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FONC News



Winter issue (December 2011 - February 2012) - 60p - Free to Members



Late autumn in Nunhead Cemetery (from a painting of 1977 by 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 contact 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.

THE SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS

Editor: Ron Woollacott *Subeditor:* Gwyneth Stokes

Contributors to this issue: Jeff Hart, RGS Hunter, Jolanta Jagiello, Graham Hilton Kedgley and Carole Tyrrell.

The views expressed in this publication are those of their individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the editor or subeditor or FONC's General Committee.

MONUMENTS

Inspiration for those left behind

'Graveyards are places of exquisite and exaggerated emotion and the best of places to find out about ourselves', wrote Michael Dobbs (best selling author, former politician, now Baron) in the *Sunday Mail* 'Weekend' magazine in February 2011. 'I love graveyards', he went on to say, 'they are places of exquisite and exaggerated emotion, full of dark images and pain for some but overflowing with delights for those who look for them'. He went on to claim that dying is not what it used to be, 'memorials have become anodyne, over-regulated and standardised' he said. 'Today we burn and scatter our dead. It's efficient, of course, and cheap but it lacks a certain magic. The family plots that are the treasure of the genealogist are no more'.

Accompanying the article was a photograph of a beautiful Nunhead angel - sadly vandalised since the photograph of her (opposite) was featured on a FONC picture postcard a dozen or so years ago.■



Photograph by Fay Katz as featured on a FONC postcard in 1999

Thanks to FONC members Stella Bond of Winchester and Maureen Woollacott of Nunhead for drawing the attention of the editor to the article in 'Weekend'.

CEMETERY NEWS 4 - by Jeff Hart

Anglican Chapel stone repairs

The harsh winter's snow transformed the cemetery into a truly magical winter wonderland for several weeks earlier in the year. During the so-called summer (Open Day 2011 was blessed with the best weather of the year!) the snow may have been just a memory, but the cemetery has had to deal with the aftermath. The soft honey-coloured Bath stone that is used as a decorative feature on the Anglican chapel suffered particularly from the affects of freezing and thawing. The entrance around the crypt entrance doors at the rear of the Chapel fared particularly badly with several large pieces breaking off and other areas starting to crumble. Thankfully, representations from FONC led to Southwark Council paying for the stonework to be repaired and a very good job the contractors made of it too.

Burial policy assurance for Nunhead

The consultation period on Southwark Council's proposals for the future provision of burial space in the Borough has now closed (see *FONC News* issue 113 and FONC website). The FONC General Committee has submitted its written views in response to the eight options put forward by Southwark and four FONC committee members attended the first of three public meetings to ensure that our views were fairly represented. Whilst we await the outcome of the Council's consideration, we at least have the comfort of assurances given by several Southwark councillors, and also by borough officers, in respect of the potential re-use of existing used grave spaces in Southwark's cemeteries. It has been categorically and publicly stated that there will be no re-use of grave space at Nunhead Cemetery and nor is any consideration being given to bring any unused part of Nunhead Cemetery into use for new burials. We shall, of course, report further as Southwark's burial policy is determined further.

New Woodland Trail for Nunhead

As part of the Woodland Wonders exhibition that ran in the Anglican chapel for the month of September, visitors were invited to be guided on a new tree trail in the cemetery or, alternatively, to follow the trail individually using a new tree trail leaflet produced by FONC. Some 15 different species of tree are indicated along a circular walk in the north-eastern corner of the cemetery by discreet wooden marker posts.

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Welsh Inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery

by Ron Woollacott

In the early 1970s, while on a one-man mission to record the more interesting and unusual monumental inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery, I came across dozens of headstones commemorating Welsh families who had settled in London in the 19th century. In fact there were so many Welsh surnames along this particular pathway, I decided to call it, as you might have guessed, the Welsh Path. (The numerous roads and paths in Nunhead Cemetery were not given names by the cemetery company and one of the first tasks FONC's General Committee gave me was to name them all. The names were agreed and are now in general use.)

I transcribed several Welsh inscriptions and showed them to a Welsh speaking colleague at my place of work and she translated some words but not all. Some words just didn't make sense. She suggested I had copied them incorrectly (which is a distinct possibility), or else they were misspelled by the families or stonemasons. Some of these inscriptions are shown below:

Er cof am Thomas Williams *fu farw awst* 20, 1904 49 *oed*; Thomas Henry Williams, *a fu farw Ebrill* 21, 1889, 7 *mus oed*; Jane Williams, *bu farw Mawrth* 17, 1889, 2 *oed*.

In loving memory of my dear husband John Davies, late of Erwyd Cottage, Ponterwyd near Aberystwyth, who entered into rest Jan 6th, 1902, aged 68. *Ai ddiwedd ef oedd tangnefed*.

In memory of Letitia, daughter of John and Jane Davies of Fort Road (Bermondsey), died Sept 4th, 1892, aged 14. *Am Hynny Byddwch Chuithau Barod Oanys. Yn Yr Awr Ni Thybioch y daw mab y dyn*.

Er cof anwyl am John Jones (dairyman), of 3 Old Kent Road, *Llundain*, *bu farw Rhagfyr* 2 1932, yn 58 *Mlwydd oed*.

Er serchus cof am John Davies, Lower Park Road, Peckham, *Ganwyd Medi* 23, 1833, *bu farw Mawrth* 12, 1904.

Some words and phrases were translated as follows: *A fu farw* = has died; *Awst* = August; *Ebrill* = April; *Mawrth* = March; *Rhagfyr* = December; *Medi* = September; *Er cof am* = In memory of; *Er cof anwyl am* = In dear memory of; *Er serchus cof am* = In loving memory of.

Can any Welsh speaking readers fully translate any of the Welsh inscriptions shown above ? (*Ed*).

RARE MOTH 'NOT SO RARE' IN NUNHEAD

On the 26th August 2011 an article appeared in the *South London Press* stating 'a rare winged visitor from the Channel Islands' had been spotted in Lambeth's Brockwell Park. Lambeth Council's parks officer is reported to have said that to see a Jersey Tiger moth was fantastic as they were hardly ever found in London. In fact, during the last few years there has been a number of sightings of this attractive and rather colourful moth in the Nunhead area including the cemetery. I saw my first Jersey Tiger moth in the



Jersey Tiger moth (Euplagia quadripunctaria) (photos: Ron Woollacott)

back garden of my house at Nunhead in 2008, and several more in subsequent years. This year at least half a dozen were seen fluttering around both my front and back gardens for several days in August. One specimen alighted on the front window of my house thus enabling me to take the two photographs shown above. The Jersey Tiger moth (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*) has cream stripes on a dark brown background and bright red underwings and flies both at night and during the daytime. RW

~ DOT WINTERS ~ RIP ~

Mrs Dorothy Winters, better known as Dot Winters, collapsed and died while out shopping on Thursday, 6th October 2011, aged 76. Dot, who was a keen supporter and member of FONC, was a Labour councillor for the former Basset ward in Nunhead in the 1980s and Mayor of Southwark in 1987. Dot was born in Nunhead, and her late husband, Alf, a keen horologist, ran the Clock Shop (long since closed) in Evelina Road, Nunhead.

BENJAMIN KEDGLEY OF THE BOROUGH MARKET, SOUTHWARK *by Graham Hilton Kedgley of Canada*

Selling peas and potatoes, plus I am sure other vegetables, cannot have been too bad a business even in the 1800s, for every indication is that my great-great-grandfather, Benjamin and his family lived a very comfortable life.

Benjamin Kedgley was born in Ipswich, Suffolk, in 1802, but somewhere along the way either his family or Benjamin himself moved to London and set up in the peas and potatoes business in the Borough Market, in the parish of St Saviour's, Southwark. The family is fortunate to still have a piece of stationery from the business which states that the firm was established by Benjamin at No 5 Stoney Street in the Borough Market and at No 125 Commercial Street, Spitalfields. Also in the family's possession are two tokens (rather like coins): one is for a shilling and the other for two shillings. Both have 'Kedgley the Boro' Market' on them and were made by R Neal of No 19 Percival Street specifically for use by Benjamin's business.

No 5 Stoney Street is the only surviving original building in the Borough



The Kedgley vault photographed by Ron Woollacott in 1997

continued on next page

Market. In chapter 10 of the *Survey of London*, Volume XXII - *Bankside - the Parishes of St Saviour and Christ Church, Southwark*, it is recorded that No 5 Stoney Street was purchased by Benjamin in 1872.

While there were living quarters at No 5 Stoney Street, it is not known if he ever lived there with his family. What we do know is that he was living at Portland House, New Cross Road, in the parish of St Paul's, Deptford, Kent, at the time of his death in 1875, and was interred at Nunhead Cemetery in a burial vault, grave number 13377, square 96.

Like so many folks of the era, Benjamin and his wife Amelia *née* Adams, had a large family, some of whom died as children.

Benjamin must have been an interesting fellow and a good community man. On a foundation stone in West Dulwich recording the erection of St Saviour's almshouses and chapel, which were removed from Southwark in the years 1862 and 1863, he is shown as a warden. ■

~ *Book Review* ~

Freemasonry & the Enlightenment: Architecture, Symbols, and Influences

A new book by Professor James Stevens Curl

This wide-ranging, thorough and beautifully illustrated study of Freemasonry's influence on Western culture puts into context a movement that has left a significant legacy. Building on his earlier work published in 1991, Professor Curl describes how aspects of Freemasonic ideas have permeated the design of buildings, parks, gardens, and cemeteries, as well as other art-forms from literature to the performing arts.

The chapters relating to the development of cemeteries will be of particular interest to readers of *FONC News*. Professor Curl informs us that the Freemason and Theorist, Quatremère de Quincy, favoured the establishment of catacombs, and was the leading light in the transformation of Soufflot's great church of Sainte-Geneviève into the national *Panthéon*.

Professor Curl says that in terms of allusion, British cemeteries are less obviously Masonic than those of France and Italy, although Highgate Cemetery has its spectacularly sublime Egyptian Avenue and Cedar of Lebanon catacombs, and the entrance gates and lodges in the Egyptian style at Abney Park Cemetery are overtly Masonic.

RW

Hardback - 384pp 194 illus. ISBN 978-1-905286-45-4 Historical Publications, 32 Ellington Street, London, N7 8PL £45 plus p&p £6 (UK) £11 (Europe) £21 (rest of world). website www.historicalpublications.co.uk

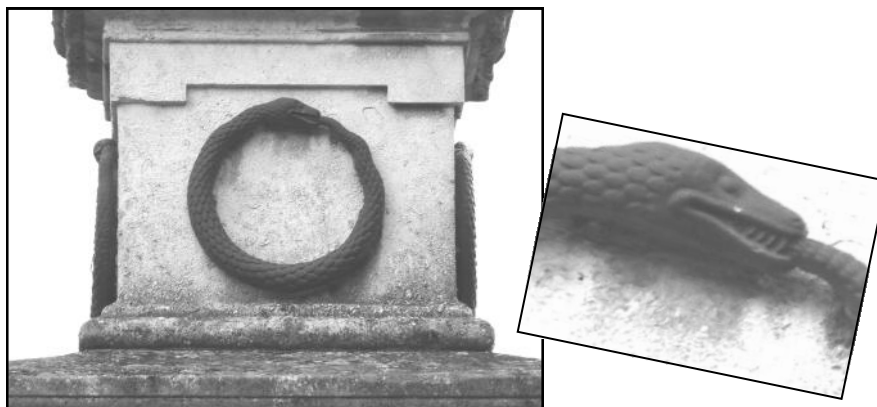
SERPENT EATING ITS TAIL (UROBORUS)

The Portland stone piers at the entrance to Nunhead Cemetery are adorned with inverted cast iron torches, symbolic of the extinguishing of life, and the serpent eating/biting its own tail on the die of the pedestal symbolises eternity. Soon after FONC was established in 1981 we chose the serpent symbol as our logo. Committee member, Rex Batten, the author of *Nunhead Remembered - A collection of stories, anecdotes and observations from Nunhead Cemetery*, published by FONC in 1995, was intrigued by the serpent symbol and wrote to the British Museum for more information. Dr Richard Parkinson, Assistant Keeper, Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, replied with the following explanation:

The serpent as a symbol of eternity derives from the *Hieroglyphica of Horapollo* (I i), written in the 5th century AD in Alexandria by a Hellenist. The text was very influential from the 15th century onwards, and helped perpetuate the mistaken belief that hieroglyphs were symbolic. Many of Horapollo's explanations are widely inaccurate....

The symbol of 'eternity' may derive from the fact that the Egyptian word *dt* was spelled with a serpent. A good description of this subject is E Ivesen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition* (Princeton 1993).

Dr Parkinson went on to say that he doubted if the designer of the cemetery gate piers (James Bunstone Bunning FSA 1802-63) will have been conscious of 'the symbols' specifically Egyptian pseudo-Egyptian ancestry'.



Cast-iron uroborus (serpent eating its own tail) on the die of the pedestal at the gates of Nunhead Cemetery (photos: Ron Woollacott)

Woodland Wonders Review

by Jolanta Jagiello

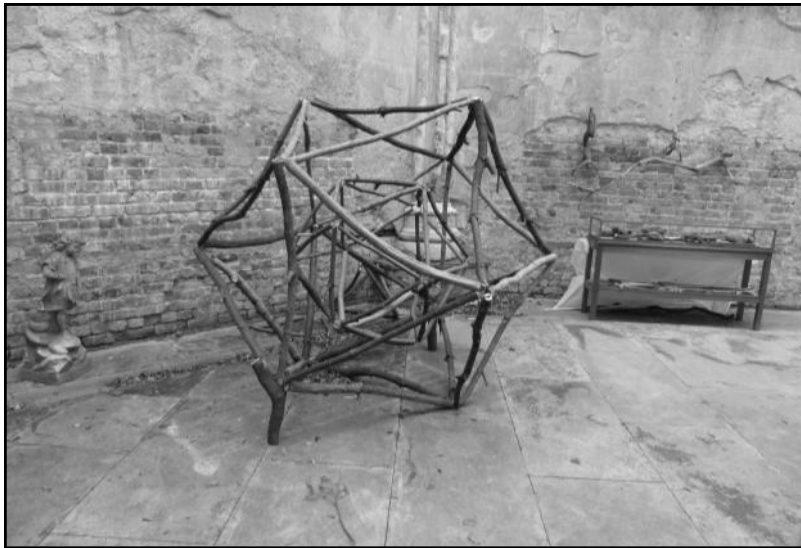
Woodland Wonders: *A public art exhibition of woodland installations by 15 artists in Nunhead Cemetery's Anglican chapel celebrating Nunhead Cemetery, accompanied by woodland tours over the weekends in September 2011, curated by Jolanta Jagiello.*

The exhibition was enjoyed by 1,400 local people, dog owners and their dogs, and new visitors who would not normally have access to high quality art outside of galleries and museums. What was particularly satisfying was that dog owners were allowed to bring their dog into the exhibition space to enjoy the exhibition with their pet. Families were welcome and children enjoyed the excitement of engaging with artworks. Runners detoured to take the exhibition in. The sound piece 'Mono-log' by Julia Peat was very engaging and funny, and popular with visitors. Open House Weekend drew about 485 visitors who were spoilt for choice with: tours up the turret tower; crypt tours, woodland tours and FONC general tours, as well as a performance from Calum F Kerr as Jem Ward (boxer, painter, violinist) one of the Nunhead Notables, and poetry readings by Narayani L Guibarra and Rebecca Rouillard. The exhibition ended on the last weekend in September with the Blake Poets, and international renowned Iraqi poet Adnan Al-Sayegh reading his poetry in Arabic with the translation into English read by Jill Rock.

This exhibition was funded by Southwark Council's Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Council Fund 2011-2012. Over 40 visitors enjoyed the guided woodland trail tours led by Fay Roberts, Tim Stevenson, and Jeff Hart. The woodland trail is now available for visitors to go around by themselves accompanied with a leaflet written by Carol Stevenson.

A selection of observations from the 'Comments Book' expressed visitors' appreciation of the exhibition, the artworks, tours, and the imagination of the artists. One of the visitors, Arijan Sahar, left the following comment which summarises the magic of the show: 'Surprisingly magical exhibition with a roof to the sky! Loved the transformative elements of the "woods" taking on a human form in a burial site, such as the bird made from twigs + leaves. The human CT scan of a skeleton made from bark! Liked seeing the trees from the path as you approach – almost as wreaths! The sculptural skills of the artists and assemblage reflect and use the space to superb effect. Well done all!'

The next planned exhibition is the 'Magnificent Seven Deadly Sins' in the Stearns Mausoleum during Open Day on Saturday 19th May 2012.■



Just two of the installations in the Anglican chapel at Nunhead Cemetery during the Woodland Wonders public art exhibition in September 2011. The sculpture at the top of the page is part of 'In Living Memory' by Everton Wright and the work shown directly above is 'Platonic Branches' by Mike Hoath.

Photographs: Ron Woollacott

GLIMPSES OF GALLOWAY GRAVES

(part two) by R G S Hunter

With this issue we continue our visit to the Dumfries and Galloway region of southwest Scotland and look at two more old and interesting graveyards with our guide Bob Hunter.

GATEHOUSE-OF-FLEET

The road leading to this graveyard carries the appropriate name of Memory Lane. Among people buried here who served overseas was Sir Philip James Macdonnell (1873-1940), an Oxford graduate, 1st class modern history 1894, and president of the Union in 1895. He was called to the Bar (Gray's Inn) in 1900. He was a war correspondent for *The Times* in South Africa 1900-02, and became secretary to the Transvaal Native Commission in 1903; public prosecutor 1908-18, and high court judge in Northern Rhodesia 1918-27. He moved to Trinidad and Tobago to serve as chief justice, and was knighted in 1925, and appointed PC in 1939.

Another local man who served overseas was David Mann Jack MD, a son of the parish minister, who was a surgeon-major in the Indian Medical Service in the 1850s. He died in 1890.

Sometimes the person who erects a tombstone seems to figure more largely than the person being commemorated. One such was William McNeil who was described as 'the erector' of the memorial to his daughter who died in 1874. When he died in 1919 at the age of 77 he was described as 'the erector', and when his wife *née* Walker, died in 1932 at the age of 89, she was noted as 'the wife of the erector'.



Grave of Sir Philip James Macdonnell

Photo: RGS Hunter

OLD ST CUTHBERT'S, KIRKCUDBRIGHT

This is another site I visited in search of the Covenanters. Here lie two martyrs, Robert Smith and William Hounture (Hunter), hanged and cruelly beheaded by the infamous Grahame of Claverhouse in 1684, after the Auchencloy skirmish. This is one of the largest graveyards I have visited in this area, but I shall mention only two other interesting burials. The first is that of Edward Atkinson Hornel (1864-1933), the famous artist, a member of the 'Glasgow Boys' group, who was born in Australia where his parents had emigrated but who returned to their native Kirkcudbright, and where he settled at Broughton House, a near neighbour of Jessie M King and her husband, E A Taylor. Together these artists were responsible for establishing Kirkcudbright as a haven for artists which continues to this day. Although Hornel is known for his paintings of local scenes, he travelled widely, especially to Japan, and is equally famous for his evocative expressions based on his interpretation of Japanese life. The Hornel memorial also commemorates some of his ancestors who share this site.



Grave of E A Hornel (artist)

Photo: RGS Hunter

Perhaps of more general interest is the resting place of William 'Billy' Marshall (c,1671-1792), King of the Gypsies, who we are told passed the age of 120. On the back of his tombstone are carved rams' horns and spoons, some of his specialities when engaged as a tinker, but he could work in wood and metals also. He led a very colourful life, surviving adventures overseas with the army and navy (volunteer or pressed man?), from which services he freely absconded when he needed to meet fellow gypsies at special events. He also survived polygamy, some 17 wives or so, but that did not prevent him fathering an unknown number of illegitimate children, including four after he had passed his 100th birthday. Billy was involved in politics, including campaigning against landlords who built walls to keep off undesirables; he organised gangs to tip over such walls. Smuggling was another activity where he was involved helping a famous smuggler, Yawkins or Hawkins, who became the inspiration for Dirk Hatterjack in Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*. In the same novel Meg Merrilies, an old gypsy, was based on Billy Marshall's favourite wife, Flora.

to be continued

CEMETERY NEWS 4 - continued from page 4

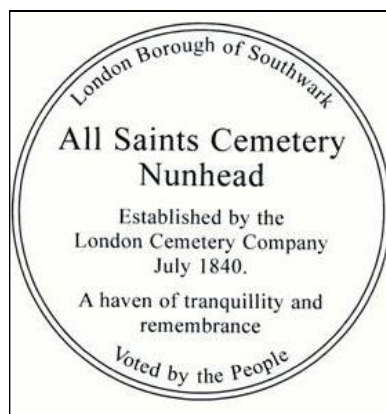
New Woodland Trail for Nunhead (continued)

The numbered posts relate to information given on each of the tree species in the tree trail leaflet, which is now available for sale for a mere 20p, the printing costs having been met from the grant given by Southwark to mount the Woodland Wonder exhibition. The leaflet also includes a simple quiz question on each species, the answers to which will be kept on the publications stall or can be found on the FONC website. Originally the tree trail was intended to be available only for the duration of the art exhibition but so popular did it prove that it will be retained for the foreseeable future and FONC guides will be leading several specific 'Tree Trail' tours next year in addition to the usual monthly tours.

Blue Plaque award placed at Nunhead cemetery

Last year, Southwark Council invited nominations and votes from the public on their favourite places in the Borough of Southwark. Of course, FONC members already know that the cemetery is among our many visitors' favourite places – including Dulwich resident, comedienne Jo Brand! But we were delighted that Nunhead Cemetery was voted among the top ten favourite sites leading to the award of a specially commissioned Southwark Blue Plaque to commemorate this achievement. Southwark consulted FONC on the wording placed in the centre of the

plaque and accepted our suggestion as shown here. But where to place the plaque on site? Southwark's favoured option of using one of the Portland Stone entrance gate pillars on Linden Grove was rejected because it would need listed buildings consent as the entrance is a Grade II listed structure. In the Anglican chapel was considered too hidden from public view and the flint circle wall too exposed to possible vandalism. FONC's suggestion of placing the plaque in the



grounds of the ruined East Lodge, where it could be easily seen from Linden Grove whilst protected from being interfered with was adopted. Rather than Southwark having to meet the cost of couriering the plaque to the cemetery and paying someone to erect it, FONC volunteers collected the plaque and have fixed it to the small brick electricity cabinet in the East Lodge grounds

adjacent to the pedestrian entrance at Linden Grove. We will shortly be screeding the whole electricity cabinet around the plaque to give it a smart setting for the future.

A sign of the times!

Regular visitors to the cemetery entering by the Linden Grove pedestrian gates may notice that something looks a little different, perhaps without quite being able to put their finger on what has changed. Certainly, when our chairman Ron Woollacott was invited to opine, whilst he clearly saw the placement of the new blue plaque (see above), he did not realise that we had removed the huge scaffold structure holding the notice-boards about the Lottery funded restoration project in the cemetery. These boards were about 6' x 10' each, standing about 25' high in total and were erected in 1999 when the Lottery funded work commenced. Ten years after completion, and needing to find a prominent home for the blue plaque, it finally dawned on our work-day volunteers that the notice-boards were no longer needed and would hugely improve the visual amenity of the entrance gates if they were removed. We were up to the challenge, when we remembered that local FONC supporter Joe Olley is a professional scaffolder. The whole family turned out on one of our regular Sunday work-days and by the end of the morning had not only taken the whole signage and scaffolding down but re-used the scaffold poles to replace the timber fencing erected around the 'moat' of the East Lodge which by now was itself deteriorating badly. We are very grateful to the Olley family for their efforts which have really improved the visual amenity of the entrance gates as a result.

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF CEMETERY FRIENDS

This year's Annual General Meeting of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF) was held at Plymouth in June and hosted by the Friends and Trust of Ford Park Cemetery. Thirty-five delegates attended representing 12 member groups, with four associates. FONC was represented by co-ordinator Jeff Hart. FONC members Gwyneth Stokes and Carol Stevenson, attended in their capacity of NFCF secretary and newsletter editor.

The business meeting was preceded by a tour of Ford Park Cemetery and lunch. The main meeting was held in the Anglican chapel. The Federation's chairman, Arthur Tait, thanked the Friends of Ford Park for their hospitality and congratulated them on the impressive restoration of the chapel, which features an impressive memorial to the civilian war dead, and restoration of the cemetery achieved by their hard work.

A VISIT TO THE GARDENS OF PEACE

A MUSLIM CEMETERY - 9th OCTOBER 2011

by Carole Tyrrell

After a rainy start the skies cleared and we enjoyed blue skies and sunshine throughout our visit to the Gardens of Peace. This is the UK's largest Muslim cemetery and is based in Hainault. It's built on what was once an old quarry and covers 21.5 acres with space for 10,000 burials. Since 2002 they have carried out nearly 5000 burials and have plans to expand eventually. Cremation is forbidden in the Muslim faith. The building and creation of the cemetery was financed by donations and loans and is owned and run by the Gardens of Peace Muslim Cemetery Trust. The cemetery staff were very welcoming and our guide, Taz, was extremely enthusiastic and knowledgeable and met us in their new building where the funeral preparations take place.

The Gardens are, in many ways, very reminiscent of a Victorian cemetery in their landscaping, for which they have won awards, and also in their plantings of trees and flowers. We saw holly oaks and olives amongst others and roses, important symbols in the Muslim faith, made bright splashes of colour. Water is also important to Muslims and a river, a former canalised ditch, ran through the cemetery.

A Muslim funeral and burial is very different to a conventional Western one and Taz explained the procedure. The burial must take place as soon as possible after death and can sometimes be done in as little as 24 hours. The main steps are washing the de-



The Gardens of Peace. Photo: Carole Tyrrell

ceased's body, shrouding, the performance of the funeral prayer and then burial. Washing and shrouding are performed only by selected relatives and community members due to the intimacy of the acts.

Firstly, the body is prepared in the Hall of Remembrance by the relatives as washing the body is seen as the final act of kindness towards the deceased. No embalming is done as it impedes the body's decay. The washing of the body has a strict procedure. Hands, feet, arms to elbow, face, head and mouth. These are all performed three times. The body is then washed again before being laid out and then wrapped in white cotton shrouds, known as Kafans. The mourners will line up in rows behind painted lines in the open air as the Imam, or prayer leader, performs the funeral prayer outside. He stands in front of the deceased and facing away from the worshippers. This is performed for the deceased and not to them as the Gardens of Peace website makes clear. The male mourners then accompany the body to the graveside where the Imam will say a final prayer at the graveside.

The shrouded body is placed on a stretcher and lowered in and then turned on its right hand side to face Mecca. The Muslim faith dictates that everything must be done on this side as the left hand is associated with being unclean. Then the grave is allowed to settle before a simple white stone recording the deceased's name and day of death, both by the Western and Muslim calendars, is placed on the grave. The rows of burials, both men and women, are in organised, regimented rows without decoration. However we did see some flowers here and there although the practice is discouraged. If the deceased has no family members then the cemetery staff will take care of the preparations and they will be buried as normal. Official mourning will last three days.

The babies and children's sections with their small burial plots were the most poignant. Muslims believe that if a baby has breathed then it must be treated as a living being and the days of their short lives are recorded on the same type of stone as the adults.

Taz quoted burial prices for adults and children and explained that there was food after the funeral so that in some ways this resembled a wake. He added that at the sacred Muslim festival of EID the bereaved visit the Gardens to pray and pay respects.

The lasting impression was of a woodland burial and the Gardens of Peace felt aptly named. It was one of the most pleasant and tranquil cemeteries that we had ever visited. ■

The above visit was just one of many which Cathy Mercer has organised for FONC members over the years. Many thanks Cathy. Ed.

~~ *BURIED AT NUNHEAD, No 17* ~~

ADA BLANCHE (1863-1953)

**ACTRESS & SINGER WHO APPEARED ALONGSIDE SUCH
MUSIC-HALL GREATS AS MARIE LLOYD & DAN LENO**

by Ron Woollacott

Ada Blanche, whose real name was Ada Cecilia Blanche Adams, was born in Brixton on 16th July 1863, the daughter of music-hall manager Sam Adams and his wife Sarah Ann Adams *née* Harris, a well-known singer whose stage name was Cicely Nott.

Ada first went on stage in her teens, appearing in children's pantomimes at the Adelphi Theatre and Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. In 1882 she took over the soprano part of Fiametta to her mother's Peronella in Emily Soldene's touring company's performance of *Boccaccio*, after which she was usually engaged in pantomime as principal boy.

In 1886 she made her first appearance at the Gaiety Theatre, and in her twenties she toured Britain, later returning to London to play the music-halls, and as the principal boy in pantomimes at Drury Lane alongside such music-hall greats as Marie Lloyd, Dan Leno, and Little Tich,

In 1893 Ada played Little Boy Blue at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in Gus Harris's outlandishly named pantomime *Little Bo Peep, Little Red Riding Hood and Hop o' my Thumb*. Marie Lloyd starred as Little Red Riding Hood, Little Tich was Hop o' my Thumb, and Dan Leno played Daddy Thumb. In 1894 Ada starred in *Robinson Crusoe*, another Harris pantomime alongside Marie Lloyd. It was a financial failure and Harris lost £30,000 on the show. The musical director blamed the introduction of too many music-hall songs into the show: 'Ada Blanche excepted, each of the artistes introduced songs totally foreign to the story.....and was thoroughly unsuited to children'.

Ada played Mrs Baxter Brown in *The Pearl Girl* in 1913, and in 1921 she starred as Lady Elizabeth Weston at the Empire Theatre alongside Thorpe Bates in Montague Phillips's light romantic opera *The Rebel Maid*.

Ada Blanche never married. She died at Chiswick on New Year's Day 1953, in her 90th year. She is buried in the same grave as her mother, brother and her maternal grandparents. Her parents separated when Ada was a child. Her father, the music-hall proprietor, Sam Adams, died in 1893 and was buried in West Norwood Cemetery. Ada Blanche was aunt to the celebrated actress and comedienne Dame Cicely Courtneidge (1893-1980).■

Grave No 25248 Sq 125. Headstone on the west side of main avenue.

~ DIARY DATES ~

► 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 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 may take up to two hours. Publications on sale, weather and volunteers permitting (*please see important notice below*).

► ANNUAL OPEN DAY (NUNHEAD CEMETERY) 2012

Saturday 19th May 2012 - 11am to 5pm. Please make a note in your 2012 diary.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The December tour will now take place on **Tuesday 27th December 2011 at 2.15pm and NOT on the last Sunday in December which is Christmas Day.**

GRAND CHRISTMAS SOCIAL & 30th ANNIVERSARY EVENT

Come and celebrate our 30th anniversary at the
Old Nun's Head (function room), Nunhead Green, London, SE15
on Thursday 15th December 2011 starting at 7.00pm

Friends welcome

We hope to show a short 'Super 8mm' cine film
NUNHEAD CEMETERY - SEASONS
filmed in 1981 (when we were just starting out)

Seasonal refreshments (food only) will be provided, however,
liquid refreshments will be obtainable from the downstairs bar

(Donations to offset costs will be appreciated)

~ CONTACTS ~

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Please send all letters, news items and feature articles for publication to:
fonc@btconnect.com

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Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)

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www.fonc.org.uk

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