

FONC News



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East Lodge c.1976 (see page 3) - Photo: Ron Woollacott

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Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC), London SE15
PDF

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**

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 on 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 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's address is: Linden Grove, Nunhead, London, SE15 3LP

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

THE EAST LODGE: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD? asks Jeff Hart

Recent visitors to the cemetery may have noticed the increase of activity around the ruined East Lodge since Christmas. At the time of writing it is not clear to what extent this activity may have reached but it would perhaps be helpful to update FONC members on the recent history of past East Lodge attempts to restore this building to its former glory and hopes for its future.

Way back in the early days

Since its formation in November 1981 it has been an objective of FONC to see the East Lodge restored. Initially, FONC lobbied Southwark Council to follow up their restoration of the West Lodge with a similar project for the East Lodge. The West Lodge was used as accommodation initially for the Borough Engineer's staff. However, it was made clear at that time that there was no enthusiasm on the part of the Council to undertake something similar for the East Lodge.

Being an entirely voluntary registered charity with no recurrent funding and hence no staff, FONC's initial efforts to improve the lot of the cemetery as a whole was limited to awareness raising of the importance of the cemetery. In 1984, after three years of discussion with the Council, FONC was granted a licence by the Council to undertake voluntary work on site – something that has continued ever since. By the end of the 1980s FONC began to explore other means of finding funding to restore the East Lodge with continuing disinterest from Southwark Council. A draft feasibility report was drawn up by FONC in April 1991. Input was received from professional advisors on an ad-hoc basis. Approaches to Southwark Council and English Heritage (EH) proved fruitless and FONC itself did not have the resources at that time to be more vigorous in identifying other potential funders. We were successful, however, in obtaining a small grant from EH (£80k) to which

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FONC added a further £18k) to enable FONC to commission work in 1995/6 to stabilise and secure the structure of the building pending full restoration. This work was project managed by FONC Committee member John Collings.

We had such high hopes!

In 1994 FONC became aware of Lambeth College's buildings conservation courses and approached the College to see if they could assist in FONC's efforts. This was met with some enthusiasm and verbal commitment was given for the College to provide labour, through conservation students managed by College staff, and some materials with FONC making up any shortfall. FONC drew up plans for a restored building and proposed an internal layout that would meet the perceived possible future use and maintenance of the building. Negotiations with Southwark Council to permit development of the project began, and in 1996 a buildings agreement was signed between FONC and Southwark Council that gave FONC a five year period to complete restoration of the lodge which, on completion, would trigger a 45 year lease of the building to FONC. FONC Committee member John Collings prepared and submitted drawings to Southwark Council's Planning Department, and planning approval was awarded to FONC on 1st December 1997 and Listed Building Consent on 10th March 1998. Unfortunately, at that time the structure of Lambeth College changed and the conservation course was curtailed leaving FONC with no immediate partner with which to undertake the restoration project. There then followed a period when FONC was unable to identify a new partner or find alternative funding to allow the project to proceed.

However, with renewed interest and support from Southwark Council agreement was reached between the Council and FONC to pursue a different Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for works to the cemetery as a whole with Southwark in the lead. It was felt that including restoration of the East Lodge in a bid at this time would be too ambitious and unlikely to succeed given the level of funding considered to be available. A bid for £1.75 million was made and a grant award of £1.25 million was secured for a variety of works to the cemetery over 1999/2000.

Back to the drawing board

Subsequently, with the encouragement of Southwark officers who indicated that match funding could be made available, FONC commissioned a report on the status and potential for restoration of the East Lodge as the first stage of a further approach to the HLF for funding. This was carried out ini-

tially by Mike Fiddler Associates (quantity surveyors), with whom FONC had previously worked on an ad-hoc basis, in January 2006. However, conservation architects were required to produce a conservation plan and FONC commissioned and paid for (£10k) a report by Thomas Ford and Partners which was delivered in September 2007. As part of the report an arboricultural report was provided, work required to prevent further encroachment of the building being undertaken by FONC in 2008, other than the removal of a horse chestnut tree which was beyond the skills of volunteers. At this point, with high turn-over of Borough officers, promised support from Southwark Council again evaporated. Without this, approaches to EH as advisors to the HLF were made and they provided useful support and advice despite the lack of financial resource. Since then both Southwark and EH have encouraged further efforts by FONC to bring forward a complete grant application.

With more voluntary resource now available at this time, FONC has determined to resuscitate its efforts to put together a viable restoration project. We held informal discussions with the Architectural Heritage Fund (not the same as English Heritage/HLF) at the end of 2013. With their encouragement, we submitted an application in April 2014 for a project viability grant (up to £3k) which AHF indicated had every chance of success. This application will be considered formally if the Council offers to transfer ownership through, for example, a leasing agreement. On completion of that work, FONC would then be able to apply to AHF for further grant project development funding (up to £25k) to put together fully costed plans for the restoration of the East Lodge to enable a bid for HLF funding to be submitted. Again AHF indicated that such an application would be looked on favourably. However, for our application to be considered, an indication of support in principle for the project from the owners, Southwark Council, was needed. Southwark officers felt unable to give this support without further information on the proposed project. We were asked to develop a paper setting out our proposals which we delivered at the beginning of September.

Where are we now?

FONC also met with EH in May 2014 to apprise them of FONC's intentions. EH expressed great concern about the current state of the building which is on the Buildings at Risk Register (as is the whole cemetery) at the highest category of risk ('A') and encouraged FONC to work further with Southwark to develop a viable project. To that end we engaged with professional advisers to help develop our proposals. EH subsequently met with

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Southwark on site (September 2014) to indicate its requirement for immediate works to be undertaken to minimise further deterioration of the building. FONC was invited to attend that site meeting. EH subsequently provided their recommendations for immediate remedial work to Southwark in October, but this report was not shared with FONC until just before Christmas when we had demanded a meeting with Southwark to discuss FONC proposals further. At that meeting we were told that it was Southwark's intention to carry out site works to enable access to the building (this was done in the middle of January) to assess the condition of the supporting scaffolding, which was deemed to be dangerous, and subsequently to allow surveyors access to draw up an options appraisal for the future of the lodge. A commitment was also given to FONC to engage with us at every stage to ensure that we were content with what was being proposed. To that end a monthly meeting was set with FONC, the first of which being held on 22nd January. The options appraisal would be to look at: demolition; consolidation as a safe ruin; restoration – either by Southwark, FONC or some other agency; or disposal.

FONC has a clear view that we would wish to be the agents for a full restoration of the lodge which would retain it in public ownership but which would be run and maintained for the benefit of the local community and beyond by FONC itself. We see this in the form of an interpretation centre (with FONC sales, museum, offices and tools storage and cafeteria facilities), public meeting facilities including schools visits, and office accommodation for Southwark/contractor's staff based on site.

To summarise, EH intervention on saving a building on the 'at risk' register, possibly as a result of FONC activity, seems to have galvanised all parties towards some form of resolution for the future of the East Lodge. There also appears to be some prospect for finding appropriate funding. FONC hopes that this will be the solution we wish to see and we will keep members updated as matters progress.

**** Subscription reminder ****

Please note that all subscriptions are due to be paid by 1st April 2015. The annual subscription for UK members is just £2 (£10 for overseas members). Donations are always most welcome. If you received a reminder with this issue of *FONC News* please send your payment as soon as possible—if there is no form this will be because you have already renewed or have sent a standing order. Thank you for your continued support.

Verwandlung—Sterben und Trauer (Metamorphosis—Death and Grief) German World War I Exhibition

by Cathy Mercer

All over Europe but especially in the UK there are exhibitions reflecting on this momentous anniversary. In Germany remembering World War I is more complicated and traumatic than in the UK, especially because of the more recent and even more terrible experiences of World War II which overshadow the German 20th century. However, AsKI, a German museum group, is currently staging a major exhibition in Berlin. The exhibition's focus is on the experience of soldier and civilian and follows four themes:

1. Euphoria and propaganda
2. Soldiers' graves
3. Trauma
4. 'Was bleibt' (what remains) – an installation commemorating the dead of the Great War.

As this summary suggests, the exhibition is very wide ranging, moving far beyond the stated themes of death and grief, though these elements lie at the heart of the display. As such, it does not probe the complicated issues of the war's causes or history and Kaiser Bill is not even mentioned. Instead, using the theme of Franz Kafka's famous novella *Metamorphosis*, it looks at how the Great War brutalised and damaged all it touched.

The first three parts of the exhibition follow a course which would surely remind visitors of British WWI experiences, looking initially at the propaganda which inspired millions of young men to sign up for an adventure billed as defending their country, before moving on to the rapid subsequent disillusion. This initial mood of enthusiasm is embodied by the public clash of two famous brothers: the Nobel Prize winning novelist Thomas Mann and his brother Heinrich. Thomas was initially a passionate defender of Germany's right to defend herself, while his Francophile brother argued for democracy and freedom. WWI propaganda affected all parts of life and even children's board games were produced justifying Germany's position.

As in the UK, disillusion soon set in as millions died in the mud of Flanders. This is explored movingly through diaries, letters and relics, especially

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through the tender letters and diary of an ordinary soldier, Gustav Sacks and his wife Paula. The little box of his remains, returned to Paula after Gustav's death in 1916, speaks volumes: his pipe and a pack of playing cards is all that remains.

Body armour, gas masks and death masks vividly illustrate how human life was dehumanised. Interestingly, the famous spiked Prussian helmet was soon abandoned, replaced by much more solid headgear with metal flaps to protect head, neck and eyes from grenades. Similarly, British soldiers wore light cloth caps in the early years of war but these too were soon replaced with metal helmets, which German soldiers dubbed 'salad bowls'.

Perhaps most sinister of all is the creepy cockroach collection put together by German novelist Ernst Juenger. He collected his bugs from soldiers' graves in pauses between fighting and later glorified his wartime experiences in his 1920 memoir *In a storm of steel: from the diary of an infantryman*, where he treats killing as a normal part of life which makes the killer a better and stronger man.

The exhibition compares the degradation of soldiers' lives to the famous 1912 novella of Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis*, where Gregor Samsa finds himself changed into a cockroach. Kafka himself was a German Jew living in Prague, now in the Czech Republic but then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany's main partner in World War I.

Interestingly, the most famous World War I novel is not touched on in this exhibition: Erich Maria Remarque's remarkable *All Quiet on the Western Front* was translated into many languages. It was also made into a very successful US film in 1930 and remade for television in 1979. The 1930 film is still ranked as one of the best 10 epic films ever made. It movingly tells the ordinary soldier's grim experience and transcends national boundaries. It is surprising that cinemas have not chosen to show the film in this anniversary year but of course there are three more years of anniversaries to go.

Furthermore no mention is made of the Christmas Day truce of 1914 between many battalions of German and British soldiers on the Western Front, fondly recalled on this side of the Channel.

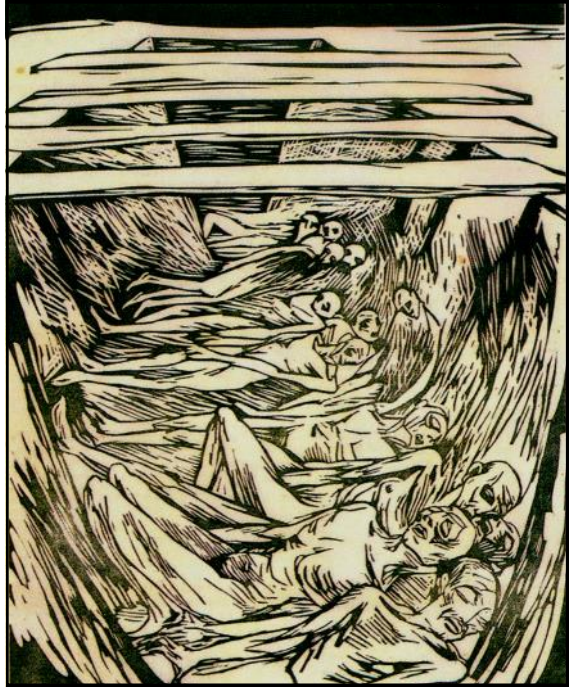
The exhibition also examines the terrible starvation suffered by civilians at home as a result of the Allies' successful blockade of ports; civilian suffering that has no parallel in the UK. This blockade meant that Germany could not import food to supplement home-grown produce and food grew ever scarcer: 1916/17 in particular is remembered as the *Steckruebenwinter*, when people had to eat animal feed. Hundreds of thousands went hungry and many literally starved to death or died of common illnesses in their

weakened state, blaming the British blockade.

The final part of the exhibition is a moving memorial to the dead of the Great War. It is especially interesting to contrast this installation with our own very moving and successful public outpouring of poppies at the Tower of London this autumn.

Like ours, the memorial is based on poppies but, where we had 900,000 poppies, each representing a dead British or Commonwealth soldier, the German installation is smaller but much more inclusive, a stark reminder of the many millions of soldiers and civilians all over the world who died in World

War I. The installation has 17,000 poppy petals, hanging like blood clots on thin thread, each representing the death of 10,000 soldiers and civilians, an estimated 9 million soldiers worldwide and 6 million civilians. To this unbelievable sum can be added the 35 million people who died in the years immediately after the war of Spanish Flu. ■



Franz M Jansen
Massengrab (mass grave)
woodcut, 1917/18

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This piece is based on a much longer article in the winter edition of the journal of Germany's Friedhof und Denkmal (Cemetery and Monument) Museum in Kassel, near Frankfurt, which FONC regularly receives in exchange for copies of *FONC News*. This museum is part of the German cultural organisation AsKI [www.aski.org](http://www.aski.org) and the exhibition is based in AsKI's Berlin headquarters. It runs until 15th May 2015. *Cathy Mercer*

# NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS - 17

*by Jeff Hart – FONC Coordinator*

## ***West Hill clearances continue***

In 'Nunhead Cemetery News 16' we reported that the natural bays that descend down to the West Hill from the Welsh Path to the site of the Dissenters' chapel have been expanded and that FONC volunteers planned to remove ash and sycamore saplings from around the hawthorn and holly trees and euonymus bushes that have been revealed. This has now been done together with felling a large limb of a nearby ash, thus allowing more light into the area. Already the hollies have benefited and rewarded us with a fine showing of deep red berries. We have left a rather shapely mature ash in the centre of the grove nearest to the Wetland area as a focal point. Although ash saplings can be an invasive nuisance in some parts of the cemetery, there is still a place for such mature specimens. Mercifully, there has been no sign in the cemetery of the dreaded ash wilt disease that caused so much concern.

## ***We are guttered!***

The rather unattractive Portakabin near the Linden Grove entrance that serves as FONC headquarters on site has outlived its normal life expectancy by some 20 or so years. This is as a result of regular maintenance by FONC volunteers. As previously reported, the guttering suffered some damage when ash trees behind the Portakabin were felled (at FONC's request) by Southwark Council. FONC workday supervisor Tim Stevenson has now completed repairs which should ensure that damaging rainwater is safely channelled away from the Portakabin.

## ***Crypt cleaning carried out***

One of the more popular attractions for visitors to the cemetery is the viewing platform atop the Anglican chapel and the crypt below it. These were repaired and made accessible following the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) works carried out in 1999/2000. However, there is a need for continued maintenance of the structure and in recent years, for example, invasive buddleia has been removed from the top of the chapel walls. Last year, as part of its health and safety responsibilities, Southwark Council commissioned a report on the condition of the building. Site visits took place in March and the report was submitted in August. Although FONC was aware that the report had been commissioned, unfortunately the report was not shared with us at the time. It came as a surprise, therefore, to find that work

had been carried out to the crypt (possibly in December?) in response to one of the report's recommendations. It has always been the case that water has percolated through the floor of the chapel to the crypt below. This is inevitable whilst the chapel remains unroofed. We didn't think, however, that this was so bad as to justify complete cleaning of the crypt at this time to remove lime scale from every surface. However, this was done, resulting in the loss of the rather attractive stalactites from the ceiling and perhaps now revealing that re-pointing of the supporting columns may be necessary. The rather slippery flooring has been cleared of detritus which is a real improvement in terms of removing a slipping hazard. Nevertheless it did reveal a rather ugly loose concrete lump presenting a further trip hazard which, on closer inspection, seems to have been used to cover what may be an original drain in the crypt floor. Southwark Council are now considering how to deal with this. It will also be necessary to reinstate the grass area in front of the crypt doors which now resembles a mud slope following work by the contractors which presents another hazard to visitors. Quite why it was necessary to carry out this work in the depths of winter is something of a mystery as there appears to be no urgency indicated in the consultant's report. FONC will now be discussing the other recommendations with Southwark *before* works are carried out but the good news is that the report found the chapel ruins to be in generally sound and safe condition.

### ***No signs to be seen***

Without going into too much detail at this time, in early 2013 FONC put forward proposals to Southwark Council for path name signs to be placed in the cemetery to help orientate visitors to the cemetery. These would reflect the path names devised by our chairman, Ron Woollacott, when he was researching the denizens of the cemetery in the 1970s. We came up with a design and had it costed by the supplier of the Green Chain and Woodland Walk signage to be found in the cemetery. FONC offered to meet half the cost and to use our volunteers to erect them on site. Southwark were enthusiastic at first but then progress became bogged down by Southwark's concerns over the need for a 'corporate' design and an apparent desire not to see 'signage clutter'. At the Open House weekend in September 2014 an overwhelming number of visitors supported FONC's proposals. There has been little progress since then as FONC and Southwark have been unable to reach agreement. Now Southwark is inviting tenders from 'signage consultants' to come up with proposals for all three of Southwark's cemeteries. FONC com-

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mented on the brief for the tender, emphasising the uniqueness of Nunhead and giving examples of similar signage used in other Victorian ‘heritage’ cemeteries. The tender is yet to be let and we await the outcome without great hopes.

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**ADVANCE NOTICE**  
**FONC’S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Thursday 18th June 2015 at 7pm**

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery will take place on Thursday 18th June 2015 starting at 7.00pm in the function room of the Old Nun’s Head, Nunhead Green, London, SE15 3QQ. Nominations for election to the General Committee and officer posts are welcome and may be received up to the elections themselves on the night. Motions, however, should be submitted no later than the 18th May 2015. All nominations and motions should be sent to FONC’s vice-chairman, Carol Stevenson, c/o fonc@btconnect.com. A reminder and full details will be appear in the next issue of *FONC News*.

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## **Nunhead—A Garden Cemetery?**

The Nunhead Cemetery of All Saints in the Parish of St Giles, Camberwell, generally known as Nunhead Cemetery, first opened for burials in July 1840. Professor James Stevens Curl and I have written extensively about the early history of Nunhead Cemetery having carried out much of our research in the early 1970s, but neither of us came across the name of the gardeners responsible for the laying out and planting of the grounds. Only very recently my daughter Michèle Louise Burford came across an old newspaper article mentioning a ‘Mr Buchanan’ as being the gardener who had laid out the grounds at Nunhead. Coincidentally, Dr Ian Dungavell, CE of the Highgate Cemetery Trust, while carrying out research for a recent talk, came across an early advertisement confirming that Buchanan and Company had indeed laid out the grounds of both the Norwood and Nunhead cemeteries.

In the following article Dr Dungavell fills a gap in the early history of the cemetery and brings to our attention the forgotten gardeners whose creations we still enjoy today. *RW*

# MR BUCHANAN, NUNHEAD'S LANDSCAPER

*by Ian Dungavell*

Nineteenth-century landscape designers must have got a bit miffed that their architectural cousins so often stole the limelight. If 'nothing on this side of the channel has yet exceeded, for elegance of arrangement, and beauty of decoration, the grounds of the cemetery at Nunhead',<sup>1</sup> as was written in 1843, why do so few of us know who was responsible for them? Many people today know that the London Cemetery Company had Stephen Geary prepare designs for buildings at Highgate and James Bunstone Bunning for Nunhead. But who designed the landscapes?

At Highgate it was David Ramsay, a 'garden architect' of some consequence who ran a nursery at Brompton which had a stock of over one million plants including 400,000 roses in 500 varieties. As well as laying out gentlemen's estates, Ramsay took on grounds maintenance contracts for London vestries and in 1835 he had had a contract for maintaining the grounds and digging graves at Kensal Green.

What about Nunhead? Well, partly due to an internal meltdown at the London Cemetery Company, the Highgate team of Geary and Ramsay was no longer in favour. Even before Highgate opened Bunning had been brought in to sort out some of Geary's mess, which can hardly have pleased the directors. Bunning is often given entire credit for Nunhead and the name of the landscaper is usually forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

So it is important to note that it was the firm of Buchanan and Company, who ran a nursery at Camberwell. It was an odd choice, but also a sensible one. Odd, because Buchanan had earlier laid out Norwood Cemetery, Nunhead's great rivals only two miles away. There they did not only the planting but the whole of the ground work including building the roads and drains. A sensible choice, because their cemetery experience at Norwood would have stood them in good stead at Nunhead.

They were a lot more than just nurserymen: in an advertisement of 1841 which boasted of their work for both cemeteries they wrote: 'To noblemen and gentlemen forming parks, making roads, planting or otherwise improving their estates, Buchanan and Co, landscape gardeners, nurserymen, road contractors &c. respectfully offer their services to the nobility and gentry, public companies &c. for [...] any works connected with the laying out of grounds, ornamental water, horticultural buildings &c.'<sup>3</sup>

At their 'Camberwell Arboretum', Buchanan & Co sought to include

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every hardy tree or shrub they could buy and propagate, particularly the less common ornamental ones,<sup>4</sup> all arranged in alphabetical order, and quite soon they had over 600 varieties of trees and more than 1200 varieties of shrubs.<sup>5</sup> These flourished despite the area being very smoky and surrounded by houses.<sup>6</sup> The horticultural writer J C Loudon praised Buchanan's efforts, hoping that landowners would be inspired by his example and thereby increase 'the knowledge and the taste of the public in botany and gardening'.<sup>7</sup>

At Abney Park Cemetery, the nurserymen Loddiges famously planted an arboretum in that improving spirit. But Loudon would not have approved of an arboretum in a cemetery and, despite Buchanan's interests, there is no record of anything so elaborate at Nunhead or Norwood. Had there been, we are sure to have heard of it, or to have found some trace. ■

<sup>1</sup> *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 10th December 1843, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. *The Morning Post*, Thursday 27th April 1843 p.1.

<sup>3</sup> *The Morning Post*, 16th August 1841.

<sup>4</sup> *The Gardener's Magazine*, 1833, pp. 99-100.

<sup>5</sup> *The Gardener's Magazine*, 1831, pp. 366-7

<sup>6</sup> *The Gardener's Magazine*, 1835, p. 544.

<sup>7</sup> *The Gardener's Magazine*, 1830, p. 378.

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## Buchanan and Company of Camberwell

*by Michèle Louise Burford*

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries James Buchanan was a gardener and florist at Kew, and a seedsman and nurseryman at Windmill Row and 7 Bowyer Place, Camberwell. Bowyer Place adjoined Windmill Row, and was situated in Camberwell Road opposite Albany Road, close to the Walworth border. James Buchanan was described as being 'very industrious in collecting rare plants and obligingly communicative to scientific inquirers'. By 1812 he was in partnership with Henry Oldroyd, also of Bowyer Place. The partnership was dissolved in 1829.

James Buchanan's son, William James Buchanan, continued in partnership with Henry Oldroyd, and he was instrumental in collecting together more than 600 species and varieties of trees, and more than 1,200 species and varieties of shrubs during the autumn and winter of 1830. Also that year, Messrs Buchanan and Oldroyd supplied 30 new species of Cape heaths (*Erica capensis*) to the Botanic Garden at Hull. A report in a Hull newspaper stated that Buchanan and Oldroyd, nurserymen of Camberwell, were 'extensive cultivators' of this genus.

Henry Oldroyd had married Anna, daughter of James Buchanan, at the Parish Church of St Giles, Camberwell, on 1st June 1820. Another daughter, Sarah Caroline, married Charles Marsden, another nurseryman, at St Giles' Church, on 14th June 1827 which was witnessed by Henry Oldroyd and James and William James Buchanan. Charles Marsden was in partnership with William James Buchanan and Henry Oldroyd until 12th June 1835.

William James Buchanan married Mary Dow *nee* Schofield, a widow, at St Peter's Church, Walworth, on 17th June 1841 in the presence of his brother-in-law, Henry Oldroyd. William was a widower with two young children to support.

At the time of the 1841 census, James Buchanan was aged 70 and of 'independent' means. William James Buchanan continued in partnership with his next door neighbours, Henry Oldroyd and Henry John Oldroyd, aged 20.

We now know, thanks to an old newspaper article that I came across recently, and research carried out by Dr Dungavell, that Buchanan and Co were responsible for the laying out and planting of Nunhead Cemetery, although the original plan of the cemetery which shows the layout of the roads and paths, is clearly signed James Bunstone Bunning. At some point William James Buchanan and Henry Oldroyd were partners with Joseph and Hugh Birley until 1843 when the partnership was dissolved.

William James Buchanan was the only nurseryman listed at Bowyer Place in 1846, soon after which date the Camberwell Nursery seems to have disappeared. By 1851, having given up the nursery, William James was living with his wife and children at 1 Albert Terrace, Southampton Street, and working as surveyor of highways for the Parish of St Giles, Camberwell, He died relatively young aged only 48, and was buried in St Giles' Churchyard, on 4th November 1853.

It is not known what became of Henry Oldroyd senior. His son, Henry John Oldroyd, removed to Shrewsbury, Shropshire, in about 1846, where he carried on his business as a nurseryman and seedsman. He married a local girl and died at Portland House, Shrewsbury, on 22nd June 1891. His wealth at death was £7,552, worth around three-quarters of a million pounds in today's money. ■

**Sources:** Surrey—Jury-Qualified Freeholders and Copyholders 1820; Marriage records St Giles's Church, Camberwell, 1820 & 1827; Marriage records of St Peter's Church, Walworth, 1841; Burial registers of St Giles's Church, 1853; Census re-

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turns, 1841-1861; *Hull Packet*, Tuesday, 30th March 1830; *Perry's Bankrupt Gazette*, 11th December 1830, 4th July 1835, 21st October 1843; John Claudius Loudon (ed), *The Gardener's Magazine and Register of Rural and Domestic Improvement*, Volume VII, 1831, pp. 336-7; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, Sunday, 10th December 1843; Natural History Museum, *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturalists* etc, 1994; National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1858-1966.

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*While searching old newspapers for early references to Nunhead Cemetery, Michèle came across the following article. Editor*

***from Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper—Sunday 10th December 1843***

THE CEMETERIES — Some of our readers may probably have had the mournful necessity, others a natural curiosity inciting them to visit the Nunhead Cemetery. It certainly was a vast step towards improvement, when, a few years since, we condescended to borrow from our French neighbours the idea of making our graveyards points of pleasurable recollection, and of associating with the grateful remembrance of the dead, the floral beauties of our gardens. We believe, we may say, without ever excepting the Huskisson Cemetery at Liverpool, that nothing on this side of the channel has yet exceeded, for elegance of arrangement, and beauty of decoration, the grounds of the cemetery at Nunhead, which were laid out, as we are informed, by Mr Buchanan, landscape gardener and florist, of Camberwell. Death loses its terrors, and a sad remembrance of the gone falls more gently upon the heart where nature, so cultivated is taught to breathe its fragrance over their remains. We would invite our friends to a morning's meditation in the grounds of Nunhead.

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**HELPERS WANTED FOR NUNHEAD CEMETERY  
OPEN DAY—SATURDAY 16th MAY 2015**

We shall require lots of volunteers to help us in setting up trestle tables etc. and to generally assist in the cemetery grounds from 8.30am onwards, and to help us to tidy up after the event from 5.00pm. We also very much welcome lots of donations of homemade cakes and plants to sell on our own stalls on the Open Day which visitors always look forward to and very much appreciate. If you can help in any way please contact a FONC officer or committee member (see list of contacts on back page).



# Brewing and Distilling

## by *Bob Rush*

The front cover of *FONC News* issue 126 (Dec 2014 – Feb 2015) featured a row of monuments over burial vaults. Centre stage is a fine red and grey granite obelisk to members of the Wasmuth family. The Wasmuths were founded in Whitechapel in about 1797 by Georg, having come over from Germany to work in the sugar industry. Henry Christian Wasmuth was born in the Holborn area in 1849. Between 1881 and his retirement in 1924 he was involved with Norfolk's brewery and Holland's distillery, both on Deptford Bridge. Marriage to Maud, daughter of Edward Norfolk proved beneficial as he progressed to become manager of the distillery and a director of the brewery. Maud is commemorated on the obelisk having died in her second year of marriage at the age of 24, twelve days after giving birth to a daughter. Henry, at 46 brought up two children and never re-married. He lived on until 1930. Almost un-noticed is a further inscription, to his son-in-law, Cpt Charles Pegram, MC who died 9th November 1918 having gained his decoration at Paschendale. He was buried with full military



*Wasmuth obelisk in Nunhead Cemetery*

honours following a service at St John's Church, Deptford. He had been married to Henry's daughter for nine months. ■

NB. *Once a year prior to the Open Day in May, FONC member Bob Rush, a Wasmuth descendant, visits from the East End and spruces up the obelisk.*

# ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH

## Part 4 - Opium and Elegance, by R G S Hunter

An unusual man buried here is Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) the famous 'Opium-eater'. Born in Manchester he was educated at Bath where he became fluent in Latin and Greek by the age of 15. He was sent to Manchester Grammar School but ran away to Wales, making a sort of living by acting as a scribe for his hosts who needed to exchange business or love letters with others. His next destination was London where he fell foul of money lenders and just wandered the streets penniless and lonely. His family helped him to attend Oxford University where he first encountered opium as a cure for toothache, but left without a degree. De Quincey admired Wordsworth and Coleridge and went to the Lake District to meet them. He must have come into some money as he loaned £300 to Coleridge. Returning to London he entered the legal profession, but soon drifted back to the Lake District where he met John Wilson *aka* Christopher North, the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, with whom he visited Edinburgh in 1813. He found refuge in Debtors' Sanctuary at Holyrood, emerging only in the evenings to enjoy the social life of the capital especially the literary community which enjoyed his brilliant conversation. Back in the Lake District he rented Dove Cottage from Wordsworth and there his opium-taking continued to increase. With some effort he did manage to cut down a little on drugs and married the daughter of a local farmer. A year later he was back seriously on drugs, a period in his life described in his famous book *Confessions of an Opium-Eater* of 1822. He returned to Edinburgh in 1828 seeking work and refuge, initially with John Wilson. He worked tirelessly in various apartments all over town, and when his apartment became jammed with his output ('snowed-up' to use his phrase) he simply moved elsewhere, so several apartments were still rented in his name when he died. We should remember him also as encouraging the trend, still with today's public, of a gruesome interest in murder. Following a report of the killing of the Marr family in London and the resulting public interest, De Quincey wrote an article for *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1827 on 'Murder considered one of the fine arts', posing the question 'why not enjoy a good murder?'

However we do find some 'more ordinary' people remembered in this churchyard, e.g. Samuel Gilmore, rope-maker, who must have been successful in his business to judge by his elaborate tombstone with two grinning skulls separated by a rather mournful 'winged soul' plus some tools of his

trade. Unfortunately the date of his death in the early 1800s is too defaced to read properly.

A clearer inscription is to the memory of James Findlay (1822-1862), chief master gunner in the Royal Artillery who was the first to fire the 'one o'clock gun' from Edinburgh Castle, still an important time-signal for the City. The monument was erected by his great-great-granddaughters.

Let us finish on a more elegant note. Within the church is the burial place of Mrs Janet Rohead (1725-1790), *nee* Janet Watsom of Muirhouse, who married Alexander Rohead in 1750 and went to live at Inverleith House (the present Royal Botanic Garden) with the elegant tree-lined avenues and shady glades; unhappily her husband died only five years after the marriage.

Remembered in Lord Henry Cockburn's description 'She would sail like a ship from Tarnish, gorgeous in velvet or rustling in silk, done up in all the accompaniments of fan, earrings, finger rings, falling sleeves, scent-bottle, embroidered bag, hoop and train—all superb, yet all in the purest taste...a display which no one in these days could accomplish or even fancy' - the good old days indeed! ■



Grave of Samuel Gilmore  
*Photo: R G S Hunter*

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## ~ *Recent FONC Events* ~

Our **Remembrance Sunday** event was held on 9th November and was well attended. Wreaths were laid at the four Commonwealth War Graves Commission's sites and at the civilian memorial. In addition to the five FONC wreaths, for which a donation of £250 was made to the Royal British Legion, we also laid a wreath on behalf of the Honor Oak and Brockley Branch of the Royal British Legion, and others present also laid wreaths.

*continued on next page*

FONC's *Christmas Social* held at the Old Nun's Head on Thursday, 18th December was reasonably well attended. Maureen Woollacott ensured a varied selection of eats were available and a raffle and voluntary donations helped offset the cost. Our guest speakers, Richard Endors and Julian Kingston, gave a most interesting PowerPoint presentation about an exciting project to build a replica of the *Lenox*, a 17th century warship, on the site of Henry VIII's Royal Dockyard at Deptford. If you would like more information about this exciting project please go to [www.buildthelenox.org](http://www.buildthelenox.org)

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## *Obituaries*

### **PETER KIMBLE**

It is with much regret and sadness that we learned of the death of long time FONC member, Peter Kimble, the beloved husband of Gwyneth Stokes (subeditor of *FONC News*), who sadly passed away on 18th November 2014. Older members will remember the meeting held in the now defunct Linden Grove Community Centre on 21st March 1991, at which Peter gave a fascinating talk on how the Pharaohs prepared for their sumptuous funerals. Drawn from the tombs, temples and pyramids of Ancient Egypt, his interesting illustrated talk gave us an insight into why so many Egyptian style monuments were erected in Nunhead Cemetery. Peter's funeral took place at Croydon Crematorium on Wednesday, 10th December, and was attended by Carol Stevenson, FONC's vice-chairman, and Tim Stevenson and minutes secretary Carole Tyrrell. *RW*

### **PELHAM RAVENSCROFT**

Pelham Ravenscroft of Selborne, Hampshire, a member of FONC for more than 21 years, died on 9th December 2014, aged 84. The funeral took place at Selborne Church on 18th December 2014. It was in the autumn of 1993 that I first had the pleasure of meeting Mr Ravenscroft when I took him to see the memorials of his forebears, of which there are several in Nunhead Cemetery, including that of the famous wig and peruke maker, Humphrey Ravenscroft, inventor of the patent forensic wig as worn by barristers. During his visit he drew my attention to the grave of Edward James Ravenscroft, arborist and author of *Pinetum Britannicum*, a monumental work on British pine trees. Mr Ravenscroft very much enjoyed his visit to Nunhead and was absolutely delighted and gratified to know that so many of his ancestors were lying at rest in such a beautiful place. *RW*

Buried at Nunhead (21)  
**GEORGE WALTER THORNBURY (1828-1876)**  
**Author and Journalist**  
*by Ron Woollacott*

**G**eorge Walter Thornbury was born on 13th November 1828, the son of George Thornbury, solicitor, of 16 Chancery Lane, and his wife Jennet Ann Bevill, and was baptised at St Andrew's Church, Holborn, on 15th August 1829. His parents were married at Christ Church, Southwark, on 1st November 1827. Young George was educated at Cheam, Surrey, by his uncle, the Reverend Barton Bouchier MA (1794-1864), husband of his father's sister Mary. Although his parents had wanted him to enter the church, he had other ideas, and studied art under James Matthews Leigh (1808-1860) at Leigh's Academy, 79 Newman Street, Westminster, before deciding to make journalism his career. When he was 17 he began contributing antiquarian and topographical articles to the *Bristol Journal*, and joined the staff of the *Athenaeum* in about 1850. He also contributed many articles to Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and to its successor *All the Year Round* a literary journal founded by Dickens in 1859. While searching for new material he travelled to Spain, Palestine, Turkey and America, and wrote numerous articles on topographical and geographical topics. His work *Life in Spain: Past and Present*, (2 vols. 1859) was originally published as a series of articles in *Household Words*.

Thornbury was prolific writer on a variety of subjects including art, and became a regular contributor to the *Art Journal*. In 1861 he published *British Artists, from Hogarth to Turner*, a series of biographical sketches. His *Life of J M W Turner RA* (2 vols.), written under the supervision of John Ruskin (1819-1900), was based on original letters and papers provided by Turner's friends and fellow academicians. It comes as something of a surprise, therefore, that in a letter to the *Athenaeum*, dated 2nd December 1861, Lovell Augustus Reeve (1814-1865) accuses Thornbury of plagiarism claiming that he prints all the best of his (Reeve's) stories about Turner as his own, often word-for-word, without any acknowledgement whatsoever, and provides examples of both their writings to prove it.

On receiving a complimentary copy of Thornbury's biography of Turner, John Ruskin criticised it in a letter to his father: 'This is a dreadful book of Thornbury's in every sense—utterly bad in taste and writing .....'

*to be continued*

## FONC's CEMETERY TOUR PROGRAMME 2015

All tours start at 2.15pm on Sundays from inside the main entrance in Linden Grove *except* Open Day and Open House or as indicated below

|           |                                     |                                                                      |                                           |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| March     | 15th                                | Woodland Trail tour                                                  | Jeff Hart                                 |
| March     | 22nd                                | Cemetery symbols tour                                                | Carole Tyrrell                            |
| March     | 29th                                | General tour                                                         | Carole Tyrrell                            |
| April     | 12th                                | Crypt, chapel, and viewing tower                                     | Jeremy Partington/<br>Malcolm Collins + 1 |
| April     | 26th                                | General tour                                                         | Ron Woollacott                            |
| May       | Saturday<br>16th <i>11am to 5pm</i> | Annual Open Day:<br>general tours; crypt and tower visits            | Various tour leaders                      |
| May       | 31st                                | General tour                                                         | Jeff Hart                                 |
| June      | 14th                                | Woodland Trail tour                                                  | Tim Stevenson                             |
| June      | Saturday<br>20th                    | Waterloo anniversary event                                           | Various tour leaders                      |
| June      | Friday<br>26th– <i>9pm</i>          | Bat sighting walk                                                    | Daniel Greenwood                          |
| June      | 28th                                | General tour                                                         | John Turpin                               |
| July      | 12th                                | Crypt, chapel, and viewing tower                                     | Jeremy Partington/<br>Malcolm Collins + 1 |
| July      | 26th                                | General tour                                                         | Tim Stevenson                             |
| August    | 9th                                 | Musical Hall artistes                                                | Jolanta Jagiello                          |
| August    | 30th                                | General tour                                                         | Jeff Hart                                 |
| September | 13th                                | Woodland Trail tour                                                  | John Turpin                               |
| September | 19th/20th<br><i>1.00pm to 5pm</i>   | Open House weekend:<br>general tours; crypt, chapel and tower visits | Various tour leaders                      |
| September | 27th                                | General tour                                                         | Ron Woollacott                            |
| October   | 11th                                | Military connections                                                 | Jeff Hart                                 |
| October   | 25th                                | General tour                                                         | Carole Tyrrell                            |
| November  | 15th                                | Cemetery symbols                                                     | Carole Tyrrell                            |
| November  | 29th                                | General tour                                                         | Tim Stevenson                             |
| December  | 13th                                | Woodland Trail tour                                                  | Jeff Hart                                 |
| December  | 28th                                | General tour                                                         | <i>To be confirmed</i>                    |

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR ► *Sunday 15th March 2015*** Meet at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to the cemetery at 2.15pm. *For dates of future woodland trail tours in 2015 see programme opposite.*

**MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION RECORDING ► *Sunday 29th March and Sunday 26th April 2015 (These dates are provisional).*** For more information and times please contact Paul Dyer (MI Co-ordinator) c/o fonc@btconnect.com. Transcribing the inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery is an important and ongoing task. Volunteers meet at the FONC Portakabin near the Linden Grove entrance.

**NUNHEAD CEMETERY ANNUAL OPEN DAY 2015 ► *Saturday 16th May 11.00am to 5.00pm.*** We shall require lots of helpers to assist in setting up trestles and to generally assist on the day from 8.30am onwards and to help tidy up after the event finishes at 5.00pm.

**FONC'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ► *Thursday 18th June 2015 starting at 7.00pm.*** Full details will be published in the next issue of *FONC News* due out at the beginning of June.

**VOLUNTARY WORKDAYS ► *these take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10am to 4.30pm.*** New volunteers are always 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 ►** for dates and times see complete tour programme for 2015 opposite.

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**The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park  
Annual Open Day  
Saturday 6th June 2015  
12.00pm to 5.00pm**

**For more information:- [www.fothcp.org](http://www.fothcp.org)**

## ~ 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 next issue is 20th April 2015*  
(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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