

FONC News



No 122 - Winter issue (December 2013—February 2014) - ISSN 1478-0631



The grave of William Rolls and family (watermen) - see page 13

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The Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC), 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, membership@fonc.org.uk**

Further 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 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**.

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



THE SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS



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

~ CHRISTMAS SOCIAL ~

We couldn't think of anything really exciting to tempt you to come to the FONC Christmas social at 7.00pm on 19th December at the Old Nun's Head on Nunhead Green, so what we have is Jeff Hart's slide presentation entitled:

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 CEMETERIES

But don't worry! We are limiting him to scenes from Argentina to Ireland, Namibia to the USA (and maybe a few others) in not more than 40 minutes (or less if we can!). To compensate, this will be followed by Christmas nibbles and the (in)famous FONC Christmas raffle! Please join us, and bring your friends, so that we can ensure Jeff doesn't overrun!

NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS (12)

by Jeff Hart—FONC Co-ordinator

Read all about it!

These days, as part of the 'Big Society', corporate volunteering is very much in vogue. Various bodies facilitate the delivery of such volunteering projects and at the beginning of September, Groundwork, which is an amalgam of ecological charitable trusts concentrating on facilitating local community practical projects, approached us about conducting a work day in the cemetery on 19 September. We were rather alarmed that discussions with Southwark's ecology officer, Jon Best, had taken place to arrange work for

continued on next page

100 volunteers without consulting FONC. However, we were able to arrange an urgent site meeting on 9th September with the London Borough of Southwark's management team, the Nunhead Quadron contractors' team and Groundwork. As a result, a much better focused and realistic work programme was agreed with praise for FONC's input. So, on the day, 46 volunteers from the News UK organisation arrived for a hard, but fun, day's work. Well supervised, the volunteers cleared huge amounts of bramble growth from the West Hill area to enhance the view towards St Paul's Cathedral and also cut back brambles and undergrowth to clear to the back of the first line of monuments along the Windsor Walk and Beeches embankments. The News UK volunteers loved the site and FONC committee members were able to explain a little of the significance of the cemetery and to conduct a visit to the crypt under the Anglican Chapel. As a result, we hope to facilitate a further work day, for a smaller group, in December to complete the West Hill clearance.

Scots Martyrs' garden fenced in

In the last year or so, visitors to the cemetery have started to take a short cut behind the Scots Martyrs' memorial when walking from Dissenters Road to the West Loop, saving themselves all of thirty yards. As a result an unsightly hard earth path has been created that runs through the previously planted area in front of the FONC planted copper hazel. This seemed particularly to attract large dogs into the area. However, during the September and October work days, FONC volunteers have fenced in the area and we plan next to remove evidence of the old path and to enhance planting in the area. Also in recent months the kerbing around the Scots Martyrs' memorial has sunk further into the ground whilst much of the surrounding paving has started to lift creating a trip hazard. FONC will be applying for funding from Southwark's 'Cleaner, Greener, Safer' community awards to carry out improvement works. In so doing, we also hope that we might be able to replace the rather incongruous twisted iron bars that surround the memorial, and which were installed by Southwark Council in about 1984 when the last restoration work was undertaken, with something more suitable.

Further war graves work to come

In the last issue of the journal we reported further work on Nunhead's war grave plots. New border planting around the graves adjacent to the Boy Scouts' memorial will take place shortly. Perhaps more importantly, Nunhead has been prioritised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) for further improvement works in the 2014/15 financial year,

which of course covers the one hundredth anniversary of the First World War. We were delighted, therefore, that the new UK Director of the CWGC, and a coachload of her Executive Committee colleagues visited the cemetery on 9th October. They visited the new war memorial and were given a tour of the site by the London Borough of Southwark's Mark Thompson and FONC committee member Malcolm Collins, who also presented the Director with a copy of the FONC publication *Investors in Death*.

Light at the end of the Thirties Tunnel!

We reported in the last Cemetery News that Department of Transport volunteers cleared about 200 metres of the previously lost Thirties Path. It is gratifying to report now that FONC volunteers have battled through to where it emerges on to the East Path. This will allow greater access for a part of the cemetery previously inaccessible and we now have plans to clear an adjacent area of brambles and ivy to create a new grassland glade to enhance the diversity of the cemetery.

Fire, sparks and mortar

The London Borough of Southwark (LBS) have kindly recently replaced the out-of-date fire extinguishers in FONC's Portakabin. We also had a shock (!) when just before the September Open House weekend, the electricity supply to the Portakabin and the lamp standards outside the West Lodge failed. However, LBS's Candy Edwards quickly engaged an electrician to carry out repairs and the Portakabin had power restored in time for Open House. And as groundwater levels shrank during our dry summer, some cracks appeared in the mortar holding together the flints in the Linden Grove entrance flower bed. This was repaired by LBS during October.

Tree pruning

We were very pleased to be contacted by the new LBS tree officer, Ian Williams, to inform us of plans to undertake tree pruning of overhanging branches along the Linden Grove boundary. Much as we love the trees of Nunhead, we do recognise that there is a need to ensure that pedestrians can still walk safely along the adjoining public footpaths! However, branch lopping has not always been carried out as sympathetically as it might in the past. We met with Ian on site on 30th September to exchange views and were pleased by Ian's very positive response. We also learnt just how restricted Ian's budget is for tree work throughout the Borough so we are lucky to have been prioritised for work this season. The work was carried out over two days in October.

JOHN G WALLER: HAPPY 200th BIRTHDAY

How FONC brought an 'overlooked Victorian artist' back into the spotlight

by Gwyneth Stokes

'**Monumental life of an overlooked Victorian artist**' - so ran the headline in the heritage section of *The Times* on Saturday, 28th September. Further reading revealed that this was an account of a ceremony in Nunhead Cemetery when the Friends and devotees of this 'Nunhead Notable' aimed to bring him into the spotlight for his 200th birthday.

It started when FONC was asked by a journalist last year whether there were to be any significant anniversaries in 2013. Skimming through Ron Woollacott's *Nunhead Notables*, I was so impressed by the work and achievements of John Green Waller FSA, antiquary, artist and brass engraver, I suggested to the committee we could make this significant and they fully agreed.



Monumental Brass Society and Church Monuments Society members meet at the grave of JGW. The Venerable David Meara is on the right. Photo by Simon Whittemore

First we had to find the grave. Ron had previously located it but now it turned out to be hidden away from a main path and was much overgrown; so the workday volunteers got busy clearing the surroundings and making a pathway.

Approaches to the many organisations JGW was associated with brought

support and interest from several but we were amazingly fortunate to have special assistance from two leading members of the Monumental Brass Society (MBS). Philip Whittemore, an authority on Waller's work, offered the loan of photographs for an accompanying exhibition. FONC's artist Jolanta Jagiello prepared the boards and they made an impressive entrance display to her 'Vignetted Windows' exhibition in the chapel. As JGW was also a stained glass window designer this was a timely link. Though a week earlier than the actual birthday, we chose Sunday, 22nd September for the ceremony to augment the Open House attractions.



*Philip Whittemore reads the tribute to JGW
Photo by Simon Whittemore*

Our other stroke of luck occurred when MBS member and past president David Meara also turned out to be Archdeacon of London and offered to conduct the commemorative service.

On the day, remembering some previous wet FONC events, we were pleased the weather was blessedly fine and dry and about 15 people easily negotiated the grassy bank to gather at the tree-surrounded grave.

David Meara's reading from Ecclesiasticus 'Let us now praise famous men' aptly stated: 'All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times'. Philip Whittemore spoke briefly of JGW's life and work, and I laid FONC's floral tribute on the grave. The final prayer included thanks for those who have 'left behind beautiful things, products of ancient crafts and all those who seek to record and understand the past, especially thy servant John Green Waller, antiquary, scholar and craftsman, the bicentenary of whose birth we celebrate today.'

And in yet another role David Meara added the finishing touch to the event as he is the author of *The Times* article. ■

And in yet another role David Meara added the finishing touch to the event as he is the author of *The Times* article. ■

FONC gives special thanks to Philip Whittemore and the Venerable David Meara for their enthusiastic contributions. There will be more opportunities to see the exhibition in the future, and a fuller account of the artist's life and work will be published in a future issue of FONC News.

SOLDIERS BURIED IN NUNHEAD (ALL SAINTS) CEMETERY

Response to Eddie Barclay's article in the Summer 2013 issue
of *FONC News* No 120

by *Philip Evans* (FONC Member No 4462)

Having spent several years researching and recording First World War graves and family memorials in numerous SE London cemeteries, I read Eddie Barclay's article 'Soldiers Buried in Nunhead (All Saints) Cemetery' in the Summer 2013 issue of *FONC News* with great interest. I felt I could not let it go, however, without carrying out some research of my own.

The argument over whether Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headstones are true to the grave said to be below them is not new, though usually restricted to the battlefield clearances in France and Flanders. Without doubt there are anomalies, errors and in a few cases, fraud and negligence. One only has to look at the intricate arrangement of CWGC headstones in Plot B at Lewisham's Ladywell Cemetery to see that some license was extended at times. To claim, however, that both the general Commonwealth Plot and the Australian Plot at Nunhead contain 51 empty graves between them is, I believe, ill-founded.

Firstly, the Burial Act 1857, Section 25 stipulates that where the removal of a body is to be carried out without the granting of a Bishop's Faculty, the granting of a licence by a Secretary of State is required, i.e. an Exhumation Order. Surviving copies of these orders are available at the National Archives in the series HO 85. To date, I have only been able to look at two volumes, covering July 1919 to March 1920, but have found either the application or the licence for the exhumation and reburial of 16 Canadians, four South Africans and one Australian. The licence was valid for twelve months from date of issue and subject to conditions.

Secondly, I cannot understand, given that each Dominion's military authority was responsible for its own reburials, how such a widespread abuse could have taken place. Not all the reburials took place at the same time, although it is my belief that there was probably an effort to minimise the disruption to Square 89 where-ever possible. Although not proof of the reburials taking place, it was a condition of the exhumation order 'that the removals are carried out under the supervision and to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health for the District.' Also the majority of the Australian soldiers' service records contain a letter to the next of kin, generally dat-

ed 20th April 1920, which states ‘This work is carried out with every measure of care and reverence in the presence of a Chaplain.’ The underlining is mine in both cases and is an attempt to show that the process of exhumation and reburial, although under the licence conditions to be carried out early in the morning, was not in isolation.

As I mentioned above, not all the reburials took place at the same time and although I have been limited by the resources available to me, especially not having been able to access the cemetery records, it has been an interesting exercise to see how each of the plots has possibly developed. To many of the Commonwealth countries, burial in a common grave was unacceptable, Australia being particularly vociferous in the debate. By early 1917 Commonwealth casualties in the UK were being buried in single graves, hence we can see that the three Canadians buried in Square 52 in January 1917 were probably the first occupants, followed by two South Africans in April. The majority of the remainder of those in the plot appear to be reburials from Square 89 etc over a period, probably from mid-1919 to mid-1920. Interestingly, the practice of burying UK soldiers in common graves in Square 89 continued up to September 1917.

The Australian Plot appears to date from later. Charles MUNDAY, who was buried there in February 1919, is the only one to have been a direct burial. The last reburial in the plot was that of Harold SKINNER in 1920. His grave can clearly be seen to break the symmetry of the plot whereby he was buried in what was formerly a pathway. The later establishment of this plot possibly explains why James MORGAN is the sole Australian in Square 52. It is my intention to carry on with this research and to extend my coverage of HO 85 in order to hopefully locate the main body of Australian and New Zealand exhumation orders. I would also welcome any comments or information from others. I can be contacted via the e-mail link on my website <http://www.philevans.org>

Sources:

First Australian Imperial Forces personnel dossiers: National Archives of Australia.
Australian Graves Services—Court of Inquiry: National Archives of Australia.
Commonwealth War Graves Registers—First World War: Library and Archives Canada.
New Zealand Defence Force—Personnel Files: Archives New Zealand.
Home Office—Burials Entry Books (Series HO 85): The National Archives, Kew.
Sketch maps and photographs compiled by the author.

A RETURN TO NUNHEAD

by Steve Wright

Having joined FONC a few years ago, I was always meaning to take a trip to the cemetery, but it took a visit from my Auntie Pat over here from New Zealand to make it happen. So in August 2013 we duly arrived outside the main gates. This was quite special for us because from 1941 to 1969 our family lived at 119 Linden Grove (once known as Church House), the former home of monumental mason Henry Daniel, directly opposite the main cemetery gates. My Nan and Grandad (Elsie and Robert Wright) moved in when my dad was about five-years-old. They had returned to Nunhead (my Nan having been born at 121 Linden Grove) to look after Elsie's father Ernest, as his wife Annie had recently passed away. Ernest said the old Daniel's house was vacant and being used by the Germans as a landmark, so it would not get bombed during the air-raids. We are unsure where he got this nugget (the pub probably), but the house remained unscathed throughout the war, although the cemetery took a few hits.

My Auntie Pat was born in the front room of Church House and I lived there until I was about seven with my parents. It was a large Gothic house with bags of character and lots of land for a young lad to have fun in (a kind of des res for the Adams family), sadly pulled down to make way for the modern housing which now stands on the plot. It withstood two world wars but not the local council. We also have a strong connection to the cemetery as Elsie's dad (Ernest) was the gatekeeper from 1919 until his death in 1956. He had worked there as an attendant before going off to fight for King and country in the First World War.

Our visit brought back many happy memories. Pat told us how in the early 1950s, as a young girl, at Sunday lunchtime she would cross over the road carrying a roast dinner on a covered tray for Ernest. He would be waiting in the gatekeeper's lodge, just inside the main cemetery gates. For this service, her grandfather would give her sixpence. In the lodge, he had a big wooden armchair, a table, and in the winter there would be a roaring fire in the grate to keep him warm. For his Sunday tea, Ernest would usually have a pot of winkles from the shellfish man, who would stop outside the gates with his cart and ring his bell.

Ernest had several watering cans painted green and the gateman at the other side of the cemetery would have blue ones. If the visitors needed water for their flowers, he would fill one up and take it to the grave they were tending. He would usually receive a coin for his trouble.



'Church House' 119 Linden Grove, Nunhead—photo courtesy Steve Wright

Pat also remembers feeding the donkeys in the cemetery, which used to pull the carts for the gardeners. Before the cemetery closed, Ernest would ring a bell to let visitors know the gates would soon be shutting. Occasionally people would get locked in and call out for help, and as we lived opposite Pat or my dad (Derek) would hear them and run down the road to 127 Linden Grove to get Ernest to unlock the gates and let them out.

Ernest had two daughters and two sons. His eldest son, also called Ernest but known as Ern, was a funeral director, and organised his father's funeral. He lived at 58 Ivydale Road, just around the corner. His younger son, Jack Brackley, worked as a letter cutter engraver for Daniel's the stonemasons. There is a photo of Jack, with his work colleagues, outside Daniel's in Ron Woollacott's book *Investors in Death*. So we had three relatives all working in and around Nunhead Cemetery. Ernest senior had a new road named after him in Linden Grove called Brackley Avenue. He died (two years before I was born) of a cerebral haemorrhage. His grave at Nunhead is the first on the left of the main avenue.

So anyway, after a chat with Jeff Hart at the FONC Portakabin, we took a

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lovely stroll around the cemetery with one of Ron's books as a guide. We were trying to imagine what it must have been like in its heyday in the early 1900s. Finally we gathered around Ernest and Annie's grave on that beautiful sunny day in August this year. There was his granddaughter Pat, grandson Derek, great-grandson Steve, and great-great-grandson James, and my mum Carol. I felt a strong need to return again and give FONC a helping hand with maintaining this fantastic place.

Before we returned back to leafy Kent, Pat and I went to check out our old schools. Pat and my dad went to Hollydale and I went to Ivydale. My school had hardly changed after nearly 50 years and was just how I remembered it. As we continued to walk around the street, Pat pointed out Kimberley Avenue where her late husband Mick Thomas lived, and my mum recognised a shop that used to be our doctor's in the 1960s. Dad also showed me the bridge next to Nunhead Station where, when he was about eight, a sailor (home on leave) threw him under to shelter from a lone German plane that proceeded to dive and pepper the road and shops with bullets. We sat down outside a small café opposite the Pyrotechnists pub reminiscing over a cup of coffee and amazing one another with long-forgotten stories until it was time to go. So you can see our family feel a strong connection with Linden Grove and Nunhead and it felt really good to be back.■

Vignetted Windows Foretold

Report by Jolanta Jagiello

'Vignetted Windows Foretold', a public art exhibition in the restored Anglican chapel curated by Jolanta Jagiello, open all weekends in September including Open House Weekend and Nunhead Art Trail, was a huge success with over 1,600 visitors, beating all previous visitor numbers for exhibitions in the restored chapel, and open all weekends in September. The public not only enjoyed artworks destined for the windows displayed on rails below the windows, but tours of the cemetery, turret tower, and crypt and the opportunity to participate in Fused Glass Workshop run by Richard Tilbury on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons during Open House Weekend. Over 50 fused glass pieces were produced by the public, and fired offsite in the week, ready for the public to collect during Nunhead Art Trail the following weekend. This is the first year of the Nunhead Art Trail and the visitors numbers were comparable to those for Open House Weekend. FONC found it a very positive experience with visitors walking through the cemetery to visit 'Vignetted Windows Foretold' exhibition before going onto their next ven-

ue. FONC's workday volunteer Bob ran a 'Design a Stained Glass Window in a Day' during Nunhead Art Trail with over 75 artworks produced which the public could display in the chapel or take home with them. ■



Richard Tilbury with a visitor collecting the finished fused glass pieces

THE WATERMEN'S MISSING MEMORIAL

by Ron Woollacott

Until sometime in the late 1970s, after which date it seems to have disappeared without trace, a rather unusual low coped memorial - I believe it was made of iron - could be seen on the right-hand side of the East Path leading to the Limesford Road gates. It marked the grave of the Rolls family of Thames watermen, and was adorned with the arms of the Company of Watermen and Lightermen. The burial rights were granted in perpetuity to Francis Rolls of New Kent Road for three guineas. It was dug to a depth of 12 feet, and the first burial was that of William Rolls, a waterman and lighterman, who was born in Bermondsey in about 1789, and died at 15 Paradise Row, Lambeth, in 1863, aged 74. He was buried at Nunhead on 31st January 1863, and the service was conducted by the cemetery chaplain, the Reverend Henry Morgan. William's widow, Harriet, died at Wandsworth and was buried with him on 23rd May 1868, aged 81.

Other members of the family who share the same grave include William's sons, Edward, his youngest surviving son, also a Thames waterman, who died in 1888, aged 60, and Francis, his eldest son, who was granted the original burial rights. Francis was a waterman and later a customs officer, and afterwards a wine merchant. He lived with his wife Isabella at 9 Crofton

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Road, Camberwell, and died there in 1889. His effects amounted to £2,784, worth over half-a-million pounds in today's money. Isabella died at Camberwell on 16 October 1894, aged 67, and was the last to be buried in the grave. It is not known what became of the memorial. ■

*Arms of the Company of Watermen
and Lightermen on the Rolls grave*



Sun shines on record attendance at NFCF AGM in York—report by Gwyneth Stokes

There was a record attendance of 84 from 29 cemetery friends groups at the annual meeting of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF) hosted by the Friends of York Cemetery in June.

Jane and Jeff Hart represented FONC. Gwyneth Stokes attended as NFCF secretary, and committee member Carol Stevenson was elected the new treasurer on Ian Simpson's retirement.

The weather was warm and sunny which added to the enjoyment of the tours of this interesting cemetery which is owned by the York Cemetery Trust which stepped in to purchase it in 1987 after many years of neglect. They have gradually and elegantly restored the chapel until it could comfortably hold such a one-day event for the talks, the meeting and generous catering. Latest acquisition was the heating system which led to the new Italian marble floor, and the installation problems were vividly described by the Trust chairman Dr Richard Keesing. His talk followed the Friends' chairman Clive Dawson giving an introduction to the cemetery and the Friends and Dr Julie Rugg of the Cemetery Research Group, York University, spoke about recent research into patterns of churchyard burial in Yorkshire.

At the business meeting topics for discussions included members' experiences of applying for grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and whether there should be any First World War commemoration under the NFCF banner.

Many thanks to the Friends and Trust of York Cemetery for an enjoyable and memorable day. ■

~ DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ~

TREE TRAIL TOUR IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

► **Sunday 8th December 2013 at 2.15pm.** Meet FONC's Tim Stevenson at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove.

FONC CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

► **Thursday 19th December 2013 at 7.00pm.** Meet in the function room (upstairs) at the Old Nun's Head pub, Nunhead Green, London, SE15 3QQ. Come and enjoy **AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 CEMETERIES** a slide presentation by Jeff Hart. Festive refreshments will be available. This is an opportunity to spend a convivial evening with other Friends and supporters. *There is no charge but donations to offset costs will be appreciated.*

ANNUAL OPEN DAY (NUNHEAD CEMETERY)

► **Saturday 17th May 2014 from 11.00am to 5.00pm.** This date will soon come around, so please make a note in your 2014 diary.

VOLUNTARY WORKDAYS

► *Voluntary workdays take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10am to 4.30pm.* New volunteers are most welcome. Meet at the FONC Portakabin (opposite the Scottish Martyrs' monument) 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 date is Sunday 15th December 2013.* Please check with Paul Dyer (MI Co-ordinator) before travelling. Contact: fonc@btconnect.com.

GUIDED TOURS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY

► *General conducted 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 entrance in Linden Grove. Just turn up on the day. Tours usually take between 90 minutes and two hours. Publications and Enquiry Desk will be open weather and volunteers permitting.

~ CONTACTS ~

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

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(Copy received after this date may be used in a future issue)

Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)

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www.fonc.org.uk

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