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FONC News



Autumn issue (September - November 2011) - 60p - Free to Members



The grave of Private G W Hovell see page 15 (photo: Ron Woollacott)

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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. **Please 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.

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 during the months of December, January and February when we only attend for the 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.* If you would like to attend a meeting please email fonc@btconnect.com for details. Occasional talks, walks, presentations, and all forthcoming events are announced in *FONC News*.

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 7635 3392.

Editor: Ron Woollacott *Subeditor:* Gwyneth Stokes

Contributors to this issue: Cyril Clark, Jeff Hart, the Revd Rollo J R Hovell, R G S Hunter, Jolanta Jagiello, Cathy Mercer, Simon Mercer, Carol Stevenson. *The editor, subeditor, and FONC's committee members do not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors.*

~ 1981 ~ 30th Anniversary ~ 2011 ~

Message from the chairman

When visitors come to Nunhead Cemetery for the first time they are frequently amazed by what they see around them. More often than not they appreciate the ecology, history and beauty of the site. Had they set foot in the cemetery back in 1980, however, they would have been confronted with a very different scene: then the cemetery was neglected and in a ruinous state, vandalism was rife, and the chapel was a burnt out ruin. Happily, the setting up of FONC in 1981 made all the difference when a few like-minded individuals agreed to approach Southwark Council (who had acquired the cemetery in 1975) in an attempt to get something done about the deplorable state of the place.

As we celebrate our 30th birthday members should reflect on what they have achieved over the last 30 years, at first without any help and eventually with the co-operation of Southwark Council. Who'd have thought that all those years ago, when only a few people were brave enough to venture inside the derelict cemetery, that our Open Day in May would annually attract a few thousand visitors from all over the country and would become such a popular event.

Everything we have achieved over the years is down to our dedicated and enthusiastic members, whether carrying out work in the cemetery, writing and selling publications, delivering newsletters, assisting on Open Days and Open House Weekends, giving talks and conducted tours, or else working behind the scenes and contributing in many other ways. Our officers and committee members - past and present - have kept our organisation running efficiently over the years, but it is the continued support of our hundreds of ordinary members that has kept us going - despite a few ups and downs - since FONC was founded three decades ago. ■

FUTURE EVENT: Cathy Mercer invites you to visit the Gardens of Peace and Forest Park cemeteries on Sunday 9th October 2011

We are very pleased to announce this visit, open to all FONC members and their friends and family. It's a bit different from usual as it's two tours, both of small and very new cemeteries.

The Gardens of Peace is an Islamic cemetery, with a fantastic display of roses over the burial stones, which of course face towards Mecca. Opened in 2003, it is now the largest Islamic cemetery in Britain and has won awards for landscaping and design. The staff at the Gardens of Peace have kindly invited us to tea after our tour. For further details please visit www.gardens-of-peace.org.uk

Just 200 yards away is Forest Park, a brand new multi-faith cemetery with Britain's newest crematorium. It was built and is managed by the Westerleigh Group for the London Borough of Redbridge. The Westerleigh Group manage a number of local authority cemeteries and crematoria across the UK. For further details please visit www.westerleighgroup.co.uk/locations

The tour will start at the entrance to the Gardens of Peace, Elmbridge Road, Hainault, Ilford IG6 3SW, and will last about an hour, and then, after tea, we will move on together to Forest Park.

In the past we have visited a Jewish cemetery and Hindu temple, as well as large privately owned and local authority cemeteries. Both these cemeteries are in their very early days and so offer an interesting contrast to Nunhead Cemetery and our other visits, which are usually to much older cemeteries.

The cemeteries lie 200 yards apart, between Fairlop and Hainault stations on the Central Line - 15 minute walk - or take the 247 bus towards Romford or 150 bus towards Chigwell Row from Hainault Station. There is limited parking at both cemeteries. The visits will start at the entrance to the Gardens of Peace.

To book a place please email Cathy at treasurer@fonc.org.uk There is no charge for the tours, though a collection will be made for the Gardens of Peace, who are also giving us tea. We do hope that you can join us!

HOW YOU CAN HELP

by Simon Mercer

Subscription to the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery is still just £2 for UK members (£10 for overseas members) to cover the membership year to 1st April. Nearly half of the members take up the option to pay using a bank standing order. This saves the time and trouble remembering to pay by cheque and it also saves the price of postage. Including a donation will help to pay for the ongoing costs of FONC's work at Nunhead Cemetery. Mem-



FONC volunteers (left to right) Jean, Gwyneth and Chris at the FONC publications desk on Open Day, May 2010. Photo Simon Mercer

bers who are UK taxpayers can complete a Gift Aid declaration, which means that FONC receives from HM Revenue & Customs an extra 25 pence for every £1 donated. These options (donations, Gift Aid and standing order) might not be possible for all members. However, we would like to encourage those members who can to consider increasing the value of their support in the ways that I've mentioned.

FONC is run by volunteers. My 'work' for FONC includes membership renewals which I can work on at home. Other members promote FONC at regular open days, work days, tours and publicity stalls. Some volunteers

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choose to serve as committee members, running the charity, and many FONC members distribute our newsletter.

If I have encouraged you to increase your support for FONC then we look forward to hearing from you. For membership please see our address on page 2; and to volunteer please see the contacts on the back page of this newsletter. Every member is important to FONC and we thank you for your help and support. ■

***NEW!* FONC CALENDARS FOR 2012**

by Cathy Mercer

Colourful calendars have been specially produced for FONC by new committee member Jolanta Jagiello. Jolanta is an artist and she has got together with her many designer and photographer friends to produce a beautiful full colour calendar. The calendar not only includes a seasonal photograph for each month, but also reminds you of important FONC dates such as work-days, tours, committee meetings, the AGM and of course the 2012 Open Day.

The Nunhead Cemetery calendar is not just attractive, it is also useful, with large pages for each month, allowing you to write in your own important dates. The photographs include a chapel snow scene for December and blue bells for the spring. The calendar would make a delightful gift.

They cost just £5 (members) or £5.50 (non-members) and are available from the Sunday afternoon publications stand in the cemetery or online at www.fonc.org.uk. *If ordering online please add £1 towards postage and packing.*

NUNHEAD CEMETERY OPEN DAY 2011

~ Rest in Peace ~

JOHN SPENCER DEEKS

A valued member of FONC since 1988

who sadly passed away

**at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Woolwich,
London, on 26th June 2011**

by Cathy Mercer (Hon Treasurer)

This year's Open Day was probably the best yet: the sun smiled down as the crowds poured in. Often the FA Cup Final clashes with our Open Day which means that people drift off to watch the match, but not this year as the FA had kindly rescheduled it a week earlier than usual.

Once again there was fun for all the family. FONC provided a variety of stalls, all as popular as ever, at least judging by the takings. There were crowds and queues all day at the publications and membership stall, the family history stall, the bodgers producing ornaments, trinkets and furniture from wood from Nunhead, the Nunhead photos and of course the ever popular 'Contrary Mary' plant stall which made a lot of money for FONC.

There was plenty for children: face painting, badge making and the always popular insect stall with FONC's very own Bug Man, sending children into the cemetery in search of insects and bugs.

In addition, there were choirs singing in the chapel, hourly cemetery tours, a stone carver and a stall explaining FONC's work recording monumental inscriptions: with 250,000 + buried at Nunhead, there are an awful lot of inscriptions to record!

One real innovation this year was the special Nunhead art exhibition. This must go down on record as the smallest art exhibition ever in Southwark, as it was held in the Stearns mausoleum and the maximum number of people allowed in at any one time was just two. This meant that there was a lively queue of people outside the mausoleum all day, enjoying the fresh greens of the trees while they waited to see the splendid art. Inside the mausoleum was an exquisite display of art works displayed on the marble slabs: sculptures, paintings and installations. The exhibition was managed and curated by new FONC Committee member Jolanta Jagiello. Many thanks to her for her hard work on this and also the very attractive 2012 Nunhead calendar which she produced in time for Open Day.

As well as the several FONC stalls, many community groups also had stalls to publicise their work and raise funds. As usual, there was honey from the local beekeeper, fruit and vegetables and plants from local garden societies, books and information from local history groups and many more. Many thanks to all the stall holders for their hard work: they add so much to the colour and variety of the Open Day.

No day out is complete without a nice cup of tea and cake and, as usual, Café Woollacott provided home made cakes and sandwiches and hot and cold drinks. Many thanks to all the volunteers who worked hard behind the

continued on next page

stall, serving and making cups of tea and clearing up afterwards Takings at Café Woollacott is a very good measure of the numbers at the Open Day and this year's takings were the highest ever.

It's always difficult to know exactly how many people attend. The Rangers did a count a few years ago but that was just of people going in through the main entrance and so didn't include people coming in through Ivydale Road. However, a rough guess must make it 2-3,000 people, mostly locals and all having a very good time.

Many thanks to everyone who made the 2011 Nunhead Cemetery Open Day such a good day out: to the many people who worked so hard from early in the morning to late evening, setting up, manning stalls; taking tours; and breaking stalls up at the end of a hard but enjoyable day. And last but by no means least, thanks also to the many visitors who came along and made it such a splendid open day.

Thanks also to the many people who work so hard beforehand, organising all the stalls, managing the bookings, growing the plants to sell, making up sandwiches and baking the cakes to eat. ■ *For more amazing details on the cakes see the editor's tribute that follows.*

DELICIOUS CAKES GALORE!

At this year's Open Day Maureen Woollacott and sister Linda were occupied as usual all day working on the refreshment stall, which was christened many years ago as Café Woollacott, and which Maureen believes should be known as Café FONC because so many more helpers are involved - this year no less than 10 enthusiastic ladies did an excellent job, said Maureen. She and Linda made and donated no less than 26 1lb fruit cakes and prepared over 200 assorted sandwiches and 108 filled bread rolls, and Jane Hart baked around 300 scones which were duly smothered with strawberry and apricot jam. On the day many anonymous members brought along a delicious array of goodies including mini pizzas, sausage rolls, and cheese scones. For those with a sweeter tooth there were chunks of chocolate cake, fresh cream cake, ginger cake and gingerbread men, lemon cake, cup cakes and rock cakes, coconut cake, fruit and nut cake, individual carrot cakes, flapjacks, shortbread, Victoria sponge cake, apple fruit cake, fresh raspberry sponge, iced fairy cakes and Lincoln tea cake - all eagerly consumed.

Hundreds of visitors queued without complaint and everything sold out, thanks to Maureen, Linda, Jane, Evelyn, Alison, Pauline, Carole, Tracy and the two Helens. The pity is I never got to sample any of it! ■

REPORT OF THE AGM 2011

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery was held at the Old Nun's Head on the evening of Thursday 16th June 2011. The chairman welcomed members and explained the purpose of the meeting. After the opening remarks and apologies for absence, the minutes of the 2010 were read and adopted as a true record of that meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report was presented by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator, who highlighted several important items contained in the report. He said membership was down on last year, perhaps a reflection of the recession. Membership now stood at 859 fully paid up members compared to 912 last year. He thanked Simon Mercer, membership secretary, for his hard work and efficiency in organising and maintaining the members' database.

PUBLICATIONS DESK & WEBSITE

Our revitalised website www.fonc.org.uk provides much information about the cemetery and FONC and is an essential link with the wider world. It is continually updated under the direction of webmaster Simon Quill and the Committee is exploring the possibility of distributing FONC News electronically through the dedicated members' area.

The Sunday enquiries/publications desk organised by Cathy Mercer, which now runs every weekend during the summer, and supported by a dedicated band of volunteers is a vital on-site link between FONC and the public.

MAIN EVENTS

This year's Open Day in May broke all records in terms of attendance and takings. With a full programme of musical events in the chapel throughout the day, more stalls than ever, and an art exhibition. We also participated in Open Squares weekend in June 2010 and London Open House weekend in September 2010.

GRAVESEARCH & MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS

While we no longer undertake grave searches direct, Ron Woollacott, Michele Burford and Keith Nicol dealt with numerous research enquiries on Open Day, and Committee member Malcolm Collins has been carrying out extensive research of the cemetery records. Progress on monument recording work in the cemetery has been hampered by Paul Dyer's indisposition. We need to recruit more regular volunteers to make headway with this daunting task.

CEMETERY TOURS, ART & EDUCATION PROJECTS

Our monthly conducted tours remain as popular and well-attended as ever, and we have a new guide in Carole Tyrrell. There has been an increase in the number of tours we provide for other groups, such as Discover London, the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery, Mycenae House Local History Group, National Art Fund and Lewisham Pensioners Group. We do not charge for such tours, but invariably our visitors are generous with their donations.

FONC has undertaken a number of public art exhibitions throughout the cemetery under the curatorship of enthusiastic new Committee member, Jolanta Jagiello, which have been enjoyed by thousands of visitors: *Here Lies ART!* in the Anglican chapel during London Open House weekend in September 2010, and *Magnificent 7 Resting Peacefully* in the Stearns mausoleum during our Open Day in May 2011.

RELIGIOUS EVENTS

The annual All Souls Service held in the chapel continues to be organised by the Revd Alan and Joan Bond, and the increasingly well-attended Remembrance Day and wreath laying event mark the formal religious events in the cemetery during the year.

Meetings with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission during the year to discuss improved maintenance of graves and a new memorial for the demolished Square 89 war graves monument make the usual FONC donation to the Royal British Legion for wreaths all the more pertinent.

CEMETERY MANAGEMENT BY SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

The new cemetery manager, Avril Kirby, and Head of Parks, Rebecca Towers, have attended meetings with FONC on various issues over the year. Avril is now fully engaged and supportive of the Friends and has initiated a number of small scale improvements on site such as new rubbish bins, planting and seating. However, as part of the general restructuring of Southwark services there is less resource available to continue to put into effect the overall Management Plan for the cemetery. Without consultation with FONC, the staffing levels were reduced from four to three during the year and responsibility for opening and closing the cemetery was outsourced, leading to some initial inconsistencies.

CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS

Grounds maintenance by Southwark Council has continued, although in some instances enthusiasm has overcome commonsense and FONC has had to tidy up the outcome. Various large tree management projects have been

carried out. Repairs to flaking stonework on the chapel have been undertaken and new lighting in the crypt has been provided by Southwark Council. Most of the ugly chestnut paling fencing - placed presumably for health and safety reasons to close off parts of the cemetery to public access - has been removed. New signage has been sited both inside and outside the cemetery to indicate the new Green Chain Walk through the cemetery. FONC has also been successful in attracting local community funding to enable several major memorials, particularly on the Main Avenue, to be restored which would otherwise be beyond our own capabilities.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Jeff Hart on behalf of Cathy Mercer. This year's surplus reflected a healthy balance in FONC's accounts. Our auditor, George Young, had examined the financial records and vouchers and was satisfied that they gave a true and fair view of FONC's activities and financial affairs for the year ending 31st March 2011. The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to both Cathy Mercer and George Young.

COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

The following members were elected to serve on the General Committee for the next 12 months: Rex Batten, Malcolm Collins, John Collings (in absentia), Paul Dyer, Jane Hart, Jeff Hart (Co-ordinator), Jolanta Jagiello, Cathy Mercer (Treasurer) in absentia, Simon Mercer (Membership Secretary) in absentia, Carol Stevenson (Vice-Chairman), Tim Stevenson, Gwyneth Stokes, Carole Tyrrell (Minutes Secretary), Maureen Woollacott, Ron Woollacott (Chairman).

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN - PRESENTATION BY JOHN TURPIN

The business part of the meeting was followed by light refreshments and a PowerPoint presentation by John Turpin, featuring photographs from his new book *The Magnificent Seven*. John, who is a Nunhead tour guide and a former Vice-Chairman of FONC, is well-acquainted with the magnificent seven great metropolitan cemeteries and treated us to numerous examples of monuments he had photographed over the years. All the pictures were in glorious colour! ■

FUTURE EVENT:
30th ANNIVERSARY & CHRISTMAS SOCIAL
Thursday 15th December 2011
Please make a note in your diary
Full details in the next issue of FONC News

VOLUNTARY WORK IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

Report by Carol Stevenson

Voluntary work during the last year has concentrated on keeping up with everything that needs doing, and controlling the flourishing plant growth. We certainly feel the reduced hours of the cemeteries staff, although John Turner has done all he can to help.

Top of the list of tasks were clearing fallen trees and the removal of re-growth on tree stumps. We also trimmed branches overhanging Linden Grove and a member's garden in Ivydale Road.

A number of areas were cleared of undergrowth including the Dissenters' Glade, Eastern Catacomb, Wetlands, Hazel Glade, the WWI memorial site and Commonwealth War graves sites. Following the removal of the chestnut fencing from the Main Avenue, we cleared back the undergrowth to show the first line of monuments, and then had to go back and remove a lot of material dumped by council staff. We also spent some time clearing up after another group of workers who did some rough work in the cemetery.

Paths need trimming back to keep them open, and the gardeners among us have worked on the Dissenters' and Scots Martyrs' gardens and Fernery. The Scots Martyrs' and Fernery have been fenced for protection and tidiness, and to protect the tree hedge which has been planted round the Scots Martyrs' area. They also removed the growth which was clogging up one of our biggest yew trees, and the gap in the laurel hedge opposite FONC's Portakabin has been cleared of dumped material ready for replanting.

Another on-going task is 'poly-pulling' (Japanese knotweed control), where we seem to be getting the upper hand. We even started clearing a big new area, so effectively that the Cemeteries staff decided to turn it into a 'Scattering Lawn' for cremated remains. With staff not on site at weekends, and no attendance at our work planning meetings, we have had problems of communication with Cemeteries staff, hopefully with recent staff changes this will improve - see page 20.

There have been further jobs to do maintaining the Portakabin and finishing the toilet block, while some time spent fixing and marking trestle tables and gazebos, paid off when Open Day came. We also made an inventory of our tools, which include such things as 'carpenters' chisel - battered', 'stump basher', 'manure fork' and cigar and canoe stones.

A new (and welcome) type of task this year is assisting the sculptors who have done two exhibitions in Nunhead Cemetery. More exhibitions are planned so we will be doing this next year too!

We have not found time for any monument repairs, but have swept and

cleared some monuments and we have also done a lot of work on removing the ivy which grows over the fence pillars on Linden Grove. The steps between the Angel Path and Beeches have been repaired, a pile of pea shingle has been distributed, and large amounts of rubbish which people push through the railings from Linden Grove has been removed.

Among the 'odder' jobs this year were trying to trace an angel in a photograph which we finally concluded had been faked, and photographing 'the grave with Starship Enterprise on it' for an enquiry.

Thanks to all our volunteers, old and new, who have turned out whatever the weather and have achieved so much. Please keep coming back - the cemetery needs you! Last year 37 volunteers carried out over 695 hours work in the cemetery.

New volunteers are always welcome. You only have to do as much as suits you. Meet us at the Portakabin on the first Sunday of every month from 10am onwards. Contact fonc@btconnect.com for more details. ■

GLIMPSES OF GALLOWAY GRAVES

by R G S Hunter (part one)

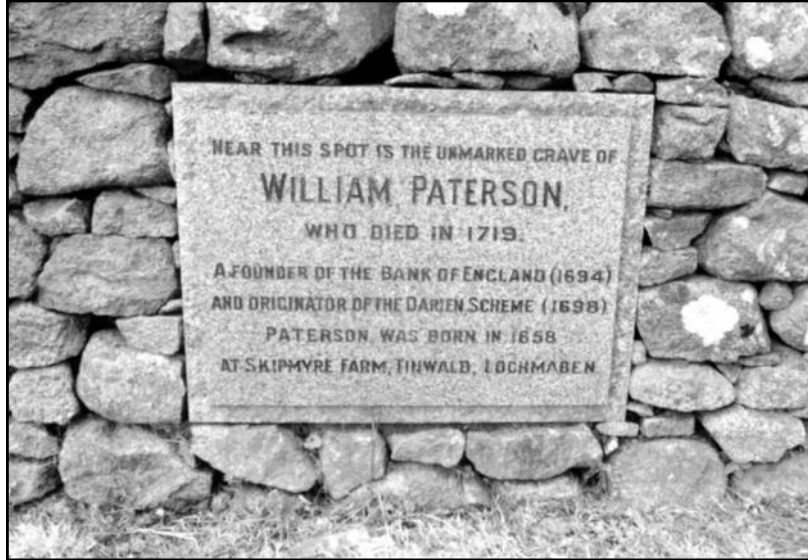
To many people the Dumfries and Galloway region of southwest Scotland is an area to be rushed through to catch the ferry at Stranraer but, 'bide a' wee' and you will be amply rewarded with the range of old graveyards to be visited. I hope the following will whet your appetite for this pursuit.

NEW ABBEY

Let's start with a bit of romance. The Cistercian Abbey here was founded in 1273 by Dervorgilla, a daughter of Alan, Lord of Galloway, in loving memory of her husband John de Baliol (died 1268). On her death in 1290 she was buried near the high altar in the Abbey with the embalmed heart of her husband she kept in a casket. This was the family which produced a son John who was King of Scotland for a short period (1292-1296). They also founded Baliol College, Oxford, in 1263, an event recalled by the College providing a new cover slab for the Dervorgillas' grave.

Among the interesting burials outside the main building is that of William Paterson (1658-1719), a founder of the Bank of England. He was less successful in founding another venture, which became the Darien Disaster, in 1698. To his credit, however, he was one of the few founders who actual-

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Memorial to William Paterson at New Abbey Photo: RGS Hunter

ly went to Darien, where his wife died as a result of disease prevalent in that colony.

Also here we have the Jardines proudly displaying the family trees of two lines of the family, one 1780-1997 and the other 1837-1996, and a reminder that the Jardines were present at the Battle of Otterburn in 1388.

Finally we note the walled funeral site of William Stewart of Shambellie and other family connections with the motto 'Je Tache' (I Try), which I could adopt for my article.

KELLS

One of my interests in visiting graveyards in this area has been to research the activities of the Covenanters who fought to preserve the Presbyterian principles set out in the National Covenant



The grave of James Faed at Kells Photo: RGS Hunter

of 1638, and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. In this churchyard lie two martyrs of this struggle, Adam MacWhan who was summarily executed in 1685 during the 'Killing Times' when their captors did not bother to hold proper trials, and John Gordon, a Pentland Martyr who died of wounds received at the Battle of Rullion Green in 1666.

A more peaceful life is illustrated by the memorial to John Murray, who died in 1777, aged 64, having served for 46 years as gamekeeper in the service of Captain John Gordon of Kenmure Castle - the elaborate decoration on his tombstone of the tools of his trade leave no doubt about his career.

A more recent memorial is to the painter James Faed who died in 1920 at the age of 63. Included in his memorial is a tribute to his son James, midshipman with the Royal Navy, who gave his life for his country at the Dardanelles at the age of only 15 (he was buried at sea).

to be continued

16/556 PTE GEORGE WOODWARD HOVELL NEW ZEALAND MAORI (PIONEER) BATTALION

by the Revd Rollo J R Hovell of New Zealand

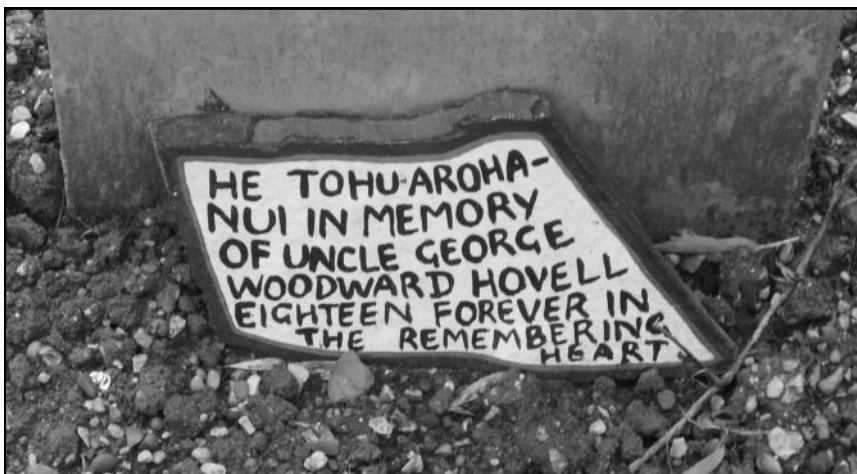
I hear that the Nunhead guardians are sometimes intrigued by mementoes left in the cemetery, and I have to confess to leaving a small slab of New Zealand rock at my uncle's grave when I was there around Remembrance Day in 2008.

I was delighted with the immaculately maintained small fallen soldiers' plot, with its wreath against the miniature centotaph. My uncle, George Woodward Hovell, is there among the few New Zealand graves. He died in 1915 aged 18, was wounded at Gallipoli and evacuated to London into the care of his father's cousin, the surgeon Thomas Mark Hovell* FRCS of Harley Street. But he was unable to save him, and he was buried at Nunhead.



I'm sending you a photo of him for your interest, since there are so few

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A piece of New Zealand rock on the grave of Private George Woodward Hovell left at Nunhead by the Revd Rollo J R Hovell - photo by Ron Woollacott

soldiers' graves in your keeping at Nunhead, I thought you might be interested to know something of one of their number. Perhaps it is a sad photo with none of the heroic about it: he looks thin, sick and haunted in his unpressed uniform - a parcel of skin and bones and innocence wrapped in untidiness.

I painted a message for him on the piece of rock, in Maori, a note in his own language, on an exfoliated slab from the top of the hill where he roamed in his boyhood....hoping that other future visitors - his great nephews and nieces would find it there in their turn.

In the past decade quite a few of our younger family members have found their way to Nunhead. I hope you do not mind my leaving a piece of clutter there at his grave, some mountain detritus from the other side of the world. Is it the War Graves Commission that maintains the plot? Part of the charm of that spot is the contrast between the orderliness of the war-remembered and the wonderful wild profusion around them.

Private Hovell was the son of Charles W and Mary Hovell, of Coromandel, New Zealand. He is buried in grave No 33511 D, square 52. ■

** Thomas Mark Hovell FRCS Edinburgh, Companion of the Order of the Crown [Germany] (1853-1925), a distinguished physician and surgeon of 105 Harley Street, London, W1, was consulting aural surgeon at the London Hospital etc, and medical attendant to Emperor Frederick III of Germany. (Ed).*

FLT/SGT CYRIL JAMES CLARK, RAF
by Cyril Clark

My earliest memories of Nunhead Cemetery date back to the early 1950s when as a young child I would help my mother tend the family grave where my great grandmother, my grandfather and my uncle are buried.

As a nine-year-old I was rather scared of the cemetery. I still have a vivid memory of being sent to a water tap to fill the flower vase. Then a branch on a nearby tree creaked in the wind: terrified, I dropped the vase and scuttled back to the safety of my mother's side.

The years rolled on. I moved from London, got married and forgot Nunhead Cemetery. Others too forgot Nunhead Cemetery and the poor old place closed and fell into ruin. My father and mother were heartbroken to see the desecration of the cemetery and made no further visits until, many years later, beneath a dark canopy of trees and almost covered with brambles, my parents, my sister and I 'rediscovered' our family grave and vowed never to lose it again.

Following the death of my parents I inherited a box of letters that my uncle, Cyril James Clark, had written to his family while he was in service with the RAF during the Second World War. The letters commence with my uncle's enlistment into the Royal Air Force in September 1940, his training as a navigator/bomber both in the UK and USA, and they cover his all too short operational service which ended with his death during a training flight on 9th June 1943.

My uncle's letters were often undated: sometimes they were just numbered. As a result I have had to do much research to get them into some sort of order. As next-of-kin I was able to obtain my uncle's service record from the RAF and this has been an invaluable tool for research.

Much of the content of my uncle's letters is day-to-day chat and often concerns family matters. He sends money and laundry home to his mother and thanks her for the cakes and sweets she has sent him. He is worried how his family is coping during the London blitz. He tells his mother how his training is progressing. It is very hard work and he failed one of his navigation examinations, but was given a second chance. At times he suffered from air sickness and nosebleeds but not badly enough to ground him permanently.

My uncle often wrote about the friends he made while training. Sadly several were killed in action. Keith had been shot down by enemy night

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fighters over England in the summer of 1942 while a few months later Arne, a very good friend with whom he had started his training, lost his life over Flensburg in northern Germany.

In December 1942 my uncle joined 226 Squadron based in Norfolk. The squadron operated Douglas Boston III aircraft on daylight bombing missions over France and the Low countries. During the early summer of 1943 the squadron converted to the North American Mitchell II bomber, and it was while on a training flight that my uncle and his three fellow crew members lost their lives.

My uncle's last surviving letter is a short one, posted 13 days before his death. He is his usual cheerful self, thanking his mother for returning his watch after a repair and signing off, 'Well this is going to be a really short letter.....the watch is still keeping good time. Cheerio for now - keep well, Love Cyril xxxxxx.'

At half-past-three on Wednesday 16th June 1943, my uncle was laid in the grave already occupied by his father and grandmother.

Following the research I have carried out on my uncle's letters and through the internet I was able to make contact in New Zealand with the nephew of my uncle's last skipper. We have swapped information and photographs and he has sent me copies of letters written to his grandmother in New Zealand by my father and grandmother. In South Africa I have made contact with the nephew of my uncle's good friend Arne and we have also swapped information and photographs.

I regret that I was not able to meet my uncle Cyril but his letters and photographs have been preserved and by reading the words he wrote I feel I have got to know him. What comes through so clearly in his letters was his love of life, his persistent cheerfulness, his certainty that he was in the right job and above all his appreciation of the love and support of his family. ■



*Clark family grave in Nunhead Cemetery
Photo: courtesy of Cyril Clark*

Future Event: ‘Woodland Wonders’ Exhibition in Nunhead Cemetery in September 2011

by Jolanta Jagiello

Visitors to Nunhead Cemetery this September will have the opportunity to enjoy Woodland Wonders, a public art exhibition of woodland art installations sited in the restored Anglican chapel. It’s open throughout the weekends in September from 11am to 5pm, including Open House London weekend 17th and 18th September. This exhibition in association with FONC is curated by Jolanta Jagiello and funded by a Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Council grant from Southwark Council and ArtGoingPlaces.

The exhibition draws upon the cemetery’s abandoned past and its transformation into an ash-sycamore woodland, natural in structure and growing among vegetated gravestones, with many remnants of the 1840 Victorian plantings remaining, including a formal avenue of towering lime trees. 15 artists have been inspired by Nunhead Cemetery’s woodland and wildlife.

Sara Scott and Desiree Ickerodt’s artwork alludes to the cemetery’s decaying past, and Everton Wright on its current purpose. Debora Mo and Elisabeth Chojak-Myszko have chosen to work with its symbolic meanings, whilst Kath Cottee and Jeff Soan are focusing their attention on its inhabitants. Alex Harley, Mike Hoath, Jayne Lloyd and Jolanta Jagiello will look at the structure of wood and its possibilities, with Isabella Pitisci and Julia Peat concentrating on the fragility of leaves. The McKenzie family will create a Museum of Diseased Wood, complementing Jill Rock’s Museum of the Paranormal. Woodland tours and a leaflet will be available for visitors to explore Nunhead Cemetery’s woodland on Sundays 4th, 11th, 25th September and 17th and 18th September (Open House London weekend) from 2pm-3.30pm. ■

PUBLIC SECTOR CUTS HIT NUNHEAD

by Jeff Hart (FONC Co-ordinator)

As with all public sector bodies, the London Borough of Southwark has spent recent months reviewing how best to deliver a range of public services with significantly less resources than previously. The management of Nunhead Cemetery falls under the Director of Parks and Open Spaces, under which the Cemeteries and Crematorium Division is headed by Avril Kirby.

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Following an extensive review, Southwark will no longer have their own grounds maintenance staff at Nunhead and the existing team of three that has worked so well with FONC in recent years have either been moved elsewhere or taken early retirement. Southwark have now decided to engage grounds maintenance contractors Quodron to carry out work to all three Southwark cemeteries, including Nunhead. At Nunhead they are required to work to the existing rolling ten year maintenance plan previously agreed between Southwark, FONC and the Heritage Lottery Fund advisers. Two Quodron staff will now be based permanently at Nunhead to work exclusively on site.

Previous experience has shown that contractors need close supervision in delivering the Council's objectives. We are very pleased, therefore, that the contractors at four sites, including the three cemeteries, will be supervised by Southwark employees Candy Edwards and Mark Thompson. They too will be based at the Limesford Road Portakabin and we are told that they expect to spend nearly 60% of their time at Nunhead. Candy and Mark have many years of experience of ecological management of sites in Southwark, most recently at Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park adjacent to the Elephant and Castle where they developed an excellent relationship with the group of Friends there. GMH's loss appears, therefore, to be our gain! Candy and Mark started in post at the beginning of July and have already attended a meeting of the FONC General Committee, along with Avril Kirby, and the FONC Voluntary Work Sub-Committee that plans our work on site. We have also had a familiarisation walk around the cemetery and Candy and Mark also attended a recent meeting with the LBS licensing team to discuss events such as the Open Day, film festival and other potential events on site (about which hopefully more in the next issue).

At the same time Southwark is once again trying to wrestle with the issue of continued provision of burial space in the borough over the next few years with reduced financial resources. It is thus currently carrying out a public consultation exercise. To quote from Southwark's website:

'We have an urgent situation as our cemeteries are nearly full. We want to make the right decision for the future of the burial service in Southwark. There are several options that offer possible solutions to the challenge and this borough-wide public consultation is to gather views from residents about the future of the borough's cemetery service. These eight options are explained in full for your reference. The consultation will provide an opportunity to have a conversation with residents about the lack of burial space in the borough and consider the options for addressing it'.

The options are explained and can be found on the website at:

www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200032/deaths_funerals_and_cremations/2231/the_future_of_southwarks_cemeteries/2

The options include the re-use of existing burial space, on which FONC has rather foresightedly expressed its views in respect of Nunhead in our 'Burial Policy' document endorsed by our AGM in 2009 and submitted to Southwark for consideration. Southwark have already said that they do not think that re-use of burial space at Nunhead is a viable option. An alternative is to bring open space purchased for burial use at Honor Oak, but temporarily set out as playing fields, back into use for burials. A very vociferous local group has been formed to oppose this option. There are other options such as giving up providing burial space altogether and purchasing new land, if it can be found, in conjunction with other boroughs. You can consider these options and submit your views by going to the website at:

Consultation https://forms.southwark.gov.uk/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=593

We believe that consultation is open until the end of September with the last of three public consultation meetings being held on 10th September from 1:00 to 3:00pm in a marquee at Honor Oak Recreation Ground. The FONC Committee would urge you to take the opportunity to make your views known to Southwark and, of course, to oppose any suggestion that Nunhead should be used for further large scale burial. ■

CEMETERY NEWS 3 - *by Jeff Hart*

Green Chain Walk signage on the move

In *FONC News* issue number 111 we reported on new signage installed at the cemetery gates to indicate the starting point of the new Green Chain Walk. Unfortunately we felt that these had been poorly sited and created an obstacle to the pedestrian gates as well as detracting from the visual amenity of James Bunstone Bunning's fine Grade II Listed entrance design. It is pleasing to report, therefore, that after consultation with the Green Chain Walk organisers the signage has now been moved to more suitable positions whilst being just as easy to follow.

Scots Martyrs' memorial garden

Visitors who have stopped to admire the Scots Martyrs memorial and to read the inspiring inscription that tells the bare bones of their story (for the full story see FONC's publication *The Scots Martyrs*) will have noticed some changes to the 'garden' behind the memorial. For a number of years,

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we have tried to establish in the area behind the Lottery funded bench a 'Scottish' planting regime consisting of heathers, ornamental thistles and other vaguely Scottish plantings. Unfortunately, the soil conditions, thieves and rampaging dogs have defeated us by not allowing the plantings sufficient opportunity to establish. When the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (to which FONC is affiliated) sent us 50 free native tree whips earlier in the year, we decided to plant them around the perimeter of the 'garden' to offer it some future protection: and in order to protect the trees until they establish we have placed temporary fencing around the 'garden' too. It may not look ideal but it has used some timber we had to hand and will be removed in due course.

The 'flint circle' comes and goes and comes back again

Just inside the Linden Grove entrance is a circular raised bed with a flint wall that matches the material used for the edging along the Main Avenue. This has had an uncertain history since the time that the cemetery was first laid out. It may have been part of Bunning's original design for the entrance but it seems to have come and gone over the years. Some old photographs show it still as a flint walled area with fantastic Victorian bedding and specimen plantings. At other times it appears far more modest or is not evident at all. When Southwark first acquired the cemetery in 1975, we are not sure whether it was there or not but shortly thereafter it became a simple red brick circular bed with nothing but rubble filling it. When FONC was first formed we cleared the rubble and put in some plants. That encouraged Southwark to put in some bedding plants at intervals but it was not until the 1999/2000 Lottery funded works that the 'flint circle' as we call it was re-instated. Since then, planting has again been intermittent, with FONC caring for and shaping the current central box hedge feature. Now, with new contractors on site (see other article), the flint circle has again been planted up with seasonal bedding. This may not be to every native species lovers' taste but FONC feels that the cemetery should reflect its history by including such 'Victorian' planting in this area which also gives visitors entering the cemetery a jolly welcome and an indication that the cemetery is cared for. Let's hope that the seasonal planting is renewed at regular intervals from now on!

Let there be light!

Southwark Council have installed at our request new lighting at the front part of the crypt. This makes entrance much safer and helps with maintenance access. However, it is fitted with a dimmer switch so that when visitors first enter we can still keep the dark atmosphere before gradually bringing up the lights to reveal the crypt's fascinating structure and history! ■

~ DIARY DATES ~

► OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

Saturday and Sunday 17th and 18th September 2011 from 1.00pm to 5pm on both days. A special feature will be 'Woodland Wonders' a public exhibition of sculptural installations in the Anglican chapel made from recycled wood from Nunhead Cemetery. We shall require volunteers to act as stewards etc. The more volunteers present on the day, so much the better. If you would like to help us please contact an officer or committee member.

► VISIT TO THE GARDENS OF PEACE (ISLAMIC CEMETERY) AND FOREST PARK CEMETERY

Sunday 9th October 2011. For further details and to book a place please email Cathy Mercer at treasurer@fonc.org.uk There is no charge for the tours, though a collection will be made for the Gardens of Peace, who are also giving us tea. We do hope you can join us. *See announcement on page 4.*

► ALL SOULS SERVICE

Sunday 6th November 2011. Ecumenical service to remember all the those buried at Nunhead Cemetery to be held in the cemetery chapel and led by the Revd Alan Bond of St Thomas the Apostle Church, Nunhead. Meet at the main entrance in Linden Grove at 3.00pm. *Everyone is most welcome.*

► FONC REMEMBRANCE DAY EVENT

Sunday 13th November 2011. Meet at the War Memorial by the Limesford Road entrance at 10.45am. British Legion wreaths will be laid at the main war graves plots to remember the dead of the two World Wars buried at Nunhead.

► 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 the next dates and more information please email Paul Dyer through 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.

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fonc@btconnect.com

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