

FONC News



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Open Day in Nunhead Cemetery 2012 - Photo: Ron Woollacott

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The Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, 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 to March 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 7525 5600.

Editor: Ron Woollacott. **Subeditor:** Gwyneth Stokes.

Contributors to this issue:

Rex Batten, Jeff Hart, Jolanta Jagiello, Richard Jones, Cathy Mercer, Carol Stevenson and Myrtle Walter.

The editor, subeditor, and FONC's committee do not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by contributors.

Chairman's Annual Report

We have had another busy year, and with a site as extensive as Nunhead Cemetery, at least 52 acres, there is always something to be done to keep the cemetery looking attractive and welcoming to visitors. It is thanks to our enthusiastic team of volunteers co-ordinated by our Tim Stevenson and Southwark Council's gardeners, Candy and Mark, that it remains so. Several monuments have been restored, thanks to money secured from Southwark's Cleaner, Greener, Safer Scheme by our vice-chairman Carol Stevenson. Carol has also managed to obtain funds to restore two more prominent monuments on the Main Avenue which are in danger of toppling over. Work is expected to start soon.

We have also been in negotiations with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, spurred on by FONC member Edward Barclay, and our work-day volunteers assisted in clearing and improving the site of the British Forces First World War burial plot in square 89, which had been abandoned by the CWGC in the 1970s due to theft and vandalism. The CWGC hope to lay out the site in time for Remembrance Sunday in November.

Members and visitors will also have noticed a number of short posts in the cemetery relating to the new woodland trail. Committee member Jolanta Jagiello succeeded in obtaining funds to produce a tree trail leaflet and to train three volunteer guides. Our co-ordinator, Jeff Hart, has since been in touch with a signpost manufacturer and the temporary posts will soon be replaced by permanent markers. Jolanta has also co-ordinated a number of popular and well-attended art/sculpture exhibitions in the Anglican chapel and Stearns mausoleum.

It goes without saying that our Open Day in May is as popular as ever, and entails a lot of work before and on the day. Open House weekend held in September requires less organisation but still takes up a lot of the committee's time, and we always need more volunteers to assist us at both events. Other activities in which we have been involved since our last AGM in June

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2011 have included providing stewards for the open air film night in the cemetery, and assisting film makers and theatrical performers in giving access to the chapel etc, and locking up the chapel and cemetery afterwards. Committee member Malcolm Collins has often made himself available on such occasions. Monthly tours of Nunhead Cemetery continue to be popular thanks to guides John Turpin, Jeff Hart, Rex Batten, Tim Stevenson and Carole Tyrell. Tours of other interesting cemeteries are regularly organised for members by Cathy Mercer.

Grateful thanks to all our officers and members of the committee for the efficient way in which they have run our Society during the past year. Those not mentioned elsewhere in my report are Paul Dyer, monumental inscription recording co-ordinator, Jane Hart, John Collings, Jeremy Partington and Maureen Woollacott. A special thank you to Cathy Mercer for carrying out the ever daunting task of treasurer, and to George Young for the equally difficult task of auditing the accounts. Simon Mercer deserves our thanks for looking after FONC's membership records so efficiently. Thanks also to all those volunteers who staff the publications and information desk which celebrates its 21st birthday this year. We have an excellent website thanks to our webmaster Simon Quill - so, if you haven't already done so, why not check it out? www.fonc.org.uk

Donning my other hat as editor of *FONC News*, I should like to express my thanks to all those members who submit articles for publication and those who assist with the production and distribution of our journal including, Maureen Woollacott, Linda Martin, Simon Mercer, Gwyneth Stokes, Pat Manning, Peter Blount and Susan McQuail and of course to our many hand deliverers. Thanks also to Nicola Dunn who has recently taken over the role of co-ordinating hand deliveries from Susan.

Finally, a word of appreciation for Avril Kirby, the manager of Southwark's three cemeteries and crematorium, for her support and assistance throughout the year, and a big thank you to all our 850 plus members throughout to UK and abroad for continuing to support us in our work. ■

Ron Woollacott

FONC News publication dates

FONC News is published quarterly in September, December, March and June. Every effort is made to ensure it reaches members during the first two weeks of those months sometimes, however, it may be a little late in reaching you due to unforeseen circumstances beyond our control.

FONC AGM 2012 - REPORT

Our Annual General Meeting was held in the Function Room of the Old Nun's Head on Thursday 21st June. The Chairman welcomed everyone present and explained the structure of the evening's meeting. He introduced Carole Tyrrell who would take the minutes and Jeff Hart who would present the Annual Report on behalf of the General Committee. After the opening remarks and apologies for absence, the minutes of the 2011 AGM were read and adopted as a true record of that meeting.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNUAL REPORT *presented by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator.*

Membership: The current membership stood at 851, which showed a slight decline in the number of members, being eight fewer than last year.

Affiliations: We continue to be affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) through whom we obtain public liability insurance cover for all our activities within the cemetery and events attended offsite. We are also affiliated to the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE) and the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF).

Sunday Enquiry Desk and website: Our website provides information about the cemetery and FONC and is an essential link with the wider world under the direction of Simon Quill. The inquiry desk organised by Cathy Mercer runs every weekend during the summer, and is supported by a dedicated band of volunteers who answer inquiries and sell publications.

Open Day and Open House Weekend: The annual Open Day in May seems to come together miraculously, but it involves lots of hard work by many volunteers, particularly Tim and Carol Stevenson the organisers. Not expressly intended to raise funds, the Open Day does account for almost 25% of our annual income. The Open House Weekend in September drew greatly increased numbers of visitors by running an art exhibition 'Woodland Wonders' in the chapel at the same time.

Publicity and Media Coverage: There was much and varied media coverage for the cemetery and FONC over the year, including a slot on Radio 4, articles about the Scottish Martyrs memorial in the *Daily Mail* and an article with a photograph of a 'Nunhead Angel' in the *Mail on Sunday*.

FONC Meetings and Members' Visits: The General Committee held ten meetings, and the Voluntary Work Sub-Committee met quarterly during the year. The committee continues to meet at the Old Nun's Head, thanks to the

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generosity of the pub managers. The 2011 AGM enjoyed John Turpin's presentation on his new book *The Magnificent Seven*. The Christmas meeting celebrated the 30th anniversary of the founding of FONC, and a film of the cemetery made by Ron Woollacott in 1981 - the year in which FONC was founded - was screened. During the year Cathy Mercer organised a successful members' visit to the Islamic Garden of Peace in Essex.

FONC News: Our quarterly journal is issued in the first two weeks in March, June, September and December, thanks to our editorial team Ron Woollacott and Gwyneth Stokes, our printers Catford Print, and postal co-ordinators Pat Manning and Peter Blount, and hand delivery co-ordinator Susan McQuail and her worthy band of distributors. Susan retired earlier this year and her place has been taken by Nicola Dunn.

FONC Publications: We have published a reprint of *Victorian Valhalla*, the story of Camberwell Old Cemetery, plus an updated edition of *Burial Places in Southwark*. In conjunction with the 'Woodland Wonders' exhibition we have also published a re-working of our old tree trail leaflet.

Grave Search and Monumental Inscription Recording: Grave searches on site are now carried out by Southwark Council's staff who charge a fee for searching the burial records. We continue to receive inquiries from the public and give advice and assistance where possible. Monumental inscription recording isn't as well supported as it once was. Paul Dyer and his volunteers have amassed a large collection of inscriptions, but there are many thousands more to be recorded.

Guided Tours: Our monthly conducted tours remain as popular as ever, and we also offer tours for special interest groups. This year we have introduced specialist tours and tree trail tours.

Art and Education Projects: 'Woodland Wonders', a public art exhibition funded by the Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Council fund and curated by Jolanta Jagiello, was enjoyed by 1,400 people. We also successfully applied for a Team London grant to assist in improving the woodland trail signage. 'Magnificent Deadly Sins', another exhibition, this time held in the Stearns mausoleum on weekends in May was also very successful, and was attended by over 900 visitors. The show is archived on Jolanta Jagiello's website www.artgoingplaces.com A second Nunhead Free Film Festival event saw 400 people attending a screening of 'The Ladykillers' on a magical evening in September.

Religious Services: We need to revitalise the annual All Souls Service held in the chapel, organised by the Reverend Alan and Joan Bond, to improve the attendance, whilst the Remembrance Day and wreath laying event continues to grow in popularity.

Management of the cemetery by Southwark Council: The council undertook a series of public meetings, consulting on its review of burial policy in July at which FONC was well represented. The results of a questionnaire have yet to be published. We have submitted to Southwark Council our earlier proposed burial policy in relation to Nunhead and we have been reassured by councillors and officers that there would be no impact on Nunhead Cemetery. The contract for grounds maintenance has been awarded to a new contractor, with noticeable improvement in the quality and quantity of work under the direction of Southwark's staff, Candy and Mark.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The audited accounts were presented by Cathy Mercer, Hon Treasurer. This year's surplus reflected a healthy balance in FONC's accounts. Our auditor, George Young, had examined the accounts and was satisfied they were a true and fair view of FONC's financial affairs for the year ending 31st March 2012. The chairman proposed a vote of thanks to both Cathy Mercer and George Young. George agreed to continue as auditor for another year.

COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

In accordance with our Constitution all officers and committee members retire at the AGM and are eligible to stand for re-election. The following members were proposed, seconded and duly elected to serve another term of 12 months: John Collings, Malcolm Collins, Paul Dyer, Jane Hart, Jeff Hart (Co-ordinator), Jolanta Jagiello, Cathy Mercer (Hon Treasurer) Simon Mercer (Hon Membership Secretary), Jeremy Partington, Carol Stevenson (Vice-Chairman), Tim Stevenson, Gwyneth Stokes, Carole Tyrrell (Minutes Secretary), Maureen Woollacott, Ron Woollacott (Chairman). Rex Batten stood down, but agreed to continue as a non-voting co-opted member.

MOTION

A motion to increase the annual UK subscription from £2 to £3 was put to the meeting, and this was defeated by a substantial majority of those voting members present. *See report by Jeff Hart on page 21*

TALK BY STEPHEN HUMPHREY

The business part of the meeting was followed by light refreshments and an illustrated talk by Stephen Humphrey on the various ancient burial sites in Southwark. Stephen, who is a former archivist for Southwark Council and writes a regular column on Southwark's history in the *South London Press*, is an expert on Southwark's history and gave an interesting and well-received presentation which was very much appreciated.

VOLUNTARY WORK GROUP ANNUAL REPORT for the period 1st June 2011 to 31st May 2012

by Carol Stevenson

A lot of work was done in the past year, pruning trees and clearing fallen trees. We weeded and pulled up Japanese knotweed (there is a little less each year!) and cleared around monuments and along paths that were getting overgrown. We cleared around the pond, cut back growth so that there was still a view from viewpoints, scythed brambles and pulled up stumps that had been left.

To balance all this 'destruction' we also did some planting - honeysuckle and passion flowers around the big 'tools container', privet to fill a gap in the hedge by the bike rack (near the Scottish Martyrs monument), which included transplanting a very large privet from the site of the Blue Plaque, and helping with planting polyanthus in the stone circle near the entrance.

We carried out repairs to the Portakabin and toilet block, tools and equipment, and also to fencing and the edging of the Dissenters' triangular flowerbed. Once we were officially in drought the rains came, and we had to pump out the 'moat' that forms around the East Lodge.

The chapel required much sweeping up of leaves and fallen plaster, and in the crypt we tidied up and put fronts on several loculi where coffins were looking very sad. There were a few less exciting tasks such as clearing rubbish that is pushed through the railings, and shifting the last of the gravel that had been dumped opposite the chapel.

This year we had a number of special projects. For the Woodland Wonders art exhibition we reinstated the Tree Trail and put up signs to match the new leaflet. Nunhead Cemetery was awarded a Blue Plaque so we installed it on the electric supply box pillar in the grounds of the East Lodge, and screeded around it to help it show up. Before installing it we removed the old builders' and sponsors' signs, with the assistance of a member who is a professional scaffolder, and used the scaffold poles to improve the safety fencing around the lodge.

Another big project was to clear the site of the First World War site in square 89 ready for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to erect a new memorial. As part of the 'Big Society' some government departments were encouraged to do a volunteering task, and Jeremy Partington brought a group of colleagues from his department and spent a day clearing bramble in the 'Thirties Glade'.

As usual I must thank all our workday volunteers, old and new, who have

turned out whatever the weather (heat wave, downpour, snow etc) and who have achieved so much. Please keep coming back - Nunhead Cemetery needs you! It is a shame to see our numbers have been falling, with the result that we have managed no monument repairs this year, although there is plenty that needs doing. Last year 31 volunteers carried out 600 hours work in the cemetery.

New volunteers are always welcome, and you only need to do as much or as little as suits you. Meet us at the Portakabin, near the front entrance in Linden Grove and opposite the huge Scottish Martyrs monument, on the first Sunday of every month from 10am onwards. Please contact Openday@fonc.org.uk for more details. Finally, a big thank you to our cemetery staff, Candy and Mark, and contractors, Dennis and Michael. ■

WELSH INSCRIPTIONS IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

Mrs Myrtle Walter née Thomas of Margate, Kent writes:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the article in *FONC News* issue 114 about the Welsh inscriptions. I enclose a translation given me by a friend in Wales, and I note the article in issue No 115 which confirms my friend's contribution.

I wonder if you have started a debate, for I am very interested in trying to find out more about my own possible Welsh ancestry. My grandfather, Stanley Thomas, was born at an address off the Old Kent Road, and his father also lived there. My brother has been unable to trace any information further back than the 1850s. However, my friend told me that the Welsh were involved in the dairy industry and the girls were renowned for their skills in butter making. They brought the trade down to London, so obviously many settled there. It is interesting that John Jones, who died in 1932, was a dairyman of the Old Kent Road. He would have been born around 1874.

The other thought that my friend had was that the spellings of some of the inscriptions look as if they are not accurate Welsh. Therefore, were the relatives who commissioned the inscriptions themselves Welsh speaking? Had they by then forgotten the language, and had they got the wording from others who might not have been literate in Welsh? Perhaps they were English speaking but for the respect for the memory of an older relative who might have had a degree of Welsh language had the inscription written in Welsh as

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a connection with the Land of their Fathers? I will come up to the Welsh Path in case I can find anyone connected with my father's side of the family.

It is interesting to compare the following translations provided by Mrs Walter with those in the previous issues of *FONC News*.

Er cof am = in memory of

Fu farw awst 20, 1904, 49 oed = who died on 20th August 1904, aged 49

A fu farw Ebrill 21 1889, 7 mis (probably mis, not mus) oed = who died 21st April 1889, aged 7 months.

Bu farw Mawrth 17 1889, 2 oed = who died 17th March 1889, aged 2.

Ei (possibly not Ai) ddiwedd ef oed tangnefed (possibly tangnefedd?) = His end was peaceful, (or possibly) peace in the end.

Am hynny Byddwch Chwithau (probably not Chuiithau) Barod Canys (probably not Oanys). Yn Yr Awr Ni Thybioch y daw mab y dyn = Therefore Be Ye Also Ready. For in Such an Hour as ye think not the Son of Man Cometh (Matthew 24.44).

Er cof anwyl am = in beloved memory of

Llundain, bu farw Rhagfyr 2, 1932 yn 58 Mlwydd oed = London, who died on 2nd December 1932, aged 58 years.

Er serchus cof am = in loving memory of

Ganwyd Medi 23 1833, bu farw Mawrth 12 1904 = who was born 23rd September 1833, died March 12, 1904.

OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

*Saturday and Sunday 22nd and 23rd September 2012
from 1.00pm to 5.00pm on both days*

A special feature this year will be '**Diamond Decades**' a public art exhibition in the Anglican chapel in the year of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee - artworks inspired by the decades of her reign curated by Jolanta Jagiello. The crypt, chapel and tower will also be open to visitors, and there will be two general tours of the cemetery. *We shall require volunteers to act as stewards and to assist with the sale of publications etc.* Unlike the Open Day, Open House Weekend is usually a fairly low key event, but help is always needed. If you can assist us on either or both days please contact an officer or committee member. For contacts please see the back page.

NUNHEAD CEMETERY OPEN DAY 2012

by Ron Woollacott

This year's Open Day on the 19th May was our 27th. Our first Open Day was held on 16th August 1986 in conjunction with Southwark Council. We were not sure how it would work out. We organised two conducted tours which were very popular with visitors, and there were a several stalls from participating groups, but nothing like the numbers we now have. Southwark Council's Parks Department were present on that occasion and offered plants for sale (in those days the Council had its own nursery at Honor Oak, sadly long since closed). It was decided we should do it all again in 1987 but, unfortunately, Southwark Council pulled out and we were left to go it alone. Since then the Open Day has been organised and run by FONC with some input from the Council, and is now held in May.

This year we had record numbers of visitors, and the main avenue was lined on both sides with stalls from participating groups. Organisers Tim and Carol Stevenson ensure it continues to be as successful as ever with all the usual attractions, including publications for sale and a grave-search enquiry desk. We also had a full programme of musical events in the chapel, conducted tours of the cemetery and crypt, visits to the top of the chapel tower with splendid views over London, birds of prey, lots of plants for sale, an art exhibition in the mausoleum, woodcraft demonstrations, children's bug hunt, and lots of delicious homemade cakes and other goodies were available.

Our thanks to Jeff Hart for ensuring all goes well on the day as he struts up and down with his trusty megaphone, and to all concerned, participants and visitors alike, for making it such an enjoyable day.

The gods were indeed kind to us and the sun shone on a particularly pleasant day weather-wise in an otherwise sodden chilly spring and early summer. ■



Another year, another Bug Hunt

by Richard (Mr Bugman) Jones

Perhaps I should have been thinking about the long game, when we first started running Bug Hunts at Nunhead Cemetery's annual Open Day. I can't actually remember when we began. The consensus seems to pick 1988 as our starting point. The Open Day had been run for a couple of years before, but this was to be the big one, and the Bug Hunt was born.

The premise was easy: the kids would come up and collect a plastic container, see what bugs they could find whilst they wandered about through the huge overgrown burial ground, bring them back to the stall to have them identified by yours truly, and receive a really cool certificate with what they found, Latin names and all. We were mobbed. And we have been every year since.

At first, it was just me, a few photographs pinned to a notice board, and a simple trestle table. We were a bit more formal in them days. One dressed for the occasion, of course. I wore a blue suit and my favourite red bow-tie; I still wear it. I probably used a fountain pen to write the certificates.

I'm still not entirely sure what was going on with my long hair in 1990. I vaguely remember thinking it was my Oscar Wilde look. I just looked like my mother. We had splashed out on a table cloth, but the signs were still all hand-written.

Every so often we would be caught out by the weather. The Bug Hunt would become a Slug Hunt and I would have a raging cold from sitting in the drizzle. By 2002 we had a gazebo to offer some protection from the elements. My father would come and help with the hordes, and my children would loiter in the background, peering over at the prizes brought back by eager bug-hunters. I'd usually still wear a tie, but the seriously greying hair was starting to look like faded astroturf.

So here we are in 2012 — casual chic, sans tie, sans hat. My father has decided, aged 82, that he no longer fancies the long drive up into the madness of London's congested roads, so Lillian, my oldest daughter, has been roped in to help. She writes out the certificates as I breeze on about woodlouse names (*Porcellio scaber* = 'scabby little pig'), pretend to eat the occasional strawberry snail or describe in elaborate gory detail just how a parasitic wasp's maggots eat the poor caterpillar alive, from the inside, to a disgusted, but enthralled, five-year-old.

It's all great fun. It's exhausting, but immensely satisfying. Some of the kids come back year after year, and their parents proudly tell us that they

have kept all the Bug Hunt certificates going back to..... well, however many years it might be. And occasionally it really comes home to us how long this has all been going on — when someone arrives with her three-year-old, to do the bug hunt, just like she herself did it 25 years ago . ■

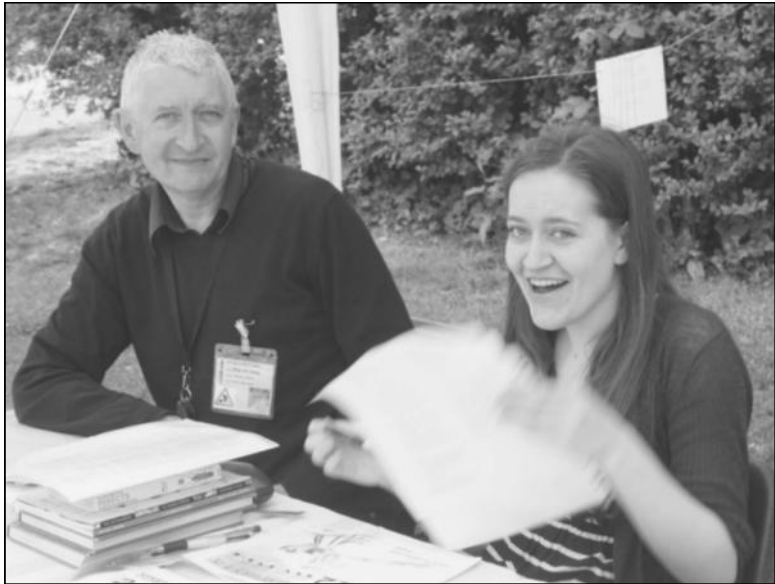


◀ *Richard 1988*

Richard 1990
▼



*Richard and
daughter Lillian
2012*
▼



NUNHEAD OPEN DAY 2012
REX BATTEN'S PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY OF
MEMORIALS & MONUMENTS

Visitors' comments and observations as heard by Rex Batten

This was the fifth year the large display of photographs showing symbols and the 'Language of Death and Resurrection' carved on gravestones has been exhibited at Open Day. Interest has grown each year. This is shown by simply quoting what was heard as visitors analysed the display:

'In the past I enjoyed walking around the cemetery and would simply see the carvings on the headstones as decoration. Now I am beginning to understand that they have meaning.' A group were looking at the headstone carvings illustrating professions and occupations. 'I am interested in cricket and knew about Bobby Abel (the famous Surrey and England cricketer known as 'The Guv'nor') and I'd seen his grave, but until I saw these pictures I'd never noticed the stumps and crossed cricket bats carved on the headstone of his grave.'



Photo: Ron Woollacott

'Look there's a fireman's helmet and a metal worker's muscular arm with a hammer, and a rifle. I believe, up at the top of the hill, there's a ship on a headstone. They are so beautifully hand carved.'

On another occasion 'hands in parting' was the centre of interest. 'They are pretty standard. Could have been carved by the same man.'

'No, this carving here is very different.' The speaker pointed to a particular photograph. 'It's an old lady's hand; see how tight the wedding ring is on her finger. I would class that as something special.'

'I've just seen one up that path' interjected a newcomer and the speaker pointed. 'The woman had a laced cuff and the man's shirt cuff is done up with a button. That has to be a one-off.'

I felt I had to intervene and say what had happened on one of my guided tours. We had reached the Mullins tomb up the hill and past the mausoleum and I pointed to the 'hands in parting' explaining it had come from ancient Greek art. 'Have you really looked at it?' asked one member of the tour. I was silent I had seen it a hundred times. 'He is not just holding his wife's

hand, he is gripping it, trying to hold her back from death.' I looked and for the first time saw what has to be a work of art carved by their son Edwin Roscoe Mullins.

A little later interest focused on the large display of angels and life size figures perfectly described by Shakespeare 'like Patience on a monument smiling at grief'.

'These angels are all female.' 'I hadn't noticed.'

'All Biblical angels are male!' A shrug of the shoulders was the only reaction.

Then came the observation that all the carved figures are feminine.

'I understand most of them were carved in Italy.'

'It might explain their clothing.'

'Does that need an explanation?'

'It would have hardly been accepted as decent Victorianism. I know they are no longer there but the couple who were lying over the stone coffin on the John Allan tomb would have raised a few eyebrows had they been seen walking up the Main Avenue.'

'You must be right. I have been told, and believe it to be true, that a lady would not have been allowed into the cemetery unless she was wearing a hat!'

'But such rules do not apply to art!'

'I suggest you take a walk. Go along to the Scout Memorial past the WW1 soldiers' graves, turn right onto the path that would lead you to the top of the hill. Only a little way along the path look to your right and there you'll experience what Nunhead is all about.' 'Do tell.'

'I've just been there. The gravestones are all covered and lost in the undergrowth but above it standing alone is the figure at peace with the world. Against a backcloth of bushes catching the late afternoon sunlight fluttering through the trees is this marble figure of a girl, who has been standing there for over a century. That scene told me what Nunhead is. Timeless, beautiful where one can come to terms with life and death.'

to be continued



*Open Day 2012 . John Mathewson (seated) and Rex Batten
Photo: Ron Woollacott*

FONC VISIT TO BECKENHAM CEMETERY SUNDAY 30th JUNE 2012 *by Cathy Mercer*

The sun shone on our visit - unusual for this summer but nevertheless very welcome. There were 20 of us, including our excellent guide John Hickman, who managed both to interest and impress us with his entertaining delivery and extensive knowledge.

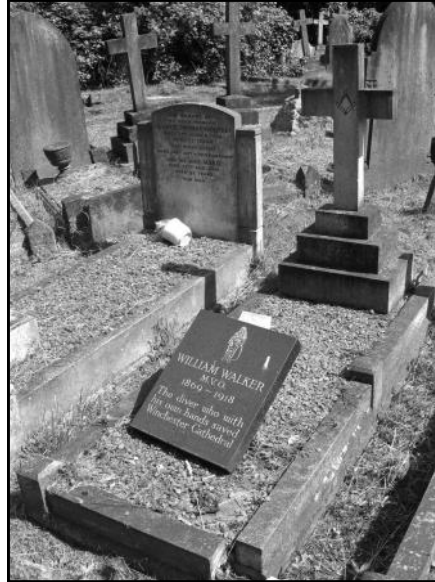


Grave of Dr W G Grace (cricketer)

dral, and Arthur Tooth, vicar of St James' Church, Hatcham, in the 1870s, whose insistence on High Church Communion led to mass riots and his temporary imprisonment.

He took us back to the Zulu Wars with the grave of Frank Bourne, last known survivor of the Battle of Rorke's Drift, and the grave of Barbara Kendal, heroine of Lucknow

John guided us round the Victorian graves of the St John's corner of the cemetery, connected with St John's Church in Upper Norwood. We visited the 'star' graves of cricketer W G Grace and lavatory salesman Thomas Crapper. We were also introduced to some lesser known incumbents such as William Walker, the diver who worked for five years on the rescue of Winchester Cathed-



*Grave of William Walker MVO (diver)
who saved Winchester Cathedral*

during the Indian Mutiny.

John not only pointed out eminent Victorians. He also introduced us to the butterflies and plants of the cemetery, filled us in on Victorian farming methods and pointed out the lovely view south towards Shirley Windmill. This was indeed a visit to the urban and rural past of Norwood. Many thanks to John for his excellent tour! ■

To plan your own visit and to find out more please see:

www.beckenhamcrematorium.co.uk

THE SUNDAY INQUIRY DESK

by Cathy Mercer

The FONC inquiry/publications desk has been going for almost 21 years. It is a very simple idea: a book stall in the cemetery on Sunday afternoons for people to access information, ask questions, meet members of FONC and buy books and postcards.

We are very pleased that three new volunteers have recently signed up to help on the inquiry desk and we now have enough volunteers to have a display every Sunday, except December - February when we're only there for the guided tours due the cold weather.

Many thanks to Malcolm, Fran, Debbie, and Ann who have signed up to help. Many thanks also to our long-standing volunteers Gwyneth, Fay, Paul, John and Carole. Some of them have been working on the Sunday inquiry/publications desk ever since it started and surely deserve gold medals or at least FONC monogrammed thermals!

Thanks also to the voluntary workday team who always put out a publications display on the first Sunday of the month.

We are always looking for new volunteers. Please contact us if you are interested in helping on the Sunday inquiry desk. Who knows? We might even be able to expand into Saturdays. Contact treasurer@fonc.org.uk.



Publications & inquiry desk 21st Birthday cake on display at AGM in June

FONC very much appreciates Cathy continuing to organise the desk rota while being our busy treasurer and despite living the other side of London.

DR PICKSTOCK AND ‘THE BABY FARMER’
or the true and dreadful tale of Margaret Waters (Part 3)
by Ron Woollacott

Margaret Waters, a former patient of Dr Pickstock of Peckham, and her sister, Sarah Ellis, have been charged with the ‘wilful murder’ of John Walter Cowen, an infant, and were tried before Lord Justice Baron Kelly at the Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey) in London.

The divisional police surgeon gives evidence

Dr Edward Pope, the police surgeon, was the last witness to give evidence for the prosecution. He told the court that he had examined Miss Cowen’s baby (John Walter Cowen) on Monday morning the 13th June 1870 and found the child very weak and emaciated. He believed the cause of death was severe congestion of the brain due to the administration of a narcotic, and emaciation was due to want of proper food.

Cross-examined by Mr Ribton for the defence, he said it was often the case that where an unmarried woman was in the family way, and suffering from the usual shame and anxiety, that the child is often affected by those circumstances. He was asked elucidate. He explained that children are often born with large heads and crooked limbs, and emaciated, and sometimes one limb or other is distorted - illegitimate children are often born so, perhaps more commonly than in matrimony.

Miss O’Connor is called by the defence

Ellen O’Connor said she was employed as a servant by Mrs Margaret Waters at No 4 Frederick Terrace, Brixton, and had worked there for three months. She thought all the children in Mrs Waters’ care had been given plenty of food to eat and three pints of milk were delivered to the house every day. She remembered Baby Cowen coming to the house and feeding it with a bottle. Sometimes it drank two bottles, she said, and sometimes a little lime water was added to the milk. She remembered seeing Mrs Ellis giving Baby Cowen a drop of titty, that is from her breast, she explained, and when the baby became ill Mrs Waters rubbed its chest with laudanum. She thought all the children were well looked after.

Cross examined by the prosecution, O’Connor said she was getting on for fourteen, did all the housework, and often attended the children. She told the

court that she was the only servant in the house with Mrs Waters and Mrs Ellis and 11 children. She said Mrs Waters used to wash the children every morning, except for Baby Cowen who was much too ill to be washed, although she washed him three or four times before he became too ill. She went on to say that she thought Mrs Waters was very fond of all the children and four of them used to sleep with her and she seemed especially fond of Baby Cowen.

Dr Pickstock of Peckham is the last witness to be called

Dr George Newport Pickstock told the court that he lived in Rye Lane, Peckham, and was a member of the Royal College of Physicians. He had professionally attended Mrs Waters from the 22nd September 1868 to the beginning of 1870 and was often called to examine infants that were unwell when she was living in Bournemouth Road, Peckham. He said he had never seen anything in her behaviour but unvarying kindness and motherly attentiveness. He agreed that opiates should never be given to children, although a paregoric syrup is sometimes given to children which contains a small amount of laudanum. Paregoric syrup is prescribed for cough, and if given in excess would produce stupor.

Cross-examined by the prosecution, Dr Pickstock said he was first called to Mrs Waters' house to attend a woman in her confinement. It was a difficult birth however, and he delivered the woman with forceps. About a month after giving birth the mother left the baby in the care of Mrs Waters. Dr Pickstock said it was a puny child and he didn't expect it to live. It did not breathe for half-an-hour after it was born and ultimately died. He described another instance in which a woman was delivered of twins at Mrs Waters' house in Peckham. He believed a relation of hers took them away and he never saw them again. He went on to say that he had never seen more than four children at Mrs Waters' home at any one time. She could be quite a nuisance, however, he said, and would sometimes call other doctors if he was not at home. In his opinion Mrs Waters seemed to be 'wonderfully desirous' of looking after the children in her care.

Sarah Ellis, Waters' sister, is acquitted of murder

Having heard all the evidence Lord Chief Baron Sir Fitzroy Kelly considered there was no evidence against Sarah Ellis, and directed the jury to find a verdict of not guilty. She was acquitted of murdering Baby Cowen but was later charged and found guilty of obtaining money under false pretences and sentenced to 18 months hard labour.

to be continued

WANTED

Volunteer to hand deliver *FONC News*

Thank you to long-term supporter Marie Coyle who has hand-delivered members' newsletters in the West Nunhead area for many years. We are now looking for a volunteer to take over the delivery of this round:

bounded by Peckham High Street, Kirkwood Road, Nunhead Lane and Rye Lane

Hand delivery involves putting a copy of *FONC News* and sometimes a membership subscription reminder through the letter boxes of members on the round. This saves FONC the cost of standard postage (50 pence) and reduces our use of envelopes. *FONC News* is delivered four times a year. If you would like to volunteer to take over this round, please contact membership@fonc.org.uk .

ART IN THE CEMETERY

by Jolanta Jagiello

The '**Magnificent Seven Deadly Sins**' exhibition in the Stearns mausoleum over the weekends in May 2012 was a very successful show attended by over 900 visitors, with 300 positive comments in the Comments Book, and a performance by Calum F Kerr as 'Mausollos' on Saturday 26th May.

Visitor Natalie Linderman wrote in our Comments Book: 'London's smallest art gallery and the most thought-provoking I've encountered in a while - unexpected in a cemetery, which adds to the mystique and enjoyment. Great work - am looking forward to the seven virtues! Thank you.'

The show is archived on my website www.artgoingplaces.com. We hope to be part of the Dulwich Festival next year which runs over two weekends in May including the 2013 Nunhead Cemetery Open Day.

'**Diamond Decades: Celebrating 60 years of the Queen's Reign**', our next show in Nunhead Cemetery during Open House Weekend 22nd to 23rd September 2012 from 11am-5pm, has been awarded a Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Grant. Please join us if you missed the Diamond Jubilee celebrations for a public art exhibition inspired by the Queen's hats, dresses, crown jewels, and rituals. Jill Rock will encourage us to reflect on our own Diamond Decade and contribute to creating a public collage to mark the occasion. The tours of cemetery, turret tower and crypt are also available as part of Open House Weekend 2012.

MEMBERS OVERRULE COMMITTEE ON SUBSCRIPTION RATES! *Report by Jeff Hart*

Each year the FONC General Committee reviews the membership subscription rate. It has always been our policy to keep this as low as possible to ensure that no-one is prevented from participating as a member on the grounds of cost. Unfortunately, the cost of producing and distributing the members' journal, with recent steep increases in postal charges, means that the current subscription rate of £2 per year no longer covers those costs. The Committee therefore proposed at June's AGM that the annual subscription rate should rise to £3 from 1st April 2013.

However, members present felt that most new and existing members add a donation to their subscription anyway, and that the proposed increase may lead to a decline in membership. There is also the issue of amending standing orders to consider. FONC auditor, George Young, expressed the views of many when he strongly opposed the proposal, arguing it was far better to subsidise costs from other income rather than lose members. Although heavily defeated when a vote was taken, FONC Chairman, Ron Woollacott, said the Committee was quite happy to accept the members' view on this issue.

NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS - 7 *by Jeff Hart*

Keep the Green Flag flying!

Cemetery staff undertook a great deal of 'tidying-up' in the cemetery in the days leading up to 21st June when the assessor from the Green Flag Award arrived on site to consider Southwark Council's application for the award. Grass was cut, path edges tidied and trees pruned. FONC Committee member Malcolm Collins joined Southwark staff to guide the assessor around the cemetery and help explain the role of volunteers in caring for the site. The Green Flag Award (run by the successors to the Keep Britain Tidy organisation) recognises well managed parks and open spaces for all to enjoy, and we are delighted to say that as we go to press we have heard that the application for Nunhead Cemetery has been successful! More details in the next issue.

Bob-a-job for Scouts memorial

In anticipation of the 100th anniversary event on Saturday 4th August 2012, the Boy Scouts memorial has had its lettering re-cut, the base tidied up and

continued on next page

the whole memorial thoroughly cleaned. The present memorial was donated and erected by funeral directors Chappell & Kellaway on behalf of FONC in 1992, and replaced the original Boy Scout memorial that was stolen.

War memorial work underway

There have been several mentions in previous journals of our hopes of reinstating the war memorial to some 500 British troops killed in the First World War and subsequently buried together in Nunhead Cemetery. The plot is in Square 89 at the northern end of the East Path, parallel to the Ivydale Road boundary. It was so badly vandalised in the 1970s that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) removed what was left and the site has since become overgrown and almost forgotten. After much discussion between FONC and CWGC on possible designs and funding, with delays and redesigns, it is fantastic to be able to report that work has now begun on site! It is anticipated that work will be completed in time for the annual Remembrance Service in November when rededication of the new memorial will be at the centre of events. A full article will appear in the next Journal.

Au naturel !

No members voted in favour of painting the electricity cabinet on which the cemetery's Blue Plaque has been placed (see *FONC News* 116, Nunhead Cemetery News 6) and so the Committee has decided to leave it unpainted at least for the time being.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TREE TOURS IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

► **Sunday 9th September and Sunday 9th December 2012.** Meet at the flint circle just inside the main entrance in Linden Grove at 2.15pm.

NUNHEAD FREE FILM FESTIVAL

► **Friday evening 14th September 2012.** As part of the Nunhead Free Film Festival there will be a screening in Nunhead Cemetery. At the time of writing times were not available. For details see www.freefilmfestivals.org

OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND

► **Saturday and Sunday 22nd and 23rd September 2012 from 1.00pm to 5pm on both days.** We shall require volunteers to act as stewards and assist in other ways, if you can help in any way please contact a committee member. *See page 10 for details.*

SPECIAL TOUR: MILITARY GRAVES

► **Please note the change of date. The tour will now take place on Sunday 7th October 2012.** Join Jeff Hart on a tour of the cemetery looking at some of the graves of soldiers who fought in the wars of the past. Meet at the flint circle near the main gates in Linden Grove at 2.15pm.

ALL SOULS SERVICE IN THE CEMETERY CHAPEL

► **Sunday 4th November 2012.** Ecumenical service to remember all those buried at Nunhead Cemetery will be held in the chapel in Nunhead Cemetery and led by the Reverend Alan Bond. Meet at the main entrance in Linden Grove at 3.00pm. *Please come along - everyone is most welcome.*

FONC REMEMBRANCE DAY EVENT

► **Sunday 11th November 2012.** Please meet at the War Memorial by the Limesford Road gates at 10.45am. Wreaths supplied by the British Legion will be laid at the main war graves plots in memory of the dead of two World Wars buried at Nunhead.

FONC's CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

► **Thursday 20th December 2012 at 7.30pm.** The Old Nun's Head pub, Nunhead Green, London, SE15 3QQ. Full details in the December issue of *FONC News*.

REGULAR EVENTS IN THE CEMETERY

VOLUNTARY WORKDAYS

► **Voluntary workdays take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10am to 4.30pm.** New volunteers most welcome. Meet at the FONC Portakabin near the main entrance in Linden Grove. 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. *Contact fonc@btconnect.com .*

GUIDED TOURS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY

► **General guided 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. Just turn up on the day. Tours take between 90 minutes and two hours. Information desk and publications on sale, weather and volunteers permitting.

~ CONTACTS ~

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Please send all letters, news items and feature articles for publication to:
The editor, *FONC News*, c/o fonc@btconnect.com

The deadline for the Winter issue is the 20th October 2012
(Copy received after this date may be used in a future issue)

Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)

Established 1981— *Registered charity number 296413*

A founder member of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF),
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and recipient of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's Birthday Award for
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www.fonc.org.uk

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