail delivered to North Lodge, Brompton Cemetery. I was delighted to receive the recent *FONC News* and to read Gwyneth Stokes article commemorating the life of Arthur Tait. Arthur was a wonderful chairman and friend, he is much missed. Thank you for sending the magazine, which is a really enjoyable and informed read. It is really appreciated.

## **East Lodge Progress – an update by East Lodge Project Board member Jane Hart**

Another *FONC News* and another update on the progress or otherwise on the restoration of the East Lodge. However, this time we feel that real progress is being made both in achieving a better understanding of FONC's activities in the cemetery by officers and in the revised designs for the restored East Lodge. After recent discussions with officers where FONC had to explain in detail what we actually have been doing, over many years, in helping with the conservation and continued development of the cemetery, LBS (London Borough of Southwark) committed to providing a dedicated office within the East Lodge for FONC (the original Superintendent's office) in recognition of FONC's contribution to the cemetery. There will also be provided storage space for FONC's publications and archives and the use of meeting room/space for our events and activities. As space within the building is very limited, FONC's practical onsite work will continue to be based within renewed portacabin facilities at the existing location adjacent to the West Lodge. The portacabin replacement is now regarded as part of the East Lodge project and will be taken forward in parallel with the East Lodge restoration.

The revised design for the restored East Lodge is now based on providing more flexible space with only the location of the café kitchen being fixed on the lower ground for ventilation/extraction purposes. This will allow the café and community hall to be located on either floor, depending on the chosen café franchise operator's preference. Ramped paths will be provided to enable access to both floors with the proposal of a 'bridge' at the rear of the building providing a second access to the upper floor from the raised garden area. Double doors in the existing bay window will be the principal entrance to the lower ground floor with appropriate landscaping and terracing around the south and rear of the building aimed at maximising external seating opportunities for the café.

LBS is committed to completing the restoration and now intends putting this in the context of the proposed Conservation Management Plan of the cemetery as a whole. However, the delays in progressing the work and the continued deterioration of the building itself has resulted in increased costs for the restoration. Although streamlining options with no compromise on

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the quality of the design are being pursued, phased delivery of the work is being looked at as is the submission of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to resolve the funding gap. FONC believes that we now have an acceptable way forward and is committed to work with LBS to bring about the successful completion of the project.■

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## **FONC Annual General Meeting**

### **17th JUNE 2021**

FONC trustees have decided that, following the relative success of the delayed ‘virtual’ AGM in December last year, we will return to the normal June date (17th) this year but will again hold a ‘virtual’ meeting at 7.00 pm since restrictions on gatherings indoors are likely to still be in place at that time. This time, we are publishing the joining details in *FONC News* to make it easier for members and non-members alike to ‘attend’. The Zoom meeting joining link is:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82171926591?  
pwd=ajBDbHFQTUxTVHUwTnhlYkpXdzJSdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82171926591?pwd=ajBDbHFQTUxTVHUwTnhlYkpXdzJSdz09)

This will be open from 6.45 pm so that everyone can log-in in good time for the 7.00 pm start. Please ensure that you show your first and surname when logging in and add ‘non-member’, if appropriate. We will aim to keep the business meeting as concise as possible and this will be followed by a 20 - minute presentation on ‘Trees of Nunhead Cemetery’ by Tim Stevenson. The meeting should conclude by around 8.00pm.

The minutes of the 2020 AGM, the trustees Annual Report, the Annual Accounts, the Independent Examiners Report and the On-site Practical Work Report will be available on request to the Co-ordinator at [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com) or by phone from 3rd June. In accordance with Clause 13 of the FONC Constitution, the current four longest serving trustees (*Jane Hart; Ish Lennox; Alan Till; and Keith Turpin*) will be seeking re-election. There is still one trustee vacancy and anyone interested in putting themselves forward should contact the Co-ordinator, Jeff Hart, who will explain what is involved.

We need 25 FONC members to attend in order for the meeting to be quorate, so please do make the effort to join us says Co-ordinator *Jeff Hart*.

# **A Sad Event**

*Text and photos by Carol Stevenson*



On Easter Saturday 3rd April 2021 one of the last of our great beech trees fell. About 250-years-old and pre-dating the cemetery, its roots had rotted in the damp clay soil and the wind brought it down. We had our first work day



the next day and removed much of it, with Southwark Council's trees team cutting through the biggest limbs a few days later.

The wood has beautiful fungal staining (flaming) and our bodger Tim Stevenson hopes to get at least some of the trunks planked up. Several local craftspeople have also taken pieces of the tree to use, so some good will come out of this sad event.



*Above:* The dismembered beech. *Opposite:* FONC volunteers removing much of the fallen beech tree are from left to right: Chairman Jeremy Partington; Tim Stevenson; Ann Coley; and Teresa Neary.

*Carol Stevenson is the author of 'Trees and Shrubs of Nunhead Cemetery' a handbook describing 43 trees and shrubs and where in the cemetery to find them. Published by FONC in 1998 it is available from FONC's publication and information desk in the cemetery on work days and tour days between 2 and 4 pm or by post from FONC publications. A printer friendly order form may be downloaded from our website [www.fonc.org.com](http://www.fonc.org.com) Price £3.50 plus £1.50 by post. Members £3.00 plus £1.50 by post.*

# 2021 Annual Open Day – An update

*by Jeff Hart*

With the continuing Covid-19 restrictions in place, FONC trustees had to take the decision not to proceed with our usual May Open Day. We would have had to commit to financial and organisational arrangements that may have proved abortive and we also needed to consider likely disruption for potential stall-holders and attractions if we had to cancel the event at the last moment.

However, the situation became a little more hopeful with the Government's announcements in March of the route-map back to 'normality', particularly after 21st June. As a result, following the successful trial with the Open House Weekend last September, we decided to hold an Open Day on the Saturday only of the 2021 London Open House Weekend in its usual slot in the middle of September. Open House subsequently announced that their event would be brought forward to the 4th and 5th September weekend and so we agreed our Open Day would be on Saturday 4th September. Unfortunately, we subsequently found that this is the same date as the annual Peckham Rye Fair but had already advised our usual supporters of our event. We hope, however, that the events will complement each other with visitors being able to manage the short walk between both venues to enjoy the different attractions of both events.

We cannot yet be sure of the precise content of our Open Day pending further Government announcements regarding Covid-19 restrictions and also the stages of the various on-going works on site in the cemetery. We will, however, have our usual plants, publications, information and, hopefully, other stalls. We will decide on the scale of other attractions such as the funeral horses, choirs, Morris dancers and, possibly, travelling farm animals nearer the time.

Please pencil the date (Saturday 4th September 2021) in your diaries NOW, grow on your plants, get the baking flour ready and put yourself forward to volunteer to help on the day!

Look out for further information on our website, Instagram and Facebook accounts or contact the Co-ordinator for updates.



# Knock'd 'em in the Old Kent Road!

by Cathy Mercer

When I was a child, we went on holiday every year to the south coast. We would drive down the Old Kent Road and my father would burst into song, singing the chorus of the famous old music hall song *Knock'd 'em in the Old Kent Road!* He even put on a Cockney accent and we used to love it. We soon picked up the tune and the words. Here is the chorus. Note the slightly unusual Cockney spelling!

'Wot cher!' all the neighbours cried,  
'Who yer gonna meet, Bill,  
Have yer bought the street, Bill?'  
Laugh! I thought I should 'ave died  
Knock'd 'em in the Old Kent Road!

On wet days, when we played Monopoly, we always sang the song when we landed on the Old Kent Road - like Dad, we only knew the chorus of course. Now, whenever we play Monopoly we still sing the song and our nieces and nephews have also picked it up and love it. The song was well-known in its day, as I discovered when a friend from Belfast said her father also used to sing it, so I thought it was time for a bit of research - so easy now with the internet!

It turns out that the song is the work of Albert Chevalier (1861-1923). He also performed the song and the tune is by his brother and manager, who went by the stage name of Charles Inge. Chevalier performed dressed as a costermonger - vegetable seller - and so was known as the 'costermonger's laureate'. Like many stars of the Victorian music hall, Chevalier had an act and would tour music halls across the country with a repertoire of Cockney songs.

*Knock'd 'em in the Old Kent Road* was written in 1891 and, like many music hall songs, it tells a story: Bill lives in an alley off the Old Kent Road with his wife, his 'old Dutch'. They are visited by a 'toff with a nasty coff', who gives them the good news that their rich old uncle Tom has 'popped off'

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and left them a donkey and cart. The couple start ‘doing the grand’, putting on airs and graces, by driving around ‘ev’ry evenin’ at the stroke of five’ and of course the donkey doesn’t always behave, all making for a very funny song - a treasure trove of wonderful Cockney rhyming slang and phrases.

Albert Chevalier, born Albert Onésime Britannicus Gwathveoyd Louis Chevalier, was the son of a French father and a Welsh mother. His mixed background shows up in his complex name! Born in Bayswater, he and his brother Charles went into show business and wrote a number of successful Cockney costermonger songs. One of these, *My old Dutch*, is about an elderly husband and wife. Dutch is Cockney Rhyming slang for ‘wife’, short for ‘Duchess of Fife’. *My Old Dutch* was worked up into a silent film of 1915 and even ran for a year as a stage play.

Albert Chevalier died in 1923 aged 62, and was buried in Abney Park Cemetery in the same plot as his father-in-law George Leybourne, another music hall star, better known as the Lion Comique, who composed the famous *Champagne Charlie* song. ■

For more about the Victorian music hall and the music hall artistes buried at Nunhead Cemetery, please see the late Rex Batten’s excellent book, *Nunhead and the Music Hall*, available from FONC at the Sunday afternoon publications and information desk or from the FONC website - just £2.00 (plus £1.50 postage and packing).



*Albert Chevalier’s grave in Abney Park Cemetery*

GrindtXX, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>>

# Nunhead Cemetery News No 42

*by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator*

## ***The further continuing impact of Covid-19***

As the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions have eased a little, we were able to recommence our practical work-days, monument inscription recording and guided tours in April. The popular tours still required pre-booked attendance with a limit of five persons up to 17th May and thirty persons up to 21st June but no limit thereafter (*subject to government confirmation*). FONC trustee meetings and our June AGM will remain 'virtual' but we hope to reinstate other face-to-face events, including the Open Day, Open House and a film night later in the year. Further updates will appear on the FONC website.

## ***Why are we waiting?***

Cemetery visitors will have been frustrated by the fencing-off of various parts of the cemetery in recent months. The re-surfacing of the area around the Scots Martyrs memorial was due for completion by 12th February but the very wet weather caused significant complications and delays to the work and the resin-bonded top surfacing requiring a dry and warm period of weather to set properly. Hopefully, as Southwark has indicated, this work will have been completed sometime in May.

Similarly, the programme of monument repairs that began towards the end of last year has been significantly delayed by the poor weather. Foundations were not drying and screed remained wet under the dry top layer and had to be redone. With the use of heavy plant to lift sections of monuments, the sodden earth paths were also turned into muddy quagmires. The delays have also contributed to delaying the start of repairs to the Anglican chapel, which also remains fenced off.

## ***Short-sighted short cuts.....***

All of this work meant that Heras fencing was erected to keep the public away from potentially hazardous work areas for their own safety, closing some popular paths. Unfortunately, alternative routes were not properly signed. Nevertheless, it is really disappointing that so many visitors chose to try to circumvent the fencing and open up informal routes through the work areas rather than to return the way they came to follow a different path. Not

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only does this potentially endanger themselves and the workers on site but has also caused significant damage to the cemetery environment which may take years to recover.

### ***.....and short circuits!***

When Southwark officers agreed to lay new cabling to the FONC portacabin to restore the electricity supply (see *Nunhead Cemetery News No 41*) we hoped that work would be completed before FONC activities on site recommenced. However, a second assessment of the problem resulted in a plan to replace fuse boxes etc, rather than lay new cables. Funding was again agreed and an order placed for necessary parts.....which had not been received by the end of April! We are assured that work has been scheduled 'as a priority'. We hope this work has now been completed as FONC volunteers are looking forward to that first fresh cup of tea!

### ***A fallen giant***

We reported on new tree planting in the last issue of *FONC News* but nature has its own ideas on making changes to the cemetery environment. During the afternoon of Saturday, 3rd April, a mighty beech tree atop the banks of Windsor Walk collapsed, straddling both wild-flower banks and completely blocking the path. Miraculously, no visitors were close to this part of the path at the time and so no-one was hurt. Many primroses starting to flower were buried under the tree trunk and a marble cross on a grave plot was broken into three parts.

Beeches are relatively shallow-rooted and this particular tree growing at a slight angle at the top of the bank and with strong winds in the week or so beforehand may have weakened its hold. However, as with other beeches in this area, there were also signs of disease in the trunk. Several people took the trouble to alert FONC to this incident and on the following day our practical work volunteers spent several hours cutting-up much of the top growth to enable visitors to be able to pass by safely until the Southwark Council's tree team were able to attend on the day after Easter Monday to log up much of the rest. However, the timber from the tree is a valuable resource and has been logged in a way to allow it to be removed and milled into planks, some given to local wood-workers and sculptors and the remainder to provide habitat piles for insects.

There is now only one large beech tree, probably one of the few that pre-

dates the laying out of the cemetery, left standing in the area we call ‘The Beeches’. We will now be considering how best to replace these losses for the future. (see also *pages 6 and 7*)

### ***St. Paul’s view preserved***

FONC trustees participated in the recent public Planning Inspectorate hearings on the tall buildings policy in the draft Council Southwark Plan to reinforce the need to protect the view from Nunhead Cemetery’s West Hill towards St Paul’s Cathedral. The Plan sets out what is intended for the development of the Borough over the complete range of activities from social care, through employment and development, to protection of the green environment. We were very pleased with Council officer’s comments on the uniqueness of the St Paul’s view, and the obvious understanding of the Planning Inspector, and we can now expect full protection from obtrusive development impinging on this view in future years.

### ***Arts in the cemetery***

FONC had been working with a noted London art gallery towards a very prestigious sculpture exhibition to be staged in the Anglican chapel. This was held back by Covid-19 but has now been abandoned because of the delays in carrying out repairs to the chapel. This is hugely disappointing and, in our view, avoidable. However, we hope to take a similar project forward in the future. In the meantime, we may be able to welcome back the Peckham and Nunhead Free Film Festival to the cemetery this year. A provisional date of 11th September has been set for a ‘Saturday night at the pictures’ event.

## **SOME THANK-YOU’S**

### ***Limesford Road Gate water point***

Thanks to the generosity of FONC supporter Oktay Karel we regularly replace watering cans, in two sizes, at the Cy Dale memorial watering point in the cemetery. These, together with new dog drinking water troughs, are provided for the benefit of all cemetery visitors and we do ask that the watering cans are returned to the hooks provided after use. Unfortunately, although marked with the name ‘Nunhead Cemetery’, these do disappear from time to time and we have to replace them. Hopefully, this saves those tending graves

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the trouble of bringing their own receptacles for water and we have received several expressions of thanks for our efforts.

### *FONC Instagram account*

The trustees would like to thank FONC member Fran White for the excellent job she has done to initiate and run the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery Instagram account over the last two and a half years. Fran has now moved away from the area but helped us to identify a suitable successor in the form of Zoe Ellsmore. Zoe has a background in IT and social media and has already made her mark with posts which have resulted in several new volunteers to help with our work as well as keeping people informed of cemetery events and developments. If you have photographs or ideas that you think suitable for the site, please pass them on to [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com) for consideration.

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## **In Search of The North West Passage 'The Nunhead Cemetery Connection'**

*by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford*

Readers may have seen the recent 10-part BBC2 series entitled *Terror*, a much fictionalised and fantastical account of Sir John's Franklin's ill-fated 1845 expedition to the Arctic region in search of the North West Passage. The TV series was based on Dan Simmons' horror novel *The Terror*.

A number of references to the actual Franklin expedition and subsequent expeditions in search of Franklin are to be found in Nunhead Cemetery. The Franklin expedition is well documented, so very little about the voyage and subsequent events are necessary here. Suffice to say, two ships, HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* set sail from Greenhithe in Kent on the 18th May 1845 with a crew of 24 officers and 110 men. Sir John Franklin was in command of the expedition and Captain James Fitzjames commanded HMS *Erebus*. Captain Francis Crozier, who had commanded HMS *Terror* during the Ross expedition of 1841-1844 to the Antarctic, was appointed commander of the *Terror*. The expedition is thought to have spent the winter on Beechey Island in 1845/46. The *Erebus* and *Terror* became trapped in the ice off King William Island in September 1846 and never sailed again. A note subse



quently found on King William Island stated that Sir John had died there on 11th June 1847. After two years had elapsed Lady Franklin asked the Admiralty to send out a search party for her husband, and another year passed before the Admiralty launched a search, offering £20,000 reward (about £1.8 million in today's money) for locating the lost expedition. The offer of money led to many searches, but the fate of the expedition was unknown until 1859, when a final search party was sent out by Franklin's wife, Lady Jane Franklin, under the command of Francis Leopold McClintock. When he reached King William Island, skeletons were found of the two vessels' crews and a written account of the expedition up to 25th April 1848.

In Nunhead Cemetery, a headstone just off the West Crescent bears the inscription 'Sacred to the Memory of John Gregory, chief engineer of HMS *Erebus*, Captain Sir John Franklin, which sailed on the fatal expedition to the North Pole in May 1845.' Buried in the grave is John Gregory's son William who died in 1854, aged 22.

Elsewhere in the cemetery there is a memorial commemorating Edward Whitehead RN, paymaster and purser of HMS *Enterprise*, who died in the Arctic region in 1851 while engaged in searching for Sir John Franklin's lost expedition. He is commemorated on the headstone of the family grave where his father Lieutenant Abraham Whitehead RN is buried.

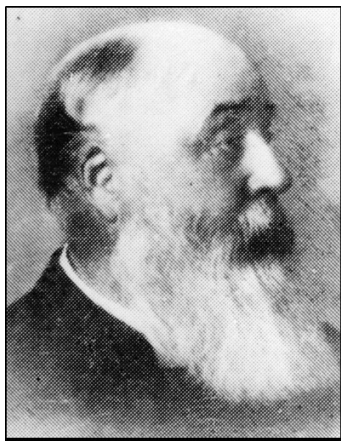
The Reverend Andrew Augustus Wild Drew, a future incumbent of St Antholin's Church, Nunhead, who died in 1921 aged 84, and whose grave may be seen in Nunhead Cemetery, took a keen interest in the Royal Navy and in particular Arctic exploration. In May 1875 he wrote to the Mayor of Brighton offering to deliver a lecture on a forthcoming Arctic Expedition for the benefit of another clergyman's church building fund, and suggested the Brighton Aquarium as the venue. He did not expect any remuneration, but requested a free railway pass from London to Brighton. He said that he had already lectured at the United Services Institution on 'armour clad ships' and on the 'training and the working of broadside guns.' He added that as the son of an admiral he had always taken a great interest in the Arctic, and suggested a naval officer might preside and a band might play at the beginning, interval and end of the proceedings.

The Mayor of Brighton gratefully accepted Drew's offer, and on Thursday afternoon and the Friday evening of the 20th and 21st May 1875, before large audiences in the Brighton Aquarium, the Reverend Andrew Augustus

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Wild Drew delivered a well-received lecture on 'Arctic Exploration, Past and Present', with special reference to the then forthcoming Arctic expedition. The Hon Richard Howe Browne (1811-88) occupied the chair in the absence of the Mayor who expressed his regret at not being present.

Drew illustrated his lecture by means of several maps and drawings, among which were a sketch of HMS *Resolute*, and a representation of the Inuit people. The maps showed all that which had been achieved in the world of Arctic discovery, both by Englishmen and foreigners. Drew spoke of the efforts of Sir Edward Parry and Sir John Ross, and on the disappearance of Sir John Franklin, and spoke feelingly of the expedition sent out in 1859 by Lady Franklin in the yacht HMS *Fox*, to search for her dearly beloved husband, and of the many other expeditions which sailed for that purpose, all sadly unsuccessful.



The Reverend A A W Drew MA

Drew concluded the lecture by speaking of the expedition currently being fitted out, which comprised HMS *Alert* and HMS *Discovery*, both screw steamers, under the command of Captain (later Admiral) George Strong Nares (1831-1915). The expedition was to go by way of Smith Sound, the only practicable route, just as HMS *Polaris* was said to have done. It was not supposed that either ship would be able to reach the North Pole, but it was asserted as a main feature of the expedition that they would endeavour to reach that spot by sledges, totally ignoring the existence of an open polar sea, a fact upon which the lecturer was prepared to stake his reputation. It was clear that there was such a sea in Drew's opinion and the whole success of the expedition was staked upon its non-existence. A band played during the interval and at the conclusion of the lecture.

In 1850 George Strong Nares was the second mate of HMS *Resolute* which made one of the unsuccessful attempts to search for the remnants of the Franklin expedition among the islands north of Canada. The *Resolute* was frozen into the ice in the winter of 1852/3 and as the spring thaw failed to release her the decision was taken to abandon her.

Nares was the first explorer to take his ships all the way north through the

channel between Greenland and Ellesmere Island - now named Nares Strait in his honour - to the Lincoln Sea. Up to this time, it had been a popular theory that this route would lead to the supposed open polar sea, an ice-free region surrounding the pole, but Nares found only a wasteland of ice thus proving Drew's sincerely held theory to be incorrect. Nares was knighted on his return to England.

Buried at Nunhead is Mrs Charlotte Nares, the 25-year-old daughter-in-law of Admiral Sir George Strong Nares. Mrs Nares was tragically drowned at the sinking of the paddle-steamer *Princess Alice* in September 1878, when it collided with the collier *Bywell Castle* in the River Thames with the loss of around 700 lives. ■

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~~~ *Book review* ~~~

**St Michael's Kirkyard - Dumfries: A Presbyterian Valhalla**  
**A new book by James Stevens Curl**

Professor Curl has written numerous scholarly volumes on architecture and historic cemeteries, including *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (1972 and 2004); *A Celebration of Death* (1980); and *Funerary Monuments and Memorials of St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh*, which never fail to impress and inspire. His latest book, *St Michael's Kirkyard, Dumfries - A Presbyterian Valhalla*, is a particularly fine volume, edifying and beautifully illustrated with numerous photographs in colour and monochrome, and a detailed bibliography, useful glossary and comprehensive index.

Professor Curl informs us that St Michael's Kirkyard is unique among provincial churchyards within the United Kingdom, and his book describes its historical importance and aesthetic qualities, and is illustrated with some of the church's most handsome and finest monuments and a remarkable collection of original architectural drawings.

The book, originally published in a limited edition is now available and costs £70.00 per copy, including postage within the UK only. For postage outside the UK add £12.00, and for postage outside Europe add £22.00. Payment by cheque/postal order/banker's draft only please. For further information telephone: +44 (0) 28 90 425 141 or e-mail: [jscurl@btinternet.com](mailto:jscurl@btinternet.com) To download an order form please go to:

[www.jamesstevenscurl.com/st.michaels-kirkyard-dumfries-a-presbyterian-valhalla](http://www.jamesstevenscurl.com/st.michaels-kirkyard-dumfries-a-presbyterian-valhalla)

# A Garden in Nunhead - Some Nature Notes

*by Ron Woollacott*

The pandemic, lockdowns and shielding has given us the opportunity to take a greater interest in the wildlife in our gardens. A solitary robin flew down from the wall of climbing hydrangea and landed beside us every day last year until Christmas, but it wasn't until the beginning of February 2021 that we saw the cheeky bird again.

On the 13th February we were greeted by an awesome sight when a flock of redwings and fieldfare flew into the garden, darting in and out of the holly trees and feasting on the berries before continuing on their journey to their northern breeding territories. On the 22nd February some of the birds seen included a pair of robins, two parakeets, several starlings and blue tits.

During the first week in March the forsythia brought a splash of colour into the garden, the sun as yet being too low in the sky. Newts were seen in the pond but there was nary a toad in sight. However, a single toad was seen on the 17th March. On Saturday 20th March, the first day of spring, a pair of goldfinches were seen by Maureen flying in and out of the pittosporum.

The toads were late in arriving this year. A mating pair of toads were seen in the pond on the 21st March, and a few days later they were joined by eight pairs or more, and by the 31st March the knot of toads had gone.



Also on the last day in March and on the first day in April we saw two speckled wood butterflies and a small holly blue. The pair of goldfinches first seen on the 20th March have been seen several times since, as well as blue tits, coal tits, black birds and a pair of wood pigeons.

As I write (22nd April) blue bells are sprouting and the cherry tree has more-or-less shed most of its blossom - but it was a gorgeous sight to behold while it lasted. ■

A garden in Nunhead. Cherry blossom  
5th April 2021. *Photo: Ron Woollacott*

# Cemetery Flora: Cow Parsley, *Anthriscus Sylvestris*

by Roy Vickery, roy@plant-lore.com

The delicate white flowers of cow parsley are conspicuous beside woodland paths in late spring each year. Sometimes known as Queen Anne's lace especially by flower-arrangers, or kecks by people in many parts of England and Ireland, cow parsley also decorates country roadsides, and appears to be increasing in recent years.

Despite its attractive appearance cow parsley is often considered to be an inauspicious plant, known by such names as dead-man's flesh in Suffolk, devil's oatmeal in Surrey and devil's parsley in Cheshire, but the most widespread of these names is mother-die.

It was widely believed that if cow parsley flowers were brought indoors one's mother would die. Although now widespread this seems to be a comparatively recent belief, being first recorded in the first decade of the twentieth century. Why should this belief become attached to such a harmless species? One explanation is that it can easily be confused with other white-flowered members of the Apiaceae (formerly Umbelliferae, Carrot Family) which are poisonous. These poisonous relatives include hemlock, *Conium maculatum*, which in Canada is sometimes known, with some exaggeration, as no-time-for-the-ambulance-plant. Thus perhaps parents encouraged the superstition to discourage children from gathering it. Another explanation is that although cow parsley flowers are attractive and are useful for bulking up flower arrangements they tend to readily drop their tiny petals, and create a mess. One can imagine even mildly house-proud women not welcoming such flowers indoors. Another interesting name, apparently restricted to the area around Manchester, is stepmother's blessing - if cow parsley was brought indoors, your mother would die leaving space for a stepmother to



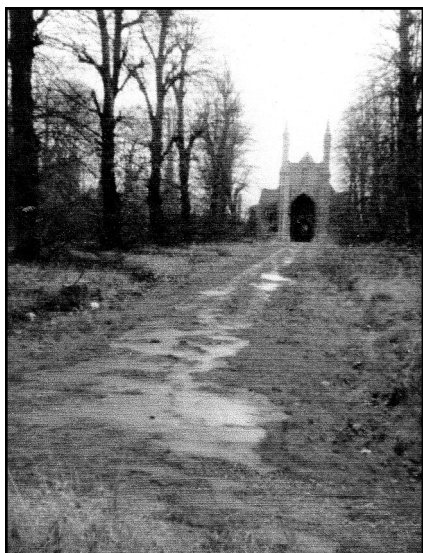
*continued overleaf*

literally step in. Cow parsley is edible, but is described as ‘not particularly tasty’; it is sometimes used as a garnish, a few fragments of its leaves sometimes decorating meals in Surrey gastropubs. A more widespread use was by children as pea-shooters, using cereal seeds, or hawthorn berries as ammunition. As usual, any memories or comments would be greatly appreciated. ■

**Friends of Nunhead Cemetery 1981-2021**  
**~ 40th Anniversary Year ~ *part two***  
*by Ron Woollacott*

**NOVEMBER 1983: SECOND ALL SOULS SERVICE HELD**

About 80 people attended the second All Souls Service, organised by FONC members Joan and Alan Bond, and held in chilly but sunny weather. The service was inter-denominational with the following clergy participating:



The disgraceful state of Nunhead Cemetery's main avenue in 1983

Father Anthony Cridland from the R C Church of St Thomas the Apostle, Nunhead; Father Joseph Inguanez, a visitor from Malta; Father Anthony Plummer from the Sacred Heart, Camberwell; Father John Davies from the Friary, Peckham; and father Roy Screech from St Antony's C of E Church, Nunhead.

**JUNE 1984: A 'NOTABLE EVENT'**

FONC'S second major publication, *Nunhead Notables* by Ron Woollacott, contained 140 mini-biographies of notable persons buried at Nunhead and was launched at a well-attended public meeting. Such was the demand, the book had sold out by the Autumn of 1987 and was reprinted. It was also reviewed in the local newspapers and featured with the author in Nunhead

Cemetery on ITV's Thames News at Six.



## SEPTEMBER 1984: *MONTHLY WORK DAYS COMMENCE*

Our first work day in the cemetery took place on the first Sunday in September 1984. John Collings was appointed 'Director of Voluntary Work' and the north-east corner was the first area to be tackled and included thinning sycamores, eradicating polygonum, cutting back undergrowth at path edges, and the endless job of picking up and removing litter.

## MAY 1986: *CEMETERY FRIENDS UNITE*

At a meeting held on 29th May FONC joined with the Friends of Highgate Cemetery and six other cemetery groups to form the National Federation of Cemetery Friends. The other founder members were the Friends of Undercliffe; Beckett Street in Leeds; York; the Rosary, Norwich; Save Abney Park Campaign; and representatives from Brookwood Cemetery. Jeff Hart represented Nunhead Cemetery.

## AUGUST 1986: *FONC'S FIRST CEMETERY OPEN DAY*

The weather dawned bright, blue and breezy on Saturday 16th August 1986. The number attending surpassed our most optimistic expectations. It was estimated that around 1,000 people visited the cemetery that day. The event was organised by FONC in conjunction with Southwark Council who provided refreshment facilities. The second Open Day on the 15th August 1987 was also held in conjunction with the Council, but on this occasion the refreshments were provided by Maureen Woollacott and family.

## APRIL 1987: *FONC BECOMES A REGISTERED CHARITY*

The Charity Commission confirmed FONC would become Registered Charity No 296413.



Poster advertising the first ever Open Day in Nunhead Cemetery 1986

*continued overleaf*

## **AUTUMN 1988: GUIDE BOOK PUBLISHED**

FONC's guidebook to the cemetery, the result of five years research by contributors and the editorial team led by Gwyneth Stokes, was published. It contained feature articles and over 40 illustrations including old prints, line drawings and old and new photographs. There was also a self-guided tour.

## **JUNE 1990: FONC HOSTS NFCF AGM**

At Linden Grove Community Hall on Saturday the 9th June 1990, FONC hosted the Annual General Meeting of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF) chaired by Ron Woollacott, FONC's chairman at the time as the Federation had not yet appointed a chairman.

Delegates from ten groups attended, and at our instigation the AGM was also attended by Professor James Stevens Curl and Jack Maher, President of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administrators. The delegates and guests were shown around the cemetery in the morning, before enjoying a lunch prepared by Café Woollacott, which included freshly picked Kent strawberries and cream donated by the chairman's mother-in-law Mrs Vearonelly of Sydenham. The all-important business of the day took place in the afternoon.

## **JULY 1990: NUNHEAD CEMETERY'S 150th ANNIVERSARY**

Nunhead Cemetery was consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester on the 29th July 1840, and Saturday the 29th July 1990 turned out to be a historic occasion in its own right, when all faiths and political persuasions came together and took part in the proceedings. The service of celebration was organised by FONC and attended by Gerry Bowden, Conservative MP for Southwark Dulwich, Simon Hughes, Liberal MP for Southwark Bermondsey, and Labour was represented by Councillor John Maurice, Mayor of Southwark. Bishop Hugh Montefiore delivered a truly uplifting sermon and the clergy of all Nunhead's churches contributed greatly to the very special occasion.

*to be continued*



### **ANTHONY EMERY** **Member No 1994**



**We were sad to learn that**  
**Anthony Emery of East Dulwich passed away in December 2020. He was a**  
**valued member of FONC for over 25 years having joined us in 1995.**

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**IMPORTANT:** All tours are subject to any further government Covid-19 restrictions. Please check the FONC website for any changes.

**TOURS ARE LIMITED TO 29 PERSONS UP TO THE 21st JUNE 2021 AND MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE THROUGH email: [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com). From the 21st June there may be no limit on available spaces but PRE-BOOKING WILL STILL BE REQUIRED.**

**WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR ► *Sunday 13th June at 2.00 pm.*** Meet Tim Stevenson, your guide for the afternoon, near the flint circle just inside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove. *Pre-booking is necessary - see above.*

**WATERLOO ANNIVERSARY EVENT ► *Sunday 20th June at 2.00 pm.*** Meet Jeff Hart your guide near the flint circle just inside the main Linden Grove entrance. *Pre-booking is necessary - see above.*

**CRYPT VISITS ► *Sunday 11th July at 2.00 pm, 2.45 pm, 3.30 pm and 4.15 pm.*** Meet your guides, Ann Coley, Jeremy Partington, Malcom Collins, at the publications and enquiry desk near the FONC portacabin. *Pre-booking is necessary - see above.*

**MILITARY CONNECTION VISITS ► *Sunday 18th July at 2.00 pm.*** Meet Jeff Hart your guide near the flint circle just inside the main Linden Grove entrance. *Pre-booking is necessary - see above.*

**MUSIC HALL ARTISTES & PRODUCERS TOUR ► *Sunday 8th August at 2.00 pm.*** Meet Jeff Hart, your guide for the afternoon, near the flint circle just inside the main Linden Grove entrance. *Pre-booking is necessary - see above.*

**GENERAL GUIDED TOURS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY ►** these take place on the last Sunday in every month starting at 2.00pm. Meet near the flint circle just inside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove. Tours take about one and a half to two hours. The publications and information desk will be open, weather and volunteers permitting. *Pre-booking is necessary - see above.*

**PRACTICAL WORKDAYS ► *these take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10.00 am to 4.30pm.*** New volunteers are always welcome. Meet at the FONC portacabin near the Linden Grove entrance. Stay an hour or two or all day, it's entirely up to you. *Appropriate clothing including sturdy footwear is essential.*

**MONUMENT INSCRIPTION RECORDING ►** Transcribing the inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery is an important and ongoing task. We meet at the FONC portacabin near the Linden Grove entrance. For further information and timings and how to volunteer please contact Garry Wiles at [foncinscriptions@gmail.com](mailto:foncinscriptions@gmail.com). *Appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear is essential.*

## ~ FONC TRUSTEES ~

*Chairman:* **Jeremy Partington**

*Vice-chairman:* **Carol Stevenson Stevenson** - email:

[nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com](mailto:nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com)

*FONC Co-ordinator:* **Jeff Hart OBE** - email: [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com)

*Minutes secretary:* **Jane Hart**, *Hon treasurer:* **Ann Coley**

*Hon membership secretary:* **Simon Mercer** - email: [publications@fonc.org.uk](mailto:publications@fonc.org.uk)

*FONC News editor:* **Ron Woollacott MBE, FRSA** - email:

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*Other trustees:* **Malcolm Collins, Ish Lennox, Gwyneth Stokes,  
Alan Till, Keith Turpin, Garry Wiles, Maureen Woollacott**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Voluntary practical work co-ordinator:* **Tim Stevenson** - email:

[nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com](mailto:nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com)

*Volunteering co-ordinator:* **Ish Lennox** - email: [volunteering@fonc.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@fonc.org.uk)

*Monument inscription recording co-ordinator:* **Garry Wiles** - email:

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*FONC News Hand-delivery co-ordinator:* **Nicola Dunn**

*FONC News Postal co-ordinator:* **Linda Martin**

*Webmaster:* **Simon Quill**

Please send all letters, news items and feature articles for publication to:

**The editor, FONC News** email: [editorfonc@hotmail.com](mailto:editorfonc@hotmail.com)

***The deadline for letters and articles for the next issue is 20th July 2021***

(Please note copy received after this date may be used in a subsequent issue)

## Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)



***Friends of Nunhead Cemetery - Established 1981***

***Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No 1178763***

A member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE).

A founder member of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF)

FONC is a recipient of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's Birthday Award for Environmental Improvements (National Commendation) 1998

**FONC's website address is: [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)**

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