

FONC News



Spring issue (March - May 2011) - 60p - Free to Members



Grave of Joseph Leicester (Photograph of 1981 by Ron Woollacott) see page 10

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*The Quarterly Journal of the
Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, Nunhead, London, SE15*

MEMBERS' INFORMATION

Subscription and supporter information: Membership of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery costs £2 pa (overseas members pay £10 to cover the cost of sending four copies of *FONC News* abroad each year) renewable on the 1st April each year. We ask members to pay their subscription on this date to avoid sending out individual reminders throughout the year. Donations are always welcome. *New members receive an initial membership card. UK taxpayers are encouraged to sign a Gift Aid declaration.* Please advise FONC if you change your address or, for Gift Aid, you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the tax FONC reclaims on your donations. Data is held by FONC to help us to send members their copy of *FONC News* and also for the purpose of reclaiming tax. **Contact membership@fonc.org.uk**

Information about FONC and Nunhead Cemetery can be found on our excellent website produced and managed by webmaster Simon Quill at: **www.fonc.org.uk**

Cemetery Opening Times: 8.30am to 4.00pm daily. The cemetery stays open later during the spring and summer months. ***All times are subject to change.*** The cemetery may be closed without notice for safety reasons, for example the danger of injury to visitors during windy and stormy weather. Please contact the cemetery staff on **020 7732 9535** for latest information.

Publications and Enquiry Desk: A wide range of books and leaflets about Nunhead Cemetery are available and on sale at FONC's Portakabin every Sunday from 2.00pm to 4.00pm (except December, January and February when we are only there for guided tours) weather and volunteers permitting.

FONC Meetings and Events: Committee meetings take place on the *3rd Thursday of each month (except August when there is no meeting).* *Committee meetings are open to ordinary members who may attend in a non-voting capacity.* Meetings are currently taking place in the Function Room at the Old Nun's Head pub, Nunhead Green, LONDON, SE15 3QQ. If you would like to attend a meeting please contact fonc@btconnect.com for details. Occasional talks, walks, presentations, and all forthcoming events are announced in *FONC News*.

Nunhead Cemetery Ranger Gardeners: The ranger gardeners may be contacted on **020 7732 9535**. Their Portakabin is located just inside the gates at the Limesford Road entrance.

Editor: Ron Woollacott **Subeditor:** Gwyneth Stokes
Contributors to this issue: Edward Barclay, Jeff Hart, Jolanta Jagiello, Cathy Mercer, Tim Stevenson and Carole Tyrrell. All other text is by the editor. *The editor, subeditor, and FONC's committee do not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by contributors.*

CROSSING THE BOUNDARIES *by Cathy Mercer*

It's a long time ago now but I seem to remember that, when I was very young, there were clear boundaries between the living and the dead: the living played in the parks and the dead lay in cemeteries. There were a few blurred edges to the dividing lines, such as neat little brass memorial plaques on park benches and war memorials, but generally the dividing line was neat and crisp. I'm not sure that's so much the case anymore.

Take, for example, Nunhead Cemetery, which was once the preserve of the departed. Now it is labelled on many maps as a nature reserve, and local people use it as their local park, walk their dogs and take their Sunday constitutionals here. Not to mention joggers. OK, so in Victorian times the intention of the attractively laid out gardens was to encourage Sunday afternoon walkers but today these strolls are much less formal with dogs, and children on scooters. The primary intention is fresh air and exercise.

But public parks too have become much more places to celebrate and commemorate our dead. Our local Gladstone Park in Dollis Hill has several memorial trees: trees planted specially to commemorate loved ones. These trees often have neat little brass plaques and, at anniversary time, bunches of flowers sometimes appear around the roots. Some of the plaques bear a variety of names, Indian and Irish as well as 'traditional' British. Some also bear the sort of epitaph you might expect to find on graves: 'always in our thoughts', 'sorely missed'.

As for trying to get a traditional brass plaque on a traditional bench in Gladstone Park, all the benches are spoken for, which shows that there is a lot of commemorating going on.

A few years ago two beautiful rose beds were planted in Gladstone Park, 'in memory of Dr Walter Isaacson, many years history master at Kilburn Grammar School, from his daughters and former pupils.' We know this be-

continued overleaf

cause of the splendid plaque on the wall behind the delightful roses. And of course everyone in Dollis Hill appreciates the roses and is grateful to Dr Isaacson's family and former pupils. They are a huge asset to the community.

Maybe the shift to commemoration of the dead in more public spaces is to do with cremation? After all, that's the way most people go these days and often they end up having their ashes scattered over their favourite park or beach.

We see this more public demonstration of grief more and more. The most striking incident was after the death of Princess Diana in 1998, when thousands of people from all over the country visited Kensington Gardens and left flowers, cards and teddy bears outside the gates to Kensington Palace, where she had once lived.

I remember finding this public outpouring strange at the time. As I worked near the Palace, a friend and I went to look. And of course we ended up being drawn into the public grief, paying our own tributes with sweet smelling freesias from the local florist, who were delighted with the sudden surge in trade and immediately guessed why we were buying the flowers.

Some of the public commemorations are more flamboyant than others. For example, when we were walking the Northumberland Coastal Path, we spotted a fabulous bench that had been put up as a memorial at an especially scenic point by Alnmouth. It was much larger than other coastal benches and a couple of years old but had recently been adorned with flowers, cards and teddy bears.

Nearby, at an especially pretty spot on the River Coquet, near Warkworth Castle, a brass plaque on a bench invited us to sit down and enjoy the view: the couple who were commemorated here had enjoyed the spot and 'would like you to enjoy it too'.

Hardly surprising perhaps because Geordies have always had a reputation for being hospitable and friendly, but nevertheless, the warm personal inclusive language was very striking and a million miles from the briefer commemorations on the plaques I remember from my youth, which just listed names.

In the early 1980s, when we had first visited Greece, our guide pointed out homemade roadside shrines with small icons and candles, commemorating people who had been killed in road accidents on those very spots. They were actually impossible to miss as they were quite numerous and very different from anything we had seen before.

We found these roadside shrines strange at the time but not any longer. Public grief has become much more acceptable in Britain. For example, re-

cently, when a cyclist was killed on a dangerous junction near us in Dollis Hill, we didn't blink an eyelid at the candles and flowers and other messages of condolence that appeared almost immediately. It was especially interesting to note that several of the cards and labels on the flowers were signed by 'local residents', not family.

In many ways this more public commemoration of death seems anomalous. The British have an old reputation for being tight-lipped and buttoned up in our emotions. On top of that, with ever longer life expectancies and lower infant mortality, we are much less familiar with death on a day-to-day basis. Death therefore perhaps seems much more tragic because in grieving we are more alone. This public commemoration must therefore be a good thing.

I have no doubt that there are many good reasons for these recent changes and I'm sure the national mourning after Princess Diana's death was an important catalyst in the process.

No doubt people are already researching the changes in patterns of grieving as I write this and almost certainly dissertations, conference papers and learned books will appear soon on the subject.

Perhaps this short piece will get a few more people talking? ■



Bench in Gladstone Park
Photos: Cathy Mercer



~ Cemetery News ~

by Jeff Hart (FONC Co-ordinator)

For some time the Co-ordinator has thought that a number of items affecting the cemetery have not warranted an article in the Journal in their own right but which members will no doubt be interested to hear about. So, with some trepidation, the Co-ordinator is embarking on the first of what is intended to be a regular round-up of mini-news items!

The 'Victorian' Fernery

Southwark's cemeteries department have recently cleared a mound of rubble on the west side of the new Muslim burial area adjacent to the Scouts' Path. Presumably the intention is to extend the area available for new burials. Unfortunately, this has included the removal of a rather fine laurel which shaded the earth mound nearby which FONC has developed over the last couple of years along the lines of a Victorian fernery. The fernery itself has struggled to become well established, not helped by a couple of thefts of plants. However, we hope this year to carry out some more work here to protect the original plantings.

Green Chain Walk Signage

At the end of last September, the new Green Chain Walk was officially opened with an event at Nunhead Cemetery (no-one informed FONC until a couple of days beforehand!). Throughout the five London Boroughs involved, splendid new signage has appeared at regular intervals to point the dedicated walker to the next link in the chain. Although FONC was promised some time ago that we would be consulted on the siting of the signage associated with the cemetery, this did not happen. There are now some half-dozen discreet marker posts within the cemetery which present no difficulties. However, the larger marker posts just outside the two entrances to the cemetery have given rise to some concern. When the supporting posts first appeared, it looked as if they were the next in a series of mock-Victorian lamp standards recently sited in the Nunhead area. Then signage arms pointing to the cemetery entrances and the next links in the walk were attached, but were at least in black rather than the standard bright green used elsewhere on the Green Chain. Unfortunately, both markers have been placed right in front of the pedestrian entrance gates making access difficult for visitors with wheelchairs or prams and seriously impacting on the visual ameni-

ty of the Grade II listed entrance gates. FONC believes that the entrances to the cemetery are pretty obvious without the need to have these signs so close and is currently negotiating to have them moved to more discreet and appropriate positions.

FONC's Portakabin

FONC has for many years now used the Portakabin at the west side of the Linden Grove entrance as our on-site headquarters. Providing shelter, storage, toilet and washing facilities, from here we run our workdays, tours and publications stall. As time has taken its toll on what was always intended as a temporary structure, FONC has in the past completely renewed the flooring, provided a new roof and fitted out the interior of the Portakabin. Recently Southwark Council has carried out a statutory fire inspection and expressed some concern at possible dampness affecting electrical wiring. We await the formal report but it could be that the Portakabin's days are numbered as repairs would be too expensive to justify. Southwark have made some noises about the possibility of replacing the Portakabin, but in these straightened financial times we await the outcome with some concern.

Improved Toilet Facilities for Visitors

Talking of Portakabins, visitors to the cemetery for the Open House weekend in September may have noticed some important changes to the toilet block that FONC maintains. With the flooring deteriorating badly, we completely replaced the flooring after last May's Open Day, and took the opportunity to reconfigure the interior male/female toilet layout. Since then we have completely redecorated. We now have two female cubicles rather than the solitary one that was there before, without reducing capacity for male visitors! This should greatly reduce queuing times for our well-attended events in the future.■

We regret to announce the deaths of the following long time members: ROY FREDERICK JONES of Hayling Island, Hampshire, who died early last year having been a member of FONC since 1997, and HAROLD & HILDA FINCH of New Cross, London, SE14. Harold, who died on Easter Sunday morning 2010, had been a member since 1987. Hilda, his widow, died in December 2010. They were both in their mid-nineties. R I P

AT THE GRANGE - A RANGE OF FAME

The Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh (Part 2)

by R G S Hunter

Another notable personality buried at The Grange is Agnes Mure Mackenzie CBE (1891-1955), historian and patriot, born in Stornoway, and a graduate of Aberdeen University where she lectured in English Literature for a time before transferring to Birkbeck College, University of London. Of her many novels and histories her *History of Scotland* in six volumes, and 'Scottish Pageant', a four volume series of Scottish quotations are probably the best known. She was appointed CBE for services to Scottish history.

A famous member of the Edinburgh brewing family Andrew Usher (1826-96) is buried here. He was responsible for the construction of the Usher Hall - which was built with the help of his donation of £100,000 in 1896 - to be the venue for popular concerts etc.

Another great social reformer was Dr Thomas Guthrie; born in Brechin he studied anatomy and surgery at Edinburgh University, one of his tutors being the notorious Dr Robert Knox (of Burke and Hare fame). His studies took him also to Paris where he was shocked by the degrading poverty and its evil effect on human beings. This changed his life forever and he turned to the Church, receiving a licence to preach in 1825. When the Disruption came Guthrie was one of the leaders of the Free Church. Installed as minister at Free St John's Church in West Bow in Edinburgh he began his crusade to set up a system of 'ragged schools' to provide shelter, training and education for the hundreds of 'street arabs', children who roamed the streets of the capital with little opportunity but to learn the violent lessons of crime.



Memorial to Agnes Muir Mackenzie CBE
Photo: R G S Hunter

Dr Guthrie was supported in his first 'Pleas for Ragged Schools' in 1847 by Hugh Miller (see part one), and three such schools were set up in that year. Two more 'Pleas' were successful in 1849 and 1860, but the new Industrial School Act was not finally passed by Parliament until 1866.

On a lighter note we have David Kennedy (1825-86), the son of a precentor who led the singing in a church in Perth. David developed a rich tenor voice with a wide range and followed his father as precentor in a number of churches in Edinburgh. In 1859 he began his famous concert career at a Burns Centenary Concert in Liverpool. This led to a series of tours of Britain, including concerts in London, thereafter he travelled widely to the USA, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and India with a repertoire from Handel's 'Messiah' to 'Auld Scots Songs', accompanied by his large family. He died of cholera during a tour of Canada, and his body was brought home to Edinburgh to rest in the Grange Cemetery.

One of his 12 children was Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser (1869-1930); part of her childhood was spent in Perth, but her musical education took place in the Grange district in Edinburgh. From an early age she accompanied her father on the piano and, with her brothers and sisters formed a choir which toured Scotland. She accompanied her father on his world tour (1872-76) to Australia where she saw the outlaw Ned Kelly in jail near Melbourne, to New Zealand where the family played in barns by candlelight, and to America and Canada where they travelled by sleigh in temperatures 20 degrees below zero.

In 1879 the family toured South Africa where the floors of their rooms were made of cow dung washed with milk, and it was there that they met Dr Leander Starr Jameson, Edinburgh born, whose raid led to the Boer War. After voice-training in Italy and France, Marjorie returned to Edinburgh in 1882, and began to learn songs in Gaelic. In 1887 she married a science teacher, Alec Fraser, who died just three years later. After his death Marjorie set herself up as a music teacher and lecturer on Celtic music.

On visiting the Island of Eriskay in 1905 she became passionately fond of the music of the Hebrides collecting melodies and songs from Eriskay and other islands, sometimes noting them down by hand, sometimes recording them on a 'graphophone' machine. Her first Hebridean recital took place in 1907, and the first of her three volumes of *Songs of the Hebrides* was published in 1909. Some people have criticised her for adapting folk songs too freely, but without her dedicated work much priceless Gaelic music would have disappeared.

to be continued

~ *BURIED AT NUNHEAD, No 15* ~
JOSEPH LYNN LEICESTER
Glass Blower & Trade Union Leader
by Ron Woollacott

Situated on the East Path, almost opposite the imposing monument to Francis Mackenzie Ravenscroft and family, is the modest grave of Joseph Lynn Leicester, who was a member of parliament for just seven months in the mid-1880s. Joseph was born in Warrington, then a town in Lancashire, on Christmas Eve 1825, the son of Thomas and Martha Leicester. His father was a glassmaker. When Joseph was just nine-years-old he was apprenticed to his father's trade.

By 1851 Joseph was employed as a glass blower by James Powell and Sons (Whitefriars Glass), in the City of London, and was living in a lodging house in the parish of Christ Church, Southwark. Soon after arriving in London he was appointed secretary of the Glassmakers' Trade Society. Joseph was married by 1861 and was then living in Lambeth with his wife Charlotte and their one year old daughter Anne. Their second child, Frederick, was born in 1863.

Joseph was sent by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) to report on glass at the Paris Exhibitions in 1867 and 1868, and the Society awarded him three first-class prizes for art. In 1870 the Glass Blowers' Society of GB and Ireland presented him with £100 in recognition of his services to the glass making trade.

His wife Charlotte died some time before 1870 and Joseph married for a second time. His new wife, Clara Mitchell, was the daughter of William Mitchell, office clerk, whom he married by special licence at St John's Church, Waterloo, on 19th March 1870. Clara was 20 years his junior. Their daughter, Violet, was born in 1880; they were then living at No 1 The Crescent, Belvedere Road, North Lambeth. Clara died in 1891, aged 46.

Joseph was a master craftsman in the art of glass making and took an active part in union affairs, becoming the leader of the Flint Glass Workers Union. In 1867, as one of the London Working Men's Association leaders, he signed a 'Manifesto to the People of England on the Direct Representation of Labour in Parliament'.

As a leader of the Lib-Labs, Leicester was returned as the Liberal member of parliament for West Ham South in the General Election of 1885, but lost his seat to a Tory in the Gladstonian defeat of 1886. In 1892 he was

again invited to contest West Ham South but on learning that the Independent Labour Party candidate, Kier Hardy, was standing against him, withdrew from the contest, and Keir Hardy went on to win the seat.

Joseph was a staunch supporter of the temperance movement throughout his life and supported in parliament the Sunday closing of public houses. In 1901 he was still living at 1 Belvedere Crescent with his unmarried daughter Violet. He died at 42 Malpas Road, Brockley, on 13 October 1903, aged 77 years and left effects valued at just under £1,115 to his daughter.

His gravestone bears the legend 'Write him down as one that loved his fellow man'. *Grave No 27039 Square 89* ■

Sources: Nunhead Burial Records; British Census 1841-1901; St John's Lambeth Marriage Records 1870; Robert Henry Mair (ed), *Debrett's House of Commons*, 1886; G D H Cole, *British Working Class Politics 1832-1914*, 1941; Joyce M Bellamy and John Saville (eds), *Dictionary of Labour Biography* Vol 3, 1976; Ron Woollacott, *Nunhead Notables*, 1984. Thanks also to my daughter Michele Louise Burford for her assistance in writing this article.



FONC Xmas Social Song 2010

(Sung to the tune of 'The Lambeth Walk')

by Tim Stevenson

Anytime you're Nunhead way
Any evening, any day
You'll find us all
Doing the work of FONC

At our stall we sell our books
People give us funny looks
They think we're odd
Doing the work of FONC

Are we strange? Heaven forbid!
It is not the least bit morbid
To want to learn about dead zones,
Leg bones, headstones.
Volunteers will all agree
There's nothing like a cemetery
It keeps us off the streets
Doing the work of FONC.

There's a great deal to be said
For a healthy interest in the dead,
It's a pity they can't join in
Doing the work of FONC.

We've got Anglicans and Quakers,
We've got fifty-two acres.
People come along and they enquire
About hellfire and vampires.
We are not at all obsessed
Just lay that idea to rest
We're normal as can be
Doing the work of FONC.

Anytime you're Nunhead way
Any evening, any day
You'll find us all
Doing the work of FONC.

NUNHEAD CEMETERY OPEN DAY SATURDAY 21st MAY 2011

IMPORTANT! We will need lots of volunteers to help us in setting up trestle tables and to generally assist in the cemetery from 8.30am onwards and help us tidy up after the event. We also appreciate donations of homemade cakes etc which are always much appreciated. If you can help in any way please contact a committee member or Open Day organisers openday@fonc.org.uk. **Please do all you can to make Open Day 2011 another excellent day out in Nunhead.**

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Please note that all subscriptions are due to be paid by 1st April 2011. The annual subscription for UK members is currently £2 (for overseas members it is £10). Donations are most welcome. If you received a reminder with this issue of *FONC News* please send your cheque with the renewal form to the Membership Secretary, Simon Mercer (address on page 2). If there is no reminder form this will be because you have already renewed or have sent us a standing order. **Thank you for your continued support.**

ADVANCE NOTICE OF FONC'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery will take place on Thursday 16th June 2011 starting at 7.00pm in the Function Room (upstairs), Old Nun's Head pub, Nunhead Green, London SE15 3QQ. Nominations for election to the General Committee may be received up to the elections themselves on the night. Motions, however, should be submitted no later than 31st May 2011. All nominations and motions should be sent to FONC Vice-Chairman, Carol Stevenson, 30 Kirkwood Road, Nunhead, London, SE15 3XX

Book Review
CAMBERWELL THROUGH TIME
by **John D Beasley**

This is the third in a series of picture books about the former Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell compiled by our long time member John D Beasley. The first covered Peckham and Nunhead (see review in *FONC News* Spring 2010) and the second covered East Dulwich (reviewed Summer 2010). His latest publication is about modern day Camberwell, i.e. that portion of the present day London Borough of Southwark that is mostly covered by the LONDON SE5 postal district, and is a fascinating collection of more than 180 photographs showing some of the many changes that have taken place in the district over the last hundred years or so. Each page contains two pictures, many of which are in colour, showing a view of Camberwell as it was, usually a view taken from an old postcard, and a photograph of the same place as it appears today. This is a delightful book and will appeal to anyone with an interest in the history of Camberwell. *RW*

Paperback ISBN 978-1-84868-563-5 Amberley Publishing 96pp £14.99

RECENT EVENTS

THE ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE SERVICE was held on 14th November 2010 and was well attended. We were joined by representatives of the Brockley and Honor Oak branch of the Royal British Legion. FONC made a donation of £160 for the wreaths which were laid at the cemetery.

ALL SOULS SERVICE. There was a slight muddle over the date of the All Souls Service, as a result an impromptu service took place on the 31st October and the proper service (*as advertised in FONC News*) was held on 7th November 2010.

JOHN TURPIN assisted by John Collings led two tours of Nunhead Cemetery for Discover London on the 12th and 24th November 2010.

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL was attended by over 34 guests who enjoyed seasonal refreshments and an interesting illustrated presentation by Robert Stephenson on the fear of being buried alive. A raffle raised nearly £35 and voluntary donations of £46 helped offset the cost of refreshments.

THE NATION'S HEROES BURIED IN NUNHEAD

Following Mr Edward Barclay's letter in *FONC News 109* regarding his concerns over unmarked war graves in Nunhead Cemetery, a meeting was held with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission who are now seeing what can be done (see *FONC News 110*). The following verses express Mr Barclay's views.

Nearly 100 years have passed
All the warriors that fought are dead
But we would like to raise
Some caring thoughts in your head
We soldiers buried in Nunhead
In unmarked graves we lie
We did not ask to go to war
We did not ask to die
Our graves are covered in rubbish
Beneath a forest of trees
We only ask that you clear them
So people can see us please

We went and fought for freedom
In a country we did not know
We gave our lives in thousands
And from many our blood did flow
We gave our lives for our country
And thousands of us were lost
But unlike the War Graves Commission
We did not consider the cost
We lived in filthy trenches
We struggled in the mud
And when we charged in no man's land
Many of us were wounded and lost our blood

They took us who were wounded
To doctors at the hospital base
Then they shipped us back to home
We were not all a hopeless case
The loss of our lives to our loved ones
Meant our future together was lost
We won eventual victory
But it was soldiers whose lives it cost

Unknown soldiers who died abroad
With headstones their graves were marked
But those of us who died at home
Are buried in graves unmarked

The fallen soldiers of Fromelles
Were recovered and buried in style
But we were placed in common graves
And forgotten for a long while
They swore to always mark our grave
But once at home it seems
We were buried without formality
Along with our future dreams
There are thousands buried at home
In mostly unmarked graves
And most of them with no headstones
Because of the money it saves

An unknown soldier was brought home
And buried in state and glory
But we were buried in Nunhead
And no one knows our story
We have been left for many years
Forgotten in a great big city
And no one wants to honour us
It seems that is such a pity
They honour the men that fall now
They parade to see them home
But after nearly 100 years
We are left here all alone

FASHIONABLE FORENAMES

The most popular forenames of people of both sexes and all ages that were buried in Nunhead Cemetery between 1840 and 1846

by Ron Woollacott

The ten most popular girls' names in 2010, according to an article which appeared in *The Times* in October 2010, were, in order of popularity, Olivia, Ruby, Chloe, Emily, Sophie, Jessica, Grace, Lily, Amelia and Eve. The ten most popular boys' names were: Oliver, Jack, Harry, Alfie, Joshua, Thomas, Charlie, William, James and Daniel.

Although the choice of girls' names fluctuates quite considerably over the years, with the exception of Emily, which was the fourth most popular name in 2010, and the ninth most popular name recorded in Nunhead's earliest burial registers, the naming of boys remains fairly consistent and Charlie (pet form of Charles), George, James, John and William, are just as popular today as they were over 150 years ago.

A trawl of burials at Nunhead Cemetery reveals that over 1,780 people were laid to rest there between its opening in July 1840 and the end of 1846. Of the 116 girls' forenames appearing in the burial records during those years the top twenty recorded were: Mary (128), Sarah (101), Elizabeth (81), Ann (67), Jane (38), Eliza (33), Emma (25), Charlotte (24), Emily (23), Martha (21), Caroline (20), Harriet (12), Margaret (18), Maria (17), Susannah (16), Rebecca (13), Eleanor (12), Catherine (11), Frances (11) and Hannah (11). Some of the more unusual girls' names include: Antionetta (1), Barbe (1), Everelda (1), Hennetta (1), Jacobina (1), Joseth (1), Margrett (1), Nicholas (1)*, Thamasan (1), and Theophila (1).

Of the 93 boys' forenames listed in Nunhead's burial records between 1840 and 1846, the top twenty names were John (129), William (125), James (74), Thomas (55), George (51), Edward (50), Henry (48), Charles (46), Robert (31), Frederick (21), Joseph (20), Richard (18), Benjamin (16), Samuel (16), Alfred (15), David (8), Francis (7), Alexander (6), Peter (5) and Walter (5). The more unusual boys' names recorded in the registers include: Adino (1), Bayly (1), Bellamy (1), Benaiah (1), Berkley (1), Bingham (1), Jerubbaal (1), Peniston (1) and Zebiah (1).■

*Although the sex of the deceased person is usually not indicated in Nunhead's burial registers this particular entry is written down as 'Nicholas Shiels (a female)' who was buried in 1844 in private grave 277 square 131.

Art in the Mausoleum

Open Day feature by the Magnificent 7 Artists curated by Jolanta Jagiello

For the very first time the Stearns mausoleum after its restoration in 2000 is open to the public during Open Day 21st May, 11am-5pm, with a Public Art Exhibition. This art exhibition draws attention to the beautiful architectural features of the small salmon-coloured terracotta mausoleum which stands beside the path running up the hill on the west side of Nunhead Cemetery. It was built in the Romanesque style with crow-stepped gables and a ridged roof, lined with brown and yellow glazed tiles and ornamented with Celtic motifs, for Mrs Laura Stearns of Radnor House in Twickenham who died in 1900.

The Mausoleum was designed by the architectural firm of George and Peto using moulded decorative detail made by the firm Doulton in Lambeth. This gives its charm, with arcaded parapets, moulded gargoyles, and intricate patterns round the arched openings of the windows and doorway, and the capitals and shafts of the colonnettes.



The Stearns Mausoleum before restoration

It was recently featured on BBC TV in Andrew Neil's 'This Week' on Thursday 20th January 2011 when Andrew Rawnsley from *The Observer* was shot standing outside the mausoleum covering a story on the Political Cemetery of the Government, prompted by the recent resignation of Alan Johnson.

The mausoleum is brought to life and will be open to the public on Open Day 2011 with artworks on the shelves by the Magnificent 7 Artists: Nick Baelz, Mike Hoath, Sara Scott, Jill Rock, Desiree Ickerodt, Debora Mo, and Lorraine Clarke. With decorative features of birds, heads, and twigs provided by artists Belinda Opie, Kim Thornton, and Jolanta Jagiello. Come and enjoy this spectacular little jewel in the crown that is Nunhead Cemetery. ■

Article written by Jolanta Jagiello with the assistance of Ron Woollacott

Your Greatest Fear – Being Buried Alive

The 2010 FONC Christmas Lecture given by Robert Stephenson

Report by Carole Tyrrell

Robert Stephenson's talks are always entertaining, informative and a highlight of FONC socials. This was no exception. He began by referring to the inspiration that being buried alive has given to great writers throughout the centuries. The famous, sinister Harry Clarke illustration to 'The Premature Burial' introduced one of Edgar Allan Poe's most celebrated works and RS soon passed onto Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher'. Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' and Wilkie Collins' novels were also honourable mentions. A powerful illustration of Lazarus arising from the dead was also discussed as another notable example.

It has always been a primeval fear of falling into a cataleptic trance and being unable to tell your loved ones that you aren't dead. There are several examples of coffins being opened and it being obvious that the incumbent awoke to find themselves trapped with no escape. Scratch marks on the coffin lid, torn fingernails and a twisted body are the telltale signs. During times of plague it was necessary to bury the dead very quickly in mass graves and there are recorded instances of victims who weren't yet dead crawling out of the pit.

Until quite recently, the newly deceased would be on display at home in their coffins and watched over for several days by relatives to check that they were indeed dead and not liable to spring up at any moment. The two memorials to Sara Colville in 1621 and Constance Whitney in 1627 contain a statue of each lady draped in shrouds which could either be interpreted that they rose from the dead or a memento mori of them.

The terror of being prematurely interred attracted serious writers such as Jacob Winslow who wrote a celebrated book on it in 1740. It even had its own phobia: taphophobia or a fear of the grave. There was a whole industry of inventors and patents who devised all kinds of devices that the recently revived could use to attract the attention of the outside world: complicated bells which attached to parts of the body, coffins with alarms and phones amongst others. Another celebrated idea was that of mortuary waiting rooms which began in Germany and spread to England and other countries. In these large dormitory like halls, the recently dead could lie in rows surrounded by flowers and their loved ones for the requisite time limit. There was also an alarm system in case one of the temporary residents should awake.

However, it wasn't until the 19th century that it was necessary to have a

doctor to authenticate the death certificate. This offered some reassurance - unless your doctor was called Shipman.

The lecture ended with two modern examples from the 1980s which demonstrated that being buried alive can still happen and thus your fears may yet still be realised. Two middle-aged ladies were certified dead but came back to life in the morgue and carried on living a normal life. These two disturbing examples demonstrate that, despite modern science, the fear of premature burial is not quite dead and buried! ■

~ DIARY DATES ~

► FONC'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011

Thursday 16th June 2011 starting at 7.00pm. Meet in the Function Room (upstairs) at the Old Nun's Head pub, Nunhead Green, London, SE15 3QQ. *For further information please see page 13.*

► NUNHEAD CEMETERY ANNUAL OPEN DAY 2011

Saturday 21st May 2011 from 11am to 5pm. This is a great day out when upwards of 2,000 visitors descend on Nunhead. **We need more volunteers to come forward and help the regular stalwarts on the day, especially to set up stalls in morning and dismantle stalls at the close of the event. The more helpers we have the easier it is for everyone to enjoy the day.**

► VOLUNTARY WORKDAYS

Voluntary workdays take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10am to 4.30pm. New volunteers are always most welcome. Meet at the FONC Portakabin, to the right of 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.

► MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION RECORDING

Transcribing the inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery is an important and ongoing task. Volunteers meet at the FONC Portakabin near the Linden Grove entrance. *For dates and more information please contact fonc@btconnect.com.*

► GUIDED TOURS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY

General tours of the cemetery take place on the last Sunday in every month at 2.15pm. Meet at the flint circle just inside the main gates. There is no need to book, just turn up on the day. Tours usually take approximately two hours. Publications will be on sale weather and volunteers permitting.

~ CONTACTS ~

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