

FONC News



No 125 - Autumn (September—November 2014) - ISSN 1478-0631



Contrary Mary's plant stall at Nunhead Cemetery—see page 4 Photo: Nicola Dunn

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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. *If you would like more Sundays can you spare the occasional one to help?* Contact Gwyneth Stokes gwyneth1@btinternet.com

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 the chairman fonc@btconnect.com. 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

Editor: Ron Woollacott.

Subeditor: Gwyneth Stokes.

Contributors to this issue: Nicola Dunn; Jeff Hart, R G S Hunter, Carole Tyrrell. Unless otherwise credited all other text is by the editor.

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

~ **FORTHCOMING EVENT** ~

London Open House Weekend in Nunhead Cemetery

Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September 2014

1.00pm—5.00 pm on both days

The crypt, chapel and viewing tower will be open to visitors during the London Open House weekend, and we shall require volunteers to act as stewards, assist with enquiries and staff the publications stall etc. If you can help us on either or both days, please contact an officer or committee member. Contact details will be found on the back page of this journal.

Chairman's Annual Report

for the period 1st June 2013 to 31st May 2014

My wife Maureen and I recently had the pleasure of showing an American friend and his companion around Nunhead Cemetery. Our friend has a particular interest in the cemetery because his ancestors are buried there. The last time he visited Nunhead was about 14 years ago, at which time work was well underway in restoring the 'historic core' of the cemetery with financial assistance from the Heritage Lottery Fund. He was absolutely delighted with the restoration and the additional work carried out by FONC volunteers, and the Council and their contactors, since he last visited in 2000. A colonel (retired) US Marine Corps, he and his companion appreciated Jolanta Jagiello's latest art exhibition on the subject of the First World War: 'Wrenches, Trenches and Stenches'. It was raining during their visit

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but the wet weather didn't dampen their spirits nor diminish their enthusiasm. Of course, most people visiting Nunhead Cemetery after so many years are usually delighted with the many improvements.

We participated in numerous events and activities during the last twelve months. In addition to taking part in the London Open House Weekend in September 2013, and holding our Annual Open Day in May 2014, other attractions included two well-attended art exhibitions in the cemetery, 'Vignetted Windows Foretold' and 'Wrenches, Trenches and Stenches' both curated by Jolanta Jagiello. A special event commemorating a Nunhead Notable, the artist John Green Waller, was organised by Gwyneth Stokes, and members' visits to Highgate Cemetery and to Streatham Church were organised by Cathy Mercer. Our regular monthly tours of Nunhead Cemetery continue to be popular with visitors, and specialist tours on offer included, Tree Trails, Military Connections, Symbols and Music-Hall Entertainers tours. Paul Dyer continued with the ongoing task of memorial inscription recording, and our hardworking team of workday volunteers ensure Nunhead Cemetery is a wonderful place to visit. All these events entail a tremendous amount of work and dedication on the part of volunteers, and everyone is to be congratulated for making them a success.

So many members work hard on behalf of FONC and deserve our thanks, in particular, and in no special order, Carole Stevenson, vice-chairman; Jeff Hart, co-ordinator; Cathy Mercer, our treasurer, who also organises special tours for members; Simon Mercer, membership secretary, who also attends to FONC publications by mail order; Carole Tyrrell, minutes secretary; and George Young, auditor, and not forgetting our committee members, Rex Batten, Ann Coley, Malcolm Collins, Jane Hart, Jolanta Jagiello, Jeremy Partington, Fran Rawcliffe, Tim Stevenson, Gwyneth Stokes and Maureen Woollacott.

Our grateful thanks also to Nicola Dunn and her band of *FONC News* distributors; Peter Blount and Pat Manning, postal co-ordinators, and Linda Martin and Maureen Woollacott for taking on the task when Pat and Peter were otherwise engaged; cemetery tour guides John Turpin and Chris Knowles, and those tour guides whose names have already been mentioned elsewhere in this report; Gwyneth Stokes and her band of volunteers who staff the publications and enquiry desk; Simon Quill, our webmaster, who maintains our excellent website; and of course our many members for their valued and continued support.

Ron Woollacott

Report of Annual General Meeting 2014

The AGM of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) was held at the Old Nun's Head public house on the evening of Wednesday 18th June 2014. The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the structure of the evening's business. After the opening remarks and receiving apologies for absence, the minutes of the 2013 AGM were adopted as a true record of that meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report of the General Committee was presented by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator, who drew the attention of members to various items contained within the report as follows:

Membership. We now had 837 fully paid up members compared to 855 last year. Jeff said membership services provided by Simon Mercer are highly professional and represent a very significant contribution to maintaining our impressive membership figures.

Website and Sunday Publications and Enquiry Desk. Jeff informed members that our website maintained by Simon Quill was FONC's introduction to the wider world, and said we were lucky to have him on board at no cost to FONC. The publications and enquiry desk was FONC's public face, recruiting new members as well as selling publications. No special knowledge was required and new volunteers were always welcome.

Annual Open Day and Open House Weekend. Jeff said the 2014 Annual Open Day held on Saturday 17th May had been better attended than in previous years. Carol and Tim Stevenson had done sterling work organising behind the scenes. The Open Day was free admission to make it accessible to all and provided 25% of FONC's annual income. The refreshments stall alone had yielded a profit of £1,832. There had been good publicity with pieces in *The Times*, *Green Chain Journal* and Southwark websites.

Publications, Archives and Research Work. Jeff said that during 2014 we had produced a calendar and the third volume in the popular Nunhead Notables series which had been published in time for Open Day, and initial sales had been encouraging as had FONC's new cotton bags. Carol Stevenson proudly displayed a bag and reminded everyone that they cost only £3 each.

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Art and Education Projects. Jeff said we were extremely fortunate to have Jolanta Jagiello on board. She had curated the recent ‘Wrenches, Trenches and Stenches’ exhibition which was about to go on a tour of various London cemeteries. Jolanta added that she also sourced the funding.

Religious Services. Jeff reminded everyone that the Annual All Souls Service was ecumenical and catered for all religious denominations. He said he hoped more members would make the effort to attend. By contrast the Remembrance Day Service was a secular event and attendance increased every year.

Management of Nunhead Cemetery. The contract for grounds maintenance was operated by Quadron led by Andy Robinson and FONC had developed a close relationship with them. The Council, Quadron and FONC, have worked together to manage an increasing number of corporate volunteering activities, notably organised with Groundwork Trust. We have, however, felt that Southwark Council have not respected the need for consultation with FONC, and this was the subject of discussion with the Council in May 2014. We hope to see an improvement.

Cemetery Improvements. We were unable to reach agreement with Southwark Council regarding possible installation of new path names signposts (to be part funded by FONC) despite majority public support. However, new signage at the Linden Grove entrance and Green Chain Walk signage at Nunhead Railway Station have enhanced the visitor experience of the cemetery. Despite positive meetings with the Architectural Heritage Fund we have yet to persuade the Council to support our revitalized efforts to restoration of the ruined East Lodge. The Southwark tree team have carried out routine tree work and have been kept busy with emergency work resulting from the winter storms.

The chairman thanked Jeff for presenting the Annual Report on behalf of the General Committee, and following questions from the floor he proposed adoption of the report, seconded by member Dave Lebon.

VOLUNTARY WORKDAY REPORT

The Voluntary Workday Report was presented by FONC’s Vice-Chairman Carol Stevenson. Carol began by saying that the biggest project had been reinstating the Thirties Path which had completely disappeared beneath the undergrowth. Following the big storm in October 2013, the workday was held in the cemetery which was closed to the public. Volunteers cleared two fallen trees thus enabling access for the Remembrance Day event to go

ahead. She thanked everyone who turned up and worked so hard. Several graves were repaired during the year as well as the usual tasks of weeding, cutting brambles and pulling polygonum (Japanese Knotweed). We removed ivy growth from the boundary walls and pillars, and cleared growth from around our largest yew tree, which turned out to be two yews! We had fewer volunteers attending workdays last year, and more volunteers are needed. The chairman thanked Carol for her report.

HON TREASURER'S AND AUDITOR'S REPORTS

As our treasurer Cathy Mercer was unable to attend the AGM, the chairman referred members to their copies of the accounts. Jeff Hart pointed out that FONC's expenditure had reduced last year, and there was a surplus of £6,300. FONC spent money on useful items to improve Nunhead Cemetery as in the case of path names, while still being prudent. Dave Lebon said that money set aside for projects wasn't shown on the treasurer's report. Jeff thanked him for the useful suggestion. John Turpin thought the low membership subscription might be raised. Jeff referred to the 2013 AGM when the Committee's motion on increasing subscriptions was defeated. He added that the current subscription of £2 enabled FONC to be accessible to everyone. Overseas members paid £10. There were currently no plans to increase subscriptions. The chairman added that most members included a donation with their subscription. He explained that the £2 subscription did not cover the cost of producing the journal, and suggested the number of issues might be reduced to three issues a year at which there was a sharp intake of breath from Jeff Hart. Carol Stevenson suggested putting the AGM papers into members' area of our website. Simon Mercer added that Simon Quill was happy to do this but detailed information about FONC's finances shouldn't be included. Jeff Hart said the accounts would be made available to any FONC member who requested to see them. Jeremy Partington suggested putting committee minutes on our website. The chairman moved adoption of the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Rex Batten. The chairman said Cathy Mercer did a marvelous job and proposed a vote of thanks to her for looking after our finances so professionally, for which there was an immediate round of applause.

The annual accounts were audited by George Young. The chairman referred members to their individual copies of the auditor's report and invited members to comment. There being no questions the chairman proposed a vote of thanks to George and this was followed by another resounding round

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of applause, after which the chairman invited George to continue as our auditor for another year to which he agreed.

ELECTIONS

The chairman explained that under the terms of our constitution there were five officer posts to be filled and places for up to ten committee members. The following members were elected to serve on the General Committee for another year: Ron Woollacott, chairman; Carole Stevenson, vice-chairman; Jeff Hart, co-ordinator; Cathy Mercer, honorary treasurer (in absentia); Carole Tyrell, minutes secretary. Committee members: Ann Coley, Malcolm Collins, Jane Hart, Jolanta Jagiello, Simon Mercer (membership secretary), Jeremy Partington, Fran Rawcliffe, Tim Stevenson, Gwyneth Stokes (in absentia), and Maureen Woollacott. As there were no further nominations the officers and committee members were elected unopposed. Rex Batten did not stand for re-election. The chairman thanked Rex for all his valuable work on behalf of FONC over the years for which Rex received a round of appreciative applause. Jeff Hart pointed out that any ordinary member could be co-opted onto the committee as had Ann Coley in 2013. No-one should feel excluded and new blood was more than welcome.

MOTIONS PROPOSED BY THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

Adoption and Review of Policy Statements. Jeff Hart explained that the purpose of this document (a copy was given to each member attending the AGM) is to consolidate policy statements adopted by FONC over the years, to bring some up-to-date, and to adopt a new policy needed to facilitate future grant funding applications. There were three groups, two of which were for consideration.

Group 1. *Policy statements for which no amendment is being proposed:* Equal Opportunities Policy, Education Policy, Burial Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Open Day Policy, Film & Photography Code of Practice.

Group 2. *Policy statements previously adopted for which minor amendments are being proposed:* FONC Access Policy, FONC Charging and Pricing Policy.

Group 3. *New policy statement proposed for adoption:* Safeguarding vulnerable adults policy. This item was printed in full.

After some discussion, Jeff proposed that the new policy statement and amendments be formally adopted. The chairman asked for a show of hands, and the motions were unanimously adopted by all present with no abstentions. *A copy of the full policy documents are available upon request from the co-ordinator.*

PRESENTATION BY ROBERT STEPHENSON

The business part of the meeting was concluded and followed by light refreshments, which included four delicious brandy and whisky fruit cakes baked and donated by Maureen Woollacott and her sister Linda Martin. After the break for refreshments, our guest speaker Robert Stephenson gave a fascinating PowerPoint presentation about the creation of the roundels he sculpted and cast (replacing those stolen from the main gates of Nunhead Cemetery) as part of the restoration of the cemetery gates and railings in 2000. These were brand new exclusive designs, one of which, designed by Robert, features an angel's wing and bat's wing supporting an hour glass. Robert also described how he made the cast of the original memorial inscription tablet stolen in 1969 which once adorned the Walworth Boy Scouts' monument. The original was recovered and is now in the possession of the Scouts' Association. After the presentation Robert very generously donated the moulds of the two roundels and inscription tablet to FONC. ■

Nicola Dunn's review of Nunhead Cemetery Open Day 2014

Sometimes it feels like the first day of the sales on the FONC plant stall at Open Day, so frantic is the first half hour. This year, aiming for a more controlled start at 11am, we tied a large fabric banner across the front of the stall, which was taken down with a flourish as Jeff Hart announced the day 'open'.

Our own plants and related bric-a-brac is boosted by numerous donations on the day, from people we often don't even see or have time to thank, so here's a big thank you to everyone who left things for us to sell – you contributed to the £1,263 that we took on the day. Eleven of us man the 'Contrary Mary' plant stall. The most experienced being Cy Dale, who started the stall with Mary Bavin about 25 years ago and the youngest is George, Pam's grandson. We keep asking him if he has any friends who would like to help – youth and energy are a bonus on such a busy day and yes, there is the long term future of the stall to think about. We keep that bit to ourselves—we don't want to frighten him off with such serious considerations!

The weather was glorious again this year and we welcomed many familiar faces who have the big day writ large in their diaries and also newcomers

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who are amazed to discover such a great event happening on their doorstep.

For several years, my neighbours have smiled indulgently when I mentioned Nunhead and, fed up with my cajoling, they came along for the first time. They were surprised there was so much to see and do, especially for the children and realised what a beautiful natural space the cemetery is, a new place to walk their dog. They will be regulars from now on. For our part, we have a lot of laughs and extend our knowledge of plants and also breeds of dogs! Did you know that a Pug crossed with a Beagle is a Puggle? I also learnt a bit of Origami too, as Keiko took time out from selling plants to show children how to make their own paper flowers. Now my garden looks unnaturally tidy and empty of pots – time to start taking cuttings for next year. Anyone for Mahonia, Kniphofia, Pittosporum or Photinia? ■



Keiko takes a break to show children how to make paper flowers

Photo courtesy Nicola Dunn

ANOTHER BRILLIANT OPEN DAY

The day dawned bright and breezy and we all looked forward to another Nunhead Cemetery Open Day and were not disappointed. This was our 29th, and despite the lack of interest by the local press, it was perhaps our best and busiest yet! There were plenty of attractions to keep visitors entertained all day, including wood turning demonstrations by Tim Stevenson, our very own bodger, birds of prey displays, stone carving, an art exhibition in the mausoleum, and for the youngsters, face painting, badge making and Mr Bugman's famous bug hunt.

The main avenue was lined with stalls with over 20 groups taking part including: the Herne Hill Society, Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery, Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, Stuart Road Allotments, Camberwell Gardens Guild, Southwark Local Studies Library, Society of Genealogists, East Surrey Family History Society, Nunhead's Voice, Woodland Trust and more. FONC's very own stalls, the publications and enquiry desk, grave search enquiry desk, Contrary Mary's plant stall, and homemade refreshment stands were kept busy all day. Maureen Woollacott would like to thank all those generous persons who donated delicious homemade cakes, and Nicola Dunn says a big thank you to everyone who donated plants.

There was a full musical programme in the chapel with the Southwark Children's Brass Band receiving an award from the Deputy Mayor of Southwark, Councillor Sunil Chupra, the Salvation Army performing excerpts from 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat', and performances by several choirs. Visitors were able to climb the spiral staircase to the viewing platform at the top of the chapel tower, and descend into the crypt. If all these attractions were not enough to entertain the many hundreds of visitors, there were also conducted tours of the cemetery every hour starting at noon. None of this would have been possible without the organisational skills of Tim and Carol Stevenson; Jeff Hart, the man with the megaphone who took control of the day's proceedings; the involvement of local organisations and hard work of FONC's volunteers. A great big thank you to all concerned. ■

Friends of Camberwell Old Cemetery

We have been informed that the recently re-formed Friends of Camberwell Old Cemetery have a Facebook page. Any Facebook users can 'Like' the page to be kept up-to-date and comment on the posts.

<http://www.facebook.com/fcocemetery/timeline>

An enjoyable morning with Marx and Spencer

FONC visit to Highgate Cemetery on 27th April 2014

Report by Carole Tyrrell

The first inhabitant of the west side of Highgate Cemetery to greet us was Domino, the cemetery cat, a black and white cat with an enviable domain in which to explore. He was also very vociferous and seemed to think that he would be leading our tour.

I've always found the west side to be very romantic and intriguing and last visited it in the 1990s so a return visit was long overdue. There is a connection between Highgate and Nunhead in that they were both owned by the same cemetery company, the London Cemetery Company. Highgate closed in 1975 and the Friends of Highgate Cemetery subsequently took over.

Dr Ian Dungavell welcomed us and then John Shepperd, the then current chairman, took over as tour leader with Peter bringing up the rear. The west side was looking its best with patches of bluebells and luxuriantly growing wild garlic. The latter reminded me of the rumours of the Highgate vampire during the 1970s and wondered if that was the reason for its abundance.

Originally the east and west sides were two separate cemeteries and the London Cemetery Co had its own brickworks. The west side opened in May 1839 and the east side in 1855 with its first burial in 1860. John revealed that there had been public complaints about the boisterous cheering at shareholders' meetings as it was feared that they were profiting from death. Apparently the Magnificent Seven London cemeteries is a misnomer as there were originally eight. Meath Gardens in E3 was once Victoria Park Cemetery but was closed in 1885 due to its poor state and became a public park. Its last burial was in 1876 having opened in 1842.

The imposing Anglican chapel on the west side still has its hydraulic lift and a tunnel under the road. It was rumoured that, after leaving the Dissenters' chapel, hearses could go in two directions: the left hand path was for paupers and the other side was for the better off. Like Nunhead, Highgate also had its own nursery, greenhouses and was originally landscaped. However, with its increasing popularity resulting in up to 30 burials a day, it was said that being buried in Highgate was like being buried in Piccadilly Circus.

John indicated the grave of the first resident, Elizabeth Jackson, who was interred in 1839 and paid 3 guineas. He reminded us that the views from Highgate at that time would have stretched to the South Downs as it's on a hill. It cost £2.10s to be buried there at a time when a working man was lucky to earn £1 a week. Local residents had keys to the cemetery which became their personal park.

The largest vault is that of General Sir Loftus Otway which can hold up to 30 coffins and was vandalised during the cemetery's closure. It currently holds 15. The Russian dissident, Alexander Litvinenko, who died from poisoning is here and John pointed out that his tombstone is a modern adaptation of the Victorian broken col-

umn which indicated that the head or support of the family has died.

We all admired the celebrated Egyptian Avenue which capitalised on the 1820s taste for all things Egyptian after the first expeditions there. John explained that originally it had a roof which had made it very gloomy but it was considered to be a prestigious place for an eternal sleep. But it took 50 years to sell all 16 vaults as, with other Egyptian symbols like obelisks, it was viewed as pagan and so unpopular. The avenue is now roofless and is a much lighter place especially in the spring sunshine.



The Egyptian Avenue, Highgate West Cemetery—Photo: Carole Tyrrell

The Circle of Lebanon, named after the beautiful Cedar of Lebanon on top of it, was another highlight. The tree came from a local, long vanished house, Ashurst, and no one knows its exact age. It is a lovely and magnificent centrepiece. We also saw Radclyffe Hall's vault which always has flowers. She wrote 'The Well of Loneliness' which was declared obscene due to its portrayal of a same sex relationship. However, Virginia Woolf, asserted that it was boring and gave it up.

At the highest point on the west side stands the Beer Mausoleum. Fifteen feet high, it had been closed for years until 1993 when it was reopened. Unfortunately the door wouldn't budge due to roughly two and half feet of bird droppings and this had to be cleared before anyone could actually get inside. This really is a showpiece memorial. No expense was spared on it and it would have cost £5 million in today's money. It was built by Julius Beer who made money from selling cotton bonds. These were to be repaid when the Confederates won the American Civil War so they

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weren't a good investment. The mausoleum's walls are lined with Italian marble and the ceiling is gilded and painted. It was dedicated to Ada, Beer's daughter who died aged eight. The beautiful sculpture on the back wall is of an angel and a small girl whose face is modelled from Ada's death mask. One of the sculptors who worked on the Albert memorial, Henry Dew Armstead, worked on the mausoleum. However, it doesn't contain any bodies as they were originally in the vault below which was vandalised during the cemetery's closure. The Beer family have died out.

One of the best loved of all of Highgate's many memorials is that of Nero, the sleeping Wombwell lion. George Wombwell was a zookeeper who, in 1810, owned a giraffe and a kangaroo amongst other animals which must have seemed very exotic to 19th century Londoners. Children used to ride on Nero's back and Wombwell's travelling circus was in business until the First World War. However, some of his extended family didn't fare so well with nature as his niece was killed by a tiger and his nephew was trampled to death by an elephant.

Another highlight of our tour was the catacombs. I hadn't known that Highgate had any and these are on ground level. There are 825 spaces with 60 remaining. They were in use until the early 20th century. Originally whitewashed, Charles Dickens had his young daughter placed there before removing her saying that it was too gloomy. John added that coffins are placed feet first into a catacomb space or *loculus* so that visitors can talk to the head of the deceased and not their feet.

Animals have always been popular in cemeteries and John took us to the grave of Tom Sayers complete with a life size sculpture of his bull mastiff, Lion, keeping watch. Sayers was a Victorian boxer or pugilist. He was the English champion and originally hailed from Pimlico, a slum area of Brighton. At Sayers' funeral, Lion, wearing a black ruff, sat in the carriage behind the hearse which emphasised that the dog had been more faithful than the wife. Lion was sold for £2 at the auction of Sayers' belongings after his death. One hopes that he had a happy and long life. The restored Acheler horse stood guard under a spreading horse-chestnut tree and the sleeping angel on a bed of stone clouds slumbered on.

There are still burials taking place here and we saw novelist Beryl Bainbridge's grave on our way back to the entrance. Domino ignored us as he continued on his prowl and vanished into the ivy.

Then, after tea and excellent home-made biscuits, we crossed the road to the east side. It is where most modern burials take place and it was busy with 21st century Londoners following the custom of Victorians by promenading in the cemetery on a Sunday afternoon. Near the entrance John pointed out the monument to one of the Great Train Robbers, Bruce Reynolds, which was erected on the 50th anniversary of the event. It features a death mask of Reynolds between two columns with the phrases 'This is it' and 'C'est la vie'. The former was the phrase that Reynolds used to alert the rest of the gang that the robbery was on, and the latter was the one used by Reynolds' arresting officer. Another death mask was on Malcolm McLaren's grave so perhaps this is the start of a new fashion in funerary architecture. But the east side's most famous incumbent is undoubtedly Karl Marx. An enormous bust of

the man sits staring out from the top of his column. It's a place of pilgrimage for worldwide communists but has suffered for it. Poor Karl, he's been blown up and daubed in blue paint but still stares serenely, if a little forbiddingly, from his plinth. Originally he and his family were buried a short distance away but were moved to their present location and their headstone incorporated in Karl's monument.

Nearby lies Herbert Spencer who was a prominent right-winger and coined the phrase 'survival of the fittest'. And so that little corner is known as Marx and Spencer. Another close neighbour is Gloria Jones, creator of the Notting Hill Carnival. George Eliot is not far away and so the great and good jostle with the less well-known and there are too many to list. Alas, the wallabies have gone elsewhere. My favourite epitaph was the playwright Anthony Shaffer's which simply read 'Grand Artificer of Mysteries.'

It was a fascinating tour and we left wishing that we had more time to explore both sides of Highgate Cemetery. Our grateful thanks to Dr Ian Dungavell, John Shepperd and Peter from the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust and also to our Cathy Mercer for organising a successful and most enjoyable tour.■

NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS No 15

by Jeff Hart—FONC Co-ordinator

Ivydale Road boundary clearance

At the time of writing, Southwark Council are responding to complaints from residents of Ivydale Road about the deteriorating condition of the cemetery boundary wall by cutting back trees and shrubs encroaching over residents' gardens. We are told this will be done sympathetically and that no trees will be removed unnecessarily, unless found to be unsafe when surrounding undergrowth is cleared. However, we are concerned about the amount of clearance that is planned and how the area will be accessed. There is also a suggestion that work is to be carried out on the boundary wall itself which also raises concerns about how this will be done from inside the cemetery. FONC will be seeking suitable reassurances from Southwark as a matter of urgency.

Portakabin receives a bashing

At FONC's suggestion, three large ash trees overhanging the FONC Portakabin inside the Linden Grove entrance were felled by Southwark Council in June. Weighed down by mature ivy growth, these trees had been gradually leaning further and further forward to threaten the toilet block Portakabin. It was a difficult job and hardly surprising that the corrugated roofing over the

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Portakabin suffered a few dents and the guttering (both installed by FONC some years ago) now looks rather twisted but this will soon be put right by FONC volunteers on a subsequent workday.

Crypt access improvements are key!

During the May workday FONC volunteers cleared silt and debris from the grid in front of the heavy oak doors that give the rear access to the crypt under the Anglican chapel. The grid is meant to drain water away from the entrance but with such wet weather over the winter and with no regular maintenance regime in place the whole area had become very slimy and slippery. Having now discovered what needed to be done to clear the soak-away, FONC volunteers will now ensure that this is kept clear in future. There are also another set of oak doors at the side of the crypt that were restored at the time of the Lottery funded work undertaken in 1999/2000. Unfortunately, no-one seemed to know who held the keys for these doors or, since they were placed and locked before FONC volunteers had sight of what was behind the doors, quite what lay beyond. However, Southwark Council recently brought in a specialist locksmith and new keys have now been provided. Rather disappointingly, nothing exciting has been revealed behind the doors – simply what appears to be an empty storage area!

ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH

Part 2—Art and Science, by R G S Hunter

A good start in looking for multi-disciplined people is at a large Celtic cross dedicated to Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840), born in the Grassmarket near the castle, he spent happy boyhood days scrambling around the Castle Rock. After education at Edinburgh High School he was apprenticed to a coachbuilder where he showed artistic talent at an early age, decorating the side panels of fine carriages. After further training at the Trustees Art Academy he was hired by Allan Ramsay, the famous portrait painter, to work in London colouring in backgrounds and completing the clothing in portraits. Returning to Edinburgh in 1778 he set up his own studios. One of his best known portraits is of Robert Burns. Nasmyth helped Patrick Miller, a wealthy banker with an interest in engineering, to design a steam-driven boat which they tried out on Dalswinton Loch with Robert Burns as a passenger. Nasmyth also helped Thomas Telford to design the Dean Bridge, and drew

up plans for a Temple of Hygeia over St Barnard's Well near the Water of Leith. Among his sons we have Patrick, a painter described as the 'Father of Scottish Landscape', while his youngest son, James, invented the steam-hammer.

Inside the church is an elaborately carved monument with musical cherubs and lots of bulging fruit to the memory of John Napier (1550-1617). His father was the Master of the Scottish Mint. Napier was born at Merchiston Castle (now within Napier University at Colinton Road) in the year at the start of the Scottish Reformation, studied at St Andrews and travelled widely on the Continent. Travel certainly broadened his mind and he was fascinated by astronomy, astrology, alchemy, and mathematics.

His uncanny understanding of the natural world led some to regard him as a sort of wizard. Wizard or not he was a staunch supporter of the Reformed Church, devoting as much energy to theology as to science. He was Commissioner for the Presbytery of Edinburgh at the General Assembly (1588) and published 'A Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of St John' (1593) strongly critical of the Roman Catholic Church. Napier invented a series of devices in military, industrial and agricultural fields, e.g. a tank, a powerful mirror for setting fire to ships at sea, artillery capable of firing in all directions, a hydraulic screw for clearing flooded mine workings, and new methods of farming. To those interested in mathematics he is better known for the invention of logarithms in 1617; as an early pioneer of the development of the computer; and laying the mathematical foundations which made the 1750 Industrial Revolution possible.



Monument to Alexander Nasmyth

Photo: R G S Hunter

to be continued

NEW FONC PUBLICATION NOW AVAILABLE
Buried at Nunhead—Nunhead Notables volume 3
by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford
ISBN 978-0-9569874-2-6 Illustrated paperback 128 pages

Eleven Victorian actors and actresses are among 100 personalities whose life stories appear in this new book, along with several officers who served in Nelson's navy, veterans of the Peninsular War, Battle of Waterloo, and Crimean Campaign. Others of interest include the general secretary of the Newspaper Society who played chess with a future British Prime Minister; the West India merchant who founded one of the UK's first roller skating rinks; the railway pioneer who worked on the Stockton and Darlington railway and drove Stephenson's 'Rocket'; a French interpreter to Louis Philippe I of France; the Lord Mayor of London who became the first Governor of the Bank of England; the artist son of an Indian prince; Queen Victoria's state coachman; a friend and supporter of the Italian patriot General Garibaldi; the war correspondent known as 'The Doyen of the Press'; the first Chief Port and Harbour Master of Victoria, Australia; a former president of the Women's Provident League; the founder of the 'Tailor and Cutter'; and others who came from more humble backgrounds including, the 'King of the Rat-catchers'; London's 'Queen of the Costers'; the cow keeper who became a successful antique dealer; and the chimney sweep turned preacher.

Available from the publications and enquiry desk in the cemetery on tour days and workdays only. Price £4.50 (members) and £5 (non-members). Also available by post from FONC Publications, publications@fonc.org.uk. ***Please add £1.50 per copy when ordering by post. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to FONC.***

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Volunteers to assist on publications and enquiry desk in the cemetery. Sunday afternoons from 2pm to 4pm.

Contact Gwyneth Stokes email gwyneth1@btinternet.com

Volunteers to carry out practical conservation work and/or monumental inscription recording on the first Sunday each month 10am to 4.30pm.

Contact Tim Stevenson on fonc@btconnect.com

Volunteers to distribute *FONC News* by hand to members in your local area.

Contact Nicola Dunn on fonc@btconnect.com

Volunteers to guide parties around Nunhead Cemetery. Training is provided.

Contact Carole Tyrrell by email cattyrrrell@hotmail.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

IMPORTANT NOTICE—CHANGE OF DATE: MILITARY CONNECTIONS TOUR ► *The date of this special tour has been changed to Sunday 12th October. Meet at 2.15pm inside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove.*

WOODLAND TRAIL TOURS ► *Sundays 14th September and 14th December.* Meet at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to the cemetery at 2.15pm.

LONDON OPEN HOUSE AT NUNHEAD CEMETERY 2014 ► *Saturday and Sunday 20th and 21st September from 1pm to 5pm on both days.* (see page 3).

ALL SOULS SERVICE ► We regret to announce that due to unforeseen circumstances the annual All Souls Ecumenical Service that was due to take place in Nunhead Cemetery on 2 November has been cancelled.

REMEMBRANCE DAY EVENT ► *Sunday 9th November.* Meet at the main War Memorial by the Limesford Road entrance at 10.45am. British Legion wreaths will be laid at all the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) main plots. Everyone is most welcome.

FONC'S CHRISTMAS SOCIAL ► *Thursday 18th December at 7pm.* Upstairs in the function room at the Old Nun's Head pub, Nunhead Green, London, SE15 3QQ. This is an opportunity to meet with other Friends and supporters. Full details will be announced in the winter issue of *FONC News* out in early December.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION RECORDING ► *Sundays 28th September, 19th October, 23rd November and Saturday 13th December.* Transcribing the inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery is an important and ongoing task. For more information and times please contact Paul Dyer (MI Co-ordinator) fonc@btconnect.com Volunteers meet at the FONC Portakabin near the Linden Grove entrance at 10am.

VOLUNTARY WORKDAYS ► *take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10am to 4.30pm.* New volunteers are always most welcome. Meet at the FONC Portakabin (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.*

GUIDED TOURS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY ► *Conducted tours take place on the last Sunday in every month at 2.15pm.* Meet at the flint circle inside the main entrance in Linden Grove. There is no need to book— just turn up on the day. Tours take between one and a half and two hours. The publications and enquiry desk will be open, weather and volunteers permitting.

SPECIAL TOURS OF THE CHAPEL, TOWER AND CRYPT ► *The chapel will be open for guided tours during Open House Weekend on Saturday and Sunday 20th and 21st September, and at 2.15pm on Sunday 16th November 2014.*

~ CONTACTS ~

fonc@btconnect.com
publications@fonc.org.uk
membership@fonc.org.uk

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

The deadline for the next issue is 20th October 2014
(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).
Member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE).
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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