

FONC News



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Scouts Procession at Nunhead Cemetery — Leysdown Tragedy Centenary Event. *Photo: Paul Dyer*

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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 the **Membership Secretary, c/o 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 first and last Sunday in the month from 2.00pm to 4.00pm 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 7525 5600**.

The cemetery address is: Linden Grove, Nunhead, London, SE15 3LP

THE SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS

Editor: Ron Woollacott.

Subeditor: Gwyneth Stokes.

Contributors to this issue: Rex Batten, John Collings, Nicola Dunn, Paul Dyer, Jeff Hart, Jolanta Jagiello, Cathy Mercer, Richard Pretlove, Tim Stevenson, Carole Tyrrell.

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

REX BATTEN'S PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY OF MEMORIALS & MONUMENTS

Open Day 2012 - Visitors' comments and observations - (continued)

by Rex Batten

The photographs of classical draped urns set on columns over a number of prominent graves attracted the attention of visitors. 'There are hundreds of these draped urns and I haven't seen two the same.'

'There are a couple along the path that are identical and they appeared to me to be on the graves of two brothers.'

'I believe there was talk of building a crematorium here in Nunhead some years ago.'

'The Romans were doing that a couple of thousand years ago.'

It was explained that the Romans cremated their dead and the ashes were placed in urns. The draped cloth being the shroud that was turned back in half mourning - a gift to the 19th century monumental mason. One observation that would need some considerable research was if there were periods of fashions in monumental designs. I felt it was time to add to the conversation.

'Have you ever been to Ostia Antiqua?' There was no reaction. 'It was the ancient port of Rome at the mouth of the River Tiber. It is now an important archaeological site. It is fascinating. There is a crematorium there. I was there with John Mathewson, who speaks Italian, and he asked one of the attendants about the urns, explaining they are used as symbols in the cemetery he is connected with. Have they any on show? We were taken past the

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crematorium to a wall where little clay pots were cemented into it. He explained that the pots, no bigger than a jam jar, held the ashes of the dead. My look must have said everything. He smiled and explained it was only the rich and powerful who ended up in the urns. You and I had a clay pot for eternity.'

'A bit like Nunhead.'

'There are no clay pots here.'

'The rich have urns along the Main Avenue where all would see, but a lot of the rest of us would have finished up in cheap boxes with a dozen or more in a common grave at the very back of the cemetery. Not that different!'

'Do we know the names of the masons who did the carving?' A question rarely asked. One visitor, a man of mature years, gave his thoughts.

'I have been coming here for a number of years and now I see past the symbols. I see the skill of the masons who created so much beauty

and interest. Their names would mean nothing to me but their work is a far greater legacy. Those craftsmen have left us so much. Imagine chipping away at a piece of stone with a chisel and hammer. I know, I've tried it. A blow too hard and the work is ruined. Look at their work and you begin to understand the high standard of skill and imagination needed to achieve even a simple memorial. It is so easy to take it for granted. Each memorial tells us something. The passion flowers, the palm branches, the laurel wreaths, and the roses of remembrance, and that is naming only a fraction of their legacy.'

'Can words describe their achievement?'

'How about saying this display is their memorial?'

'One could, but isn't Nunhead itself the memorial? Their work remembering death spans the years in a setting where nature speaks of life with each season.'



Semi-draped urns on monuments in Nunhead Cemetery. *Photo: Ron Woollacott*

BRIXTON WINDMILL

by Cathy Mercer



Brixton Windmill 1812.

From a postcard published by the Friends of Windmill Gardens.

One of London's most amazing survivals is the Brixton Windmill, standing 50 feet tall on top of Brixton Hill, just three miles from the centre of London at Charing Cross, and commanding magnificent views over London—and Brixton Prison, next door.

In the 19th century there were 12 windmills in Lambeth, built to use the breezes on Brixton Hill and to grind the corn grown in the surrounding fields. However, with the coming of the railways and the spread of suburbia, all the mills disappeared, bar the Brixton Windmill.

The Brixton Windmill is also known as the Ashby Mill, after its founders and owners, the Ashby family. The Ashbys were Irish Quakers and they built the mill in 1816. The windmill stopped in 1852 when the Ashbys transferred their business to their watermill on the Wandle at Mitcham. However, the lease on this watermill expired in 1902 and they moved back to the Brixton mill, using a steam engine and, later, a gas engine to drive the cast iron

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provender mill, which still stands on the meal floor today.

The Brixton Windmill continued working until 1934. It stood empty until the London County Council (LCC) bought it in 1957, together with the surrounding land, now a small park known as Windmill Gardens. The windmill itself stood neglected until 2003 when local people formed the Friends of Windmill Gardens. After much hard work, the Friends of Windmill Gardens managed to get a Lottery Grant to restore the Brixton Windmill and open it to the public. Now the Brixton Windmill has been beautifully restored and is open most weekends in the summer. For full details of opening dates and times, please visit www.brixtonwindmill.org

The Friends group are very active. They do a lot of work with local schools, have a newsletter and have built up interest among local residents by bringing them gingerbread windmills: a bit like the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery in many ways, though we're still working on the gingerbread side of things!

The Friends of Windmill Gardens run free guided tours, with tea and cakes in the café in next door Windmill Gardens. You can just turn up on the day but, for a full tour of all floors, you need to book in advance at booking@brixtonwindmill.org Brixton Windmill is on Blenheim Gardens, Brixton, London SW2, a short walk up Brixton Hill from Brixton Underground and national railway stations. Many buses pass close by. Brixton Windmill is a Grade 2* listed building and well worth a visit!

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF CEMETERY FRIENDS AGM 2012

The Friends of the Rosary Cemetery, Norwich, hosted the Annual General Meeting of the NFCF in June. Nunhead was represented by Jeff and Jane Hart and Carole Tyrrell. FONC members Gwyneth Stokes and Carol Stevenson attended in their respective roles of secretary and newsletter editor of the Federation. Delegates were taken for a tour of the historic Rosary Cemetery and this was followed by an excellent buffet lunch. The AGM was formally opened by the Lord Mayor of Norwich, after which the chairman, Arthur Tait, reported that the Federation was flourishing and now had 89 paid up members. Topics discussed included rebuilding the NFCF website after an attack on the system, the progress made by the Funerary Monuments Working Group, and the educational value of cemeteries for schools. The current officers, Arthur Tait, chairman; Gwyneth Stokes, secretary; and Ian Simpson, treasurer, were re-elected unopposed. Next year's AGM is to be hosted by the Friends of York Cemetery.

NUNHEAD REVISITED

by Richard Pretlove

(John & Frances West Family Group)

Well, it was a revisit for some of our party, but for others, your reporter included, it was a first visit. I am not quite sure what I expected to see, but it was certainly not a 52 acre 'wood with graves in it' set in the heart of London.

Saturday 8th September 2012 saw some 44 members of the John & Frances West Family Group taking the opportunity to visit Nunhead Cemetery on a bright summer's day, sunny and warm with a clear blue sky. Our interest in Nunhead lies in the fact the Eastern Catacomb has housed the mortal remains of John and Frances West since 1867 following the destruction of St. Christopher-le-Stocks in the City of London. In fact, the cemetery was the location of our Group's very first annual meeting back in 1984 and each member can claim relationship to, but not descent from, John or Frances West.

We must extend our cordial thanks to the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) for the warm welcome they extended to us, including copious supplies of tea, coffee and biscuits.

After our arrival and refreshments and a bookstall browse, we made our way to the ledger stone which marks the catacomb in which were housed the remains disinterred from the crypt of St. Christopher-le-Stocks. Our customary service of thanksgiving was led by Reverend Jane Elliott of Saint Catherine's Church, Hatcham, and held unusually in what can only be described as a



Ledger over the human remains removed from St Christopher-le-Stocks in 1867.

Photo: John Collings

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sylvan glade, to the accompaniment of the singing of the birds in the surrounding trees. The service culminated in the laying of a wreath by our Group Secretary, Margaret Edwards. I imagine that this is a fairly unusual activity at Nunhead!

Following the service many of the party enjoyed a picnic lunch in the woodland clearing, which we were told was formerly the site of the Dissenters' chapel, pulled down following bomb damage during World War II.

After lunch we were treated to a shortened but most interesting version of the cemetery tour by Jeff Hart of FONC whose knowledge of the history, flora, fauna, monuments and notable inhabitants of the cemetery can only be described as encyclopaedic. During the tour I was struck particularly by the importance of transient fashion on the design of the many monuments and the heavy symbolism that permeated the way our Victorian forbears observed or possibly even celebrated death and mourning. Maybe I am being cynical, but I wonder whether the vast amounts of money spent on huge memorials were less out of respect for the departed and more about impressing the neighbours. I doubt that the premium paid for being at the top of the hill, and thus closer to heaven, actually assisted one's entrance thereto. But perhaps I am judging the 19th century practice too harshly by looking through 21st century eyes.

The tour led us to the vandalised ruin of the Gothic Victorian chapel following which we were led, with dire warnings, into the dark, damp crypt



The John & Frances West Family Group gather around the catacombs at Nunhead Cemetery—the final resting place of John & Frances West. *Photo: John Collings*

lying beneath it — shades of Edgar Allan Poe! Back once more in the daylight and fresh air we climbed to the summit of Nunhead Hill some 200 feet above sea level and caught a distant glimpse of St Paul's Cathedral through the clearing.

At the end of the tour we were refreshed by welcome supplies of tea and coffee after which five intrepid visitors returned to the chapel to don hard hats and ascend the steep and narrow spiral staircase to the viewing platform above the porch from which they enjoyed a panoramic view across the City of London.

We had a brilliant day and must pay tribute both to the unstinting welcome from the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, and particularly to Jeff who entertained us so magnificently, and for all the hard work that they put in to maintain and improve this truly remarkable place which so well deserves the Grade 2* listing it has been awarded.

A huge thank you to Jeff and to those FONC members we met during our day who gave their time, their enthusiasm, and their knowledge to ensure the 'spirit' of Nunhead continues. I was reminded of one of our readings earlier in the day, 2 Corinthians 9: 6-9 'for God loves a cheerful giver'.

A LETTER FROM B L LARKINS OF BURY-ST-EDMUNDS

Dear Editor,

I wondered if you could give a mention in your magazine to Bob Fuller. Bob is my daughter's partner and her mother, my wife, is buried in Nunhead Cemetery, this was in 1961. For quite a while now my daughter has wanted to visit her mother's grave. Owing to us living and working abroad, sadly my wife's grave had been badly neglected. Bob realised this and didn't want my daughter to see it in that condition.

So unbeknown to any of us he went to Nunhead and found the grave and seeing what a poor state it was in, spent all his spare time restoring it to as far as possible its original condition, telling my daughter that he was working overtime.

The grave now looks an absolute treat, even to Bob doing the surrounding area with turfs. Naturally we have thanked him but I feel a small mention in your magazine would just add a little extra for his thoughtfulness and kindness.

Incidentally, due to all the health and safety regulations that we have today, Bob did obtain permission from the governing body before carrying out this work.

DR PICKSTOCK AND ‘THE BABY FARMER’

(Part 4) - concluding the true and dreadful tale of Margaret Waters

by Ron Woollacott

Margaret Waters, a former patient of Dr Pickstock of Peckham, and her sister, Sarah Ellis, were both charged with the murder of John Walter Cowen, an infant, and tried before Lord Justice Baron Kelly at the Old Bailey between the 21st and 23rd September 1870.

Who was Margaret Waters? She was born in Nottingham in about 1834, the first of five children born to Jacob and Mildred Forth. She had a Baptist upbringing. Her father, a Yorkshireman, later brought his family to live in London, where in the 1850s he kept a lodging house at 33 Ludgate Hill, assisted by 17-year-old Margaret. In 1861 Margaret married Charles Waters, a draper, at St Mary’s Church, Lambeth. Sadly, her husband died just three years later. After his death, she acquired a house in Camberwell with the money he had left her, and set up a small business making collars. Regrettably, within a year the business had failed, and she began letting rooms to earn a living. One of her tenants, the mistress of a solicitor, gave birth in the house and asked Waters to find someone to ‘take care’ of her new born child. Thus began Waters’ heinous career of ‘baby farming’. She and her younger married sister, Sarah Ellis, moved to Peckham and began taking in unwanted babies, usually illegitimate, and charging between £5 and £10. Threatened by a moneylender to whom she owed money, Waters moved to Brixton where she and her sister continued ‘adopting’ children. Sadly, one of the babies in their care (John Walter Cowen) died of neglect, and they were both tried for murder. Ellis was acquitted but, despite the evidence given in defence of Waters’ by Dr Pickstock, who had attended children in her care when she lived in Peckham, and Ellen O’Connor, her 13-year-old servant, Waters was found guilty, sentenced to death, and incarcerated in Horsemonger Lane Gaol (Surrey County Gaol), Southwark, to await her fate.

Waters confesses but insists she is not a murderess

Waters later confessed to a number of incidents involving children in her care. When she moved to Brixton, she said, five children died from diarrhoea and wasting, and because she couldn’t afford to bury them she wrapped their bodies in brown paper and disposed of them at night. Several unidentified bodies of babies were found on Myatt’s Field, near Waters’ house. She also confessed to having taken babies into the streets and giving children sixpence to look after them and then running away. She believed

the babies would be taken to the workhouse and looked after. But insisted she was not a murderess.

The night before her execution Waters wrote a long statement to the prison chaplain. While still denying she was a murderess, she pleaded guilty to 'great deceit' and to having obtained money under false pretences. If she had not given proper food to the children in her care, she argued, it was an error of judgement. She denied giving laudanum to children. She thought she should not be held accountable for the child that died in the workhouse. Although she wished to avoid all bitterness, she complained about those who she believed had given false evidence against her. 'I feel sure their consciences will condemn them tonight,' she wrote, 'for having caused the death of a fellow-creature.' In the face of the evidence, however, she felt the jury could not find any other verdict, or the judge pass any other sentence. She believed the case had been got up to expose a system that was wrong. 'The parents of illegitimate children wished to get rid of their ill-gotten offspring to hide their own shame,' she wrote, 'they are the real sinners. If it were not for their sin we (baby-farmers) should not be sought after.'

Waters is hanged despite appeals for clemency

Several persons, including Waters' two Baptist minister brothers, the Reverends Joseph and Jacob Coupland Forth, tried in vain to get the death sentence commuted to life imprisonment, but the Home Secretary, Henry Bruce (1815-1895), refused to intervene. Waters was hanged by the executioner, William Calcraft, at Horsemonger Lane Gaol on 11th October 1870.

The Reverend Charles Maurice Davies witnessed the execution, which was the first private execution at Horsemonger Lane since public hangings were abolished two years earlier in 1868. It was Davies' first experience in attending a private hanging and he doubted his powers of endurance. 'When the executioner had placed the rope around Waters' neck,' he wrote, 'she uttered a long and fervent prayer.' He continued, 'though most of the spectators present were used to such scenes of horror, several were overcome with emotion, one kneeling on the bare ground and another propped up against the prison wall. The bolt was withdrawn, and, almost without a struggle, Margaret Waters ceased to exist.'

After the Waters' affair, the Infant Life Protection Society was set up by, among others, the Reverend Oscar Thorpe of Peckham and William Charley MP, who spear-headed the campaign for legislation in the House of Commons. As a consequence the Infant Life Protection Act was passed in 1872 requiring the registration of all persons boarding more than one infant.

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Sources and further reading: Census Returns; *Proceedings of the Central Criminal Court*, 11th Session 1869-70; *The Times* 7th October 1870; Charles Maurice Davies, *Mystic London*, pp. 217-223, 1875; Frederic Boase, *Modern English Biography*, Vol 3, 1901; Lionel Rose, *The Massacre of the Innocents - Infanticide in Britain 1800-1939*, 1986.

Acknowledgement: I must thank my daughter Michèle Louise Burford for her help in researching this article.

A NIGHT AT THE PICTURES

by Nicola Dunn

The tombs were silhouetted in the moonlight and bats flitted over the chapel roof, but it wasn't a Dracula film we were watching—it was the classic Ealing comedy 'Kind Hearts and Coronets' as part of the Peckham and Nunhead Free Film Festival.

Having never been to an outdoor movie, the opportunity to see one in Nunhead Cemetery was too good to miss and it was a perfect September evening—no breeze or background noise to distract from the film.

Lots of FONC volunteers were amongst the stewards to help direct the crowds and by the time the film was due to start, all seats were taken—about 200 as a rough guess. There was a respectful 'no sitting on the tombs' policy and the more experienced 'pop-up' cinema attenders had brought their own folding chairs or ground sheets to sit on.

Two short amateur films were shown first, one of them a speeded up 24 hour birds-eye-view of a bus depot, which was like a bus ballet and hypnotic to watch.

This was followed by a quick competition of guess-the-film from the short strips of celluloid everyone had been given at the entrance gates. Several hands went up in answer, so I assume they had more to go on than the image of a brick wall that my one revealed.

Then the film—Alec Guinness plays all the members of the aristocratic Gascoigne family who are murdered by Dennis Price in a variety of creative ways in order to retrieve his title of Duke.

It was strange to be filing out of the cemetery at 10.15pm, but it was a wonderful, atmospheric evening—quirky London culture at its best.

My holiday meant I had to miss the rest of the films in the programme, one of which was due to be powered by bicycle, but I will make sure I have it in my diary for next year.

MY FATHER, THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS by Nicholas Reed—*reviewed by Ron Woollacott*

The subject of this book, Ronnie Reed, was a member of FONC from 1983 to his death in 1995. He struck me as a very quiet and reserved gentleman when I met him in the early days of our group and I doubt if any one who came to know him over the years was aware of the incredible life he had led. Towards the end of 1994, Ronnie, who learned he had a terminal illness and not long to live, agreed to tell his story to his eldest son Nicholas, who knew very little about his father's background.

Ronnie Reed was indeed a remarkable man. A lifelong amateur radio enthusiast, he joined the BBC in the 1930s and, at the outbreak of the Second World War, was called up to work for the security services. He took a leading part in 'Operation Mincemeat', which involved leaving the dead body of an unknown man floating off the coast of Spain dressed as 'Major Martin', a fictitious Royal Marine, carrying 'top secret' letters addressed to Allied leaders in Africa. It was Ronnie's photo that was used on the identity card of the dead man. As a result the Germans, on finding the body, were led to believe that the British attack on southern Europe would be on Greece and Sardinia rather than Sicily and, as a consequence, the Germans laid new minefields off the coast of Greece and the 1st German Panzer Tank Group was sent to Salonica. The enemy was duped and the British invasion of Sicily was a success.



In 1942 Ronnie was appointed Case Officer for the double agent Zigzag (Eddie Chapman). Chapman later presented him with his Iron Cross as a reminder of their friendship and the work they had done together. Chapman had been awarded the Iron Cross by Hitler for his 'outstanding zeal and success' when in fact he had been working for the British!

In 1944 Ronnie took a commission in the Army in order to continue to work with 'the Office', and was sent out to France to liaise with the American intelligence unit and ended the war as Major Reed.

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WALWORTH'S LOST BOYS

The centenary of the tragic drowning of the Walworth Scouts at Leysdown, Kent

by Carole Tyrrell

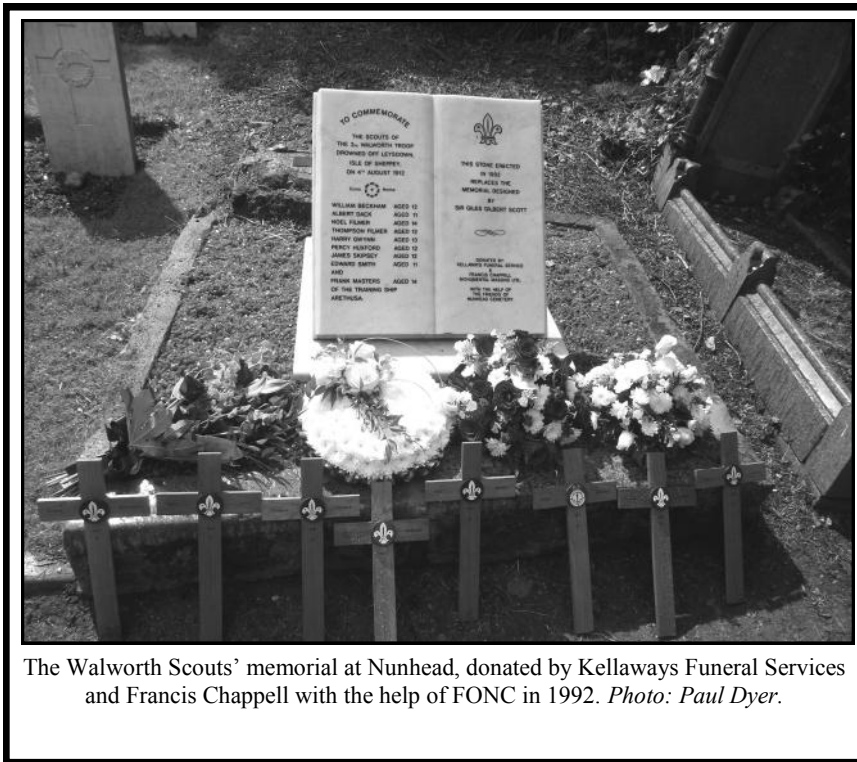
In a year of anniversaries and events the date of 4th August 2012 had a particular significance for FONC. This was the centenary of the drowning of the Scouts off the coast of Leysdown and the very public funeral that followed, and we were determined to commemorate it in association with Leysdown Parish Council.

The 4th August dawned fine and bright and we had a large gathering at the Linden Grove entrance. As well as members of the FONC committee, there was also the 1st New Cross Scout troop, members of the lost boys' families, and Bert Barnes' daughter, Jennifer, from Leysdown. The late Bert Barnes had been significantly involved with reviving interest in the Scouts together with FONC's Rex Batten.

The New Cross Scouts led the procession up along the main avenue to the Anglican chapel and we all followed them inside. By now the weather was beginning to be more threatening and rain kept trying to fall as we assembled. Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator, stepped forward to say a few words to the congregation about the centenary, he was then followed by Rex Batten, who has written books on the tragedy, who made a short speech about the Scouts and the involvement of Bert Barnes. The plaque in memory of Bert Barnes on the wall of the chapel was then unveiled by his daughter, Jennifer, and was dedicated by the Reverend Alan Bond.

The Scouts then led the congregation out of the chapel and we all proceeded to the Scouts' memorial. After another short speech by Rex Batten and a further blessing by the Reverend Alan Bond, wreaths were laid and crosses for each of the Scouts were placed along the edge of the memorial by descendants or a member of the Scout troop. Sadly, the Skipsey family's cross had been mislaid and will be commemorated at a later date. The base of the original memorial, where the life-size bronze Scout once stood, had been cleared and could be seen behind the present memorial. Kellaways, who had kindly donated the marble memorial in the shape of a book in 1992, and had recently repainted the inscription, were also represented, and laid a wreath as did the Deputy Mayor of Southwark, who made a short speech recognising FONC's efforts. The cemetery manager, Avril Kirby, was also in attendance. Journalists were also present who, despite some concentrating

on the David Beckham connection, ensured coverage in several publications. Afterwards, refreshments were provided at the FONC Portakabin as we all reflected on a successful and moving occasion which had ensured the Lost Boys of Walworth had not been forgotten.



The Walworth Scouts' memorial at Nunhead, donated by Kellaways Funeral Services and Francis Chappell with the help of FONC in 1992. *Photo: Paul Dyer.*

OPEN HOUSE IN LONDON SEPTEMBER 2012

We have taken part in Open House Weekend for several years. Visitors are able to enjoy tours of the historic cemetery and given the opportunity to climb the spiral staircase to the top of the coach tower, where they may experience panoramic views of ever-changing central London, and visit the crypt of the Anglican chapel. The crypt and the tower are not normally open to the public, except on the annual Open Day in May and Open House Weekend in September. Over 500 people visited the cemetery during the weekend which was fair on Saturday but very wet on Sunday. But the rain didn't deter the visitors who were also treated to an art exhibition in the chapel curated by Jolanta Jagiello. (*see article on the next page*).

DIAMOND DECADES

Celebrating Six Decades of the Queen's Reign in the Anglican Chapel

A public art exhibition curated by Jolanta Jagiello

Diamond Decades exhibition during Open House Weekend 2012, Saturday 22nd September and Sunday 23rd September, was enjoyed by over 350 visitors despite the British wet weather on Sunday.

The exhibition was all about the grandeur of royalty: the Queen's jewels, whose stones were re-crafted by Mike Hoath; the Queen's dresses, one of which by Norman Hartnell was recreated by Ahmed Farooqui; and the Queen's love of horses re-modelled by Jo Nicholson Smith. And in the centre of the chapel, a sparkling version of the Queen's crown lit up the exhibition from Elisabetta Chojak-Mysko surrounding Jolanta Jagiello's artwork 'Windsor Pearl & Set' based on the 1980s photograph of the Queen Mother with her daughters, Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret.

Derek Miles' stone sculpture captured the magic of her coronation, images from Mary Pritchard's treasured coronation tins decorated the chapel gates, and Will Parker based his installation around his 1977 Silver Jubilee mug and a pair of yellow marigold gloves. A number of artists, Tinsel Edwards, Twinkle Troughton, Lorenzo Belengeur, and Anna Whyatt challenged visitors' perceptions of royalty, potentially changing their views of the monarchy.

The highlights from the exhibition were Sally Buchanan's 'High Hats' which laced one of the Anglican chapel's windows with the Queen's hats over the decades to the recreation of the Queen's famous hand wave by Abilene. Above all the public and particularly the FONC volunteers enjoyed being 'A Queen for A Day' styled by Arra Moradian's hairpieces of the Queen's unique hairdo

Jill Rock recorded memories in



Carol Stevenson FONC Volunteer
'Queen of the Day'

Photo: Arra Moradian

a chosen decade in 60 seconds to accompany her Royal Blue Diamond Banner of memories in 60 words in the chapel, as well as presenting her display on modern day Ghana, one of the Queen's favourite commonwealth countries. A great time was had by all who attended the exhibition, even those passing by, captured in this comment: "We just came for a walk and ended up wearing wigs and climbing up steep stairs, Amazing!" *Stef, Catford, 22/9/12.*

NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS (8)

by Jeff Hart—FONC Co-ordinator

Now you see it, now you don't!

The Green Flag award reported in the last issue represents a significant milestone for the cemetery. As a recognition of the very much improved maintenance of the cemetery over recent years it is very welcome. However, more importantly in FONC's view is that by seeking out the award, Southwark Council are signalling their long-term commitment towards the future maintenance levels for the cemetery. The award will be reviewed each year, and it will be important if Southwark is not to lose the award (something they are very keen to avoid) that they not only demonstrate that the maintenance regime is maintained but rather improved on year by year. This, of course, will need suitable on-going financial commitment. In the meantime, the physical embodiment of the award is the flying of the Green Flag from a new flag-pole provided for the purpose. FONC was consulted on the siting of the flag-pole and, although we would rather have done without it altogether, we agreed that if it had to be at the main entrance on Linden Grove it should be off-set so that it did not impinge on the visual impact of the view up the Main Avenue to the Anglican chapel. With time pressure to be ready for a formal unfurling on 17th September, originally, the flag-pole was sited on the west side of the Main Avenue opposite the West Lodge whilst the owner of the lodge was away on holiday. Unfortunately, on return, it became evident that this impinged on the view from the West Lodge's main sitting room. It was thus agreed that the flagpole would be rapidly moved to the east side of the Main Avenue where it now proudly, but starkly, stands—not quite where FONC would have liked it because the conservation officer was concerned about the impact on an adjacent small Turkey oak!

continued on next page

What is a buddleia among Friends?

Whilst a flagpole was going up (see above), other things were going down. In anticipation of the unfurling, some 'tidying-up' work was carried out by Southwark Council. When erected to the west of the Main Avenue, the privet hedge behind was 'trimmed'. FONC has been nurturing this hedge and had recently planted privet cuttings to close up a gap in the hedge caused by years of dumping cut material from the West Lodge boundary. Unfortunately, these were rather trampled in the process. However, they have been rescued by FONC and we have now erected a hazel dry hedge to close the gap and protect the cuttings. It is pleasing to note that the dry hedge has used hazel cut from the hazel glade planted by FONC at the end of the 1980s. More bad news followed when the flagpole was moved to the east. The tidying up here included cutting back a large mature buddleia to within a few inches of the ground. One might have thought that with a large wooden marker in front of it, complete with a number and name marker, the Southwark staff would have recognised that this was the (unlucky) 13th tree on FONC's new woodland trail! But no, so down it came and with no other buddleia between stop 12 and 14 we will now have to plant a young sapling whilst the old stump recovers.

Why not rest awhile?

Southwark Council have recently sited three new benches in the historic core of the cemetery. These are really substantial metal and wood benches to match those provided during the Heritage Lottery Fund works in the now signature colour of bright maroon. One is opposite the West Lodge near the FONC Portakabin; another is at the top of the east side of the Main Avenue facing the Anglican chapel; the other is to the west of the chapel with its back to the open grassed area by the chapel. It is pleasing to see how well used these benches are already.

Wooden toadstools emerge in the Picnic Area!

Talking of sitting, visitors may have noticed the emergence of new seating in the Picnic Area (the now grassed over site of the demolished Dissenters' chapel). This consists of large sections cut from mature trees felled in the area of the cemetery that provides the vista towards St. Paul's Cathedral. They are randomly placed around the perimeter of the open grass areas and around the foot of three specimen trees planted years ago by FONC. They were seen to be in good use when members of the John and Frances West Family Group picnicked during their recent visit to the cemetery (*see the article by John Pretlove on page 7*). They won't last for ever, of course, but

they do provide a rather pastoral element to the Picnic Area for the time being!

Permanent Woodland Trail posts now appearing

FONC members will have read previously of the new Woodland Trail that we have established in the cemetery. As part of the grant award for the Woodland Trail event staged last autumn, we received funding for marker posts that indicate the stops on the trail. At the time we placed temporary wooden posts with laminated tree identification panels at each of the 14 trees on the trail. Now, however, FONC volunteers are busily installing new permanent custom-made posts giving both the common and Latin name for the tree species and showing the direction to the next stop. We have also added an extra tree (English walnut) to the trail for good measure! The posts are supplied by TJ Recycled Materials who specialise in diverting waste material from landfill to practical reuse for the benefit of all, and are truly environmentally sustainable. Each post is made of plastics material and weighs 8.5kg. Our order required 3,432kg of waste plastic, such as HDPE milk bottles, to manufacture the posts which are a suitable green colour with the information plates in contrasting yellow. The posts are weatherproof and durable, will not corrode or splinter, and are impervious to fungal and insect attack. Although costing rather more than the grant received, the FONC committee felt that the additional expenditure was fully justified. Tim Pickthall, owner of the Bromley based company, could not have been more helpful in understanding the needs of a voluntary group and helping us deliver just what we had envisaged.

**Nunhead Cemetery monumental inscriptions
are now on our website: www.fonc.org.uk**

Paul Dyer and his team have been busy transcribing the inscriptions on the gravestones in Nunhead Cemetery for several years now. There is something like 46,000 graves in the cemetery (not all are marked) and many are now difficult to access, therefore it is only those stones that can be accessed without too much difficulty that are currently being recorded. Only a few of the many inscriptions that have been recorded can be viewed at present, but more will be added in the future thanks to Webmaster Simon Quill. Visit www.fonc.org.uk

If you would like to help Paul why not give him a ring. His details can be found on page 23 and on the back page of this journal.

Norfolk Monument Repaired

by *Tim Stevenson— FONC's Voluntary Workday Co-ordinator*

For some time now we've wanted to repair the memorial to Charles Norfolk. It's a large red granite monument by the fernery, on the path leading from the chapel to the Boy Scouts memorial. The cross that should have been standing proudly on top was lying half-buried in the soil next to it, but was undamaged—including the metal pin in the base. This meant that it would be straightforward to fix it securely back in place. The only snag was lifting it ten feet into the air. We had some scaffolding poles and fittings but we needed good weather and plenty of able-bodied volunteers to turn up on the workday, or else we'd have to postpone this repair again.

After torrential rain the previous month, this workday dawned clear and sunny. Even better, we had a good turnout of volunteers including two new ones—Vince and Ian—and Vince was familiar with scaffolding work. It was a good thing we had plenty of people to share the hard work of wheeling the scaffolding poles to the worksite in barrows. The cross was in an awkward position and we needed a lot of height. We experimented with a couple of designs before we settled on a double A-frame with our winch hanging from the crossbar.

The cross was in no hurry to be moved. It had sunk deeply into the soil and we had to get spades and dig around it to free it before we tried the winch. It lifted with surprising ease, although the crossbar supporting the winch sagged a fair bit under the weight. As it rose into the air we could see the intricate design carved into the front which had been hidden when it lay face-down (and had left a perfect impression in the clay).

Vince cranked the winch energetically and the cross rose higher. We held short planks between it and the monument to prevent them damaging each other, and the cross finally lifted clear of the top. We cautiously manoeuvred



Norfolk monument before
Restoration. *Photo: Ron Woollacott*

it into place and Vince gently lowered it into the hole—which overflowed, being full of rainwater. The cross fitted perfectly and stood straight and true, a tribute to the skill of the craftsmen who had carved the stone all those years ago. We lifted it again for Ian to put a layer of mortar in the hole, and then settled it back in place and stood back to admire our achievement. This was one of the most satisfying monument repairs I have done at Nunhead.

If you would like to take part in the practical work in the cemetery, we meet at the Portakabin by the Linden Grove gate on the first Sunday of each month. With thanks to Vince, Jim, Pete, Anne, Jeremy and Anna, for their hard work.



Restored Norfolk Monument. *Photo: Tim Stevenson.*

ANSDALL ROAD, NUNHEAD, LONDON, SE15

Beryl Parfitt *nee* Cole would like to know if anyone who lived in Ansdell Road during the 1950s and 1960s would like to catch up with other teenagers of the time. If so please contact Mrs Parfitt c/o fonc@btconnect.com. They try to meet up once a year.

***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 some members due to unforeseen circumstances beyond our control.

MY FATHER, THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS

Book review continued from page 13

After the war Ronnie found himself heading the anti-Russian department of MI5 and dealing with such notorious spies as Guy Burgess, Kim Philby and Donald Maclean.

In 1957 the Reed family went out to New Zealand for three years, where Ronnie helped run the counter-espionage section and to supervise the setting up of the New Zealand MI5. Nicholas tells us that one of the Reeds' main duties was to 'wine and dine the great and the good', and it was there that Nicholas had his first taste of oysters!

In retirement Ronnie became active in the Dulwich Society and joined the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery. When he died in 1995 he expressed a wish that his ashes should be scattered in Nunhead Cemetery. As it was they were scattered around an oak tree planted in his memory in Dulwich by the Dulwich Society.

This is an excellent and well-written illustrated biography of an astonishingly interesting gentleman, and Nicholas is to be congratulated for persuading his father to reveal the secrets of his incredible life.

***My Father, The Man Who Never Was* by Nicholas Reed—200 pages, 160 illustrations, is published by the Lilburne Press at £9.95 plus p&p. For further details e-mail: lilburnepress@hotmail.com or telephone: 01303 257 659. Web: www.lilburnepress.co.uk**

Rededication of the British War Graves in Nunhead Cemetery

The British War Graves in Nunhead Cemetery contain the remains of 266 British servicemen who served in the First World War, many of whom died of their wounds received in action, or else of disease. Their grave site was desecrated in the 1970s: the Cross of Sacrifice marking their graves was demolished and the bronze plaques inscribed with their names stolen. The site was left derelict and it has long been FONC's aim to get the site tidied up and a new monument erected. The site of the graves was cleared by FONC volunteers and a new monument has been erected on the site thanks to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Southwark Council. The graves were rededicated at a special service held on Sunday 4th November. A full report will be published in the next issue of *FONC News*.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TREE TOURS IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

► **Sunday 9th December 2012 & Sunday 17th March 2013.** Meet at the flint circle just inside the main entrance in Linden Grove at 2.15pm.

FONC's CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

► **Thursday 20th December 2012 starting at 7.00pm.** The Old Nun's Head pub, Nunhead Green, London, SE15 3QQ. *See below for details.*

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 on-going task. Volunteers meet at the FONC Portakabin near the Linden Grove entrance. The next dates are **Sundays: 16th December 2012, 13th January, 24th February and 7th April 2013.** Please check with MI Co-ordinator Paul Dyer for times and details before travelling (evenings only please) - email 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.

FONC'S CHRISTMAS SOCIAL 20th DECEMBER 2012

**Old Nun's Head Pub, Nunhead Green, London, SE15 3QQ
(upstairs in the function room) - starting at 7.00pm.**

We will be showing two short films by Jolanta Jagiello featuring the *Walworth Scouts Centenary Event* and *Rededication of the British War Graves*. Seasonal refreshments will be provided.

Friends are welcome.

Donations to offset costs will be appreciated.

~ 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 Spring issue is the 21st January 2013
(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), a member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE), and recipient of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's Birthday Award for Environmental Improvements (National Commendation) 1998.

www.fonc.org.uk

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