

FONC News



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Contrary Mary's Plant Stall—Open Day 2015 (Photo: Nicola Dunn). See page 10

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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, 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 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 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

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

Contributors to this issue: Rex Batten; Michèle Louise Burford; Nicola Dunn; Jeff Hart; Marion Houghton; Carole Tyrrell. All other text unless otherwise credited is by the editor.

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

LONDON OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY

19th and 20th September 2015—1.00pm to 5.00pm on both days

The chapel and crypt will be open to visitors and we shall require volunteers to act as stewards and assist with enquiries and the sale of publications etc. If you can help on either one or both days please contact an officer or committee member. Contact details will be found on the back page of this issue.

Chairman's Report

It has been another exceptionally busy year for FONC. Each successive year since we started out in 1981 has involved more and more work for the few active volunteers who take on such tasks as physical work in the cemetery, running and manning the Sunday publications and enquiry desk, memorial recording, organising and conducting tours of the cemetery and places further afield, providing speakers for other groups, organising and running our ever-popular Open Day and Open House Weekend, organising our Christmas social, and mailing and distributing around 900 copies of our journal to members every quarter. All these activities and more involves an enormous amount of work, and on behalf of the Committee I should like to thank each and every volunteer for all their efforts in making our organisation so successful.

Although we have a very large membership we really do need more active members. Some of our members have been 'active' for so many years they are now running out of steam, and I include myself among them. This, then, is an urgent plea to all those who are able to come forward and assist in any way they can. In particular we require more volunteers to assist in setting up and clearing up on Open Day, assist with voluntary work in the cem-

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etry, including recording monuments, and assist on the publications and enquiry desk. The only proviso is that you must be a fully paid up member of FONC for insurance purposes. We also need more tour guides, so if you feel that you would like to show visitors around our beautiful and historic cemetery, do not hesitate to come forward.

Our officers and committee members deserve our thanks for all their hard work over the last 12 months: Jeff Hart, co-ordinator; Carole Tyrrell, minutes secretary; Ann Coley; Malcolm Collins; Jane Hart; Jeremy Partington; Fran Rawcliffe; and Maureen Woollacott. Special thanks are due to Simon and Cathy Mercer for their sterling work as membership secretary and treasurer. Thanks also to our auditor George Young and Tim Stevenson, our Open Day organiser, Jolanta Jagiello, arts curator, Paul Dyer, monumental inscription recording co-ordinator, Chris Knowles and John Turpin, tour guides, and excellent webmaster Simon Quill.

Wearing my other hat as editor of *FONC News* I should like to thank Gwyneth Stokes, subeditor, for her excellent proofreading, Pat Manning and Peter Blount, postal co-ordinators, Nicola Dunn and her band of hand-deliverers, and Linda Martin for her help in driving me to and from Catford Print.

A special word of thanks goes to Rex Batten who has retired as an active member of FONC after many years as a tour guide and committee member. He was also our minutes secretary for several years. We must also offer a special word of thanks to the Reverend Alan and Joan Bond, long time members of FONC, who regrettably had to step down last year after having officiated at the All Souls Service and other religious events in the cemetery from 1982 to 2013.

Last but not least we extend our thanks to all those members and their friends who bake and donate their delicious cakes for sale at Open Day, and the enthusiastic gardeners who grow and donate plants also for sale on Open Day. It really is appreciated, and of course, we thank all our members throughout the UK and abroad for their valued support. ■

FONC's Annual General Meeting 2015

The AGM of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery was held in the Old Nun's Head pub at 7.00 pm on the evening of Thursday 18th June. The chairman welcomed everyone and explained the structure of the evening's business. After the opening remarks and apologies for absence, the minutes of the 2014 AGM were read and adopted as a true record of that meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

The annual report was presented by Jeff Hart, co-ordinator, who drew the attention of members to various items contained within the report as follows:

Membership: Membership secretary Simon Mercer and treasurer Cathy Mercer continue to provide a highly professional and very significant contribution in maintaining our impressive membership figures and keeping the finances in order. Membership now stands at 846 compared to 837 last year.

Affiliations: We continue to be affiliated to the Trust for Conservation Volunteers through whom we obtain public liability insurance cover for all our activities within the cemetery and at other events we attend off-site, tools and other property insurance. We are also affiliated to the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe and the National Federation of Cemetery Friends.

FONC meetings: The General Committee held ten meetings and the Voluntary Work Sub-Committee met quarterly during the year. We continue to meet at the Old Nun's Head thanks to the generosity of the pub manager. The 2014 AGM and Christmas Social were reasonably well attended.

Website and Sunday enquiry desk: Our website provides information about the cemetery and FONC and is an essential link with the wider world. We are grateful for the hard work of webmaster Simon Quill for keeping it up-to-date and vibrant looking. The publications and enquiry desk (PED) is a vital link between FONC and the general public in dealing with general enquiries and raising funds through publication sales. Gwyneth Stokes organises the PED with a dedicated band of volunteers. More volunteers to cover the rota would be most welcome.

Open House Weekend and Open Day: Open House Weekend was held on 20th and 21st September 2014 and attracted a good number of visitors. The crypt, chapel and viewing platform were enhanced by a photographic exhibition in the chapel. FONC's 30th Annual Open Day on 16th May 2015 was blessed with good weather and set new records for attendance and takings. Tim and Carol Stevenson do an excellent job in planning the day and new attractions are continually sought.

Publicity and media coverage: FONC and the cemetery continue to receive wide media coverage. Once again we have been caught up in the on-going controversy over Southwark Council's burial policy and the proposed felling of trees in Camberwell Old and New cemeteries. Erroneous comments regarding Nunhead in this context have had to be corrected. We have also featured on a number of national and local radio programmes this year, including the BBC World Service! We attended Open Days at Brompton and Tower Hamlets cemeteries.

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FONC News: Our journal reaches members during the first two weeks in March, June, September and December. Our thanks to editor Ron Woollacott and subeditor Gwyneth Stokes, Nicola Smith and her team of hand distributors, and Pat Manning and Peter Blount our postal co-ordinators. Articles and letters are always welcome.

Publications and research work: Our ever increasing range of publications remain consistent sellers, and this year we reprinted *Investors in Death* as well as the history of Camberwell Old Cemetery. A popular new sales item has been the FONC reusable cotton bag. Honey sales this year also proved popular and sold out quickly.

Grave search and memorial inscription recording: Enquiries about graves and burials at Nunhead are now carried out by staff at Southwark Council's Cemetery Office in Brenchley Gardens. We continue to give advice and assistance to the enquirers. Under Paul Dyer's guidance a small band of volunteers continue to transcribe inscriptions some of which have been placed on our website.

Cemetery tours and other events: Our monthly tours are as popular as ever, and our woodland tours are increasingly well attended. The specialist subject tours continue to meet with mixed fortune in terms of attendance, although the chapel and crypt visits are always popular and well attended. We have also provided tours for special interest groups that have included the London Regional Arts Club and Honor Oak Women's Institute.

Art and education projects: Another successful year of public art exhibitions with over 1,000 visitors to each of the exhibitions. In September 2014 during Open House Weekend and Nunhead Arts Trail an exhibition entitled 'Around the World in 80 Cemeteries' based on photographs taken by Jane and Jeff Hart during their travels was held in the Anglican chapel. In May 2015 'Anzac in Spirit: Diggers in Gallipoli' was held in the Stearns mausoleum. Both events curated by Jolanta Jagiello.

Religious services: Sadly long time member the Reverend Alan Bond has now become too frail to conduct our annual All Souls Service. We are very grateful to Alan, and wife Joan, for support as our religious advisers for over 30 years. Our annual Remembrance Service was again well attended. The Royal British Legion benefits from the donation we make for the wreaths laid at five sites in the cemetery.

Management of Nunhead Cemetery by Southwark Council: Our relationship with the staff of Quadron who hold the contract for grounds maintenance, remains excellent and we have worked together to produce numerous improvements to the physical condition of the cemetery. The cemetery has again retained the prestigious Green Flag award for 2014/15. The Council has undertaken a major review of health and safety in all three of their cemeteries which has caused real difficulties for FONC activities on site. We do feel that at present Southwark is happy to point to problems but less active in trying to find solutions to these problems. This includes the ever-increasing occurrence of 'professional' dog-walkers who have moved into

the cemetery following dog controls in other areas precluding their activities. There have been numerous complaints by visitors, including those using the Muslim burial area, about the behaviour of both the dogs and their owners. FONC has written to the Council expressing our concerns and await a response.

East Lodge: Since its formation in November 1981 it has been an objective of FONC to see the East Lodge restored. The intervention of English Heritage 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 building. There also appears to be some prospect for finding appropriate funding. Invitations to tender for the options appraisal have been invited and we hope an appointment will be made shortly. (See article about the East Lodge and the current position in *FONC News* No 127).

ANNUAL VOLUNTARY WORKDAY REPORT *Presented Carol Stevenson, by Vice-Chairman,*

The weather in 2014 was on our side in the long battle against Japanese knotweed, with very little being found. This left us with more time for weeding around the more prominent monuments and the Dissenters’ triangle, thus improving the look of the cemetery. We removed some sycamore which were encroaching on our biggest yew tree. Since sycamore rapidly regrows from stumps, we also removed the stumps - quite a task!

We spent a lot of time during the year repairing the non-monument structures in the cemetery—repairing the fence around the East Lodge and round the pond, clearing ivy from the boundary railings and pillars, maintaining the tree trail, and clearing brambles and ivy from the stag beetle logger. Our dead hedges were restored, and we replaced the steps from the Beeches area to Angel path and built a new set of steps down to the crypt behind the chapel. Following Southwark’s power-washing of the crypt floor we dug out the drains that had become overwhelmed by mud. In the crypt we fitted several loculi covers and made a supplementary step to make access easier.

In October we were joined by a team of 30 volunteers from the Department of Transport who removed snowberry from the roof of the catacombs, weeded the corner by the First World War monument, reopened the bluebell path and removed large quantities of rubbish from the Ivydale Road boundary.

There have been some frustrating incidents with Southwark Council deciding to ban us from working in some areas for safety reasons. We have been unable to enter the grounds of the East Lodge to keep the ‘moat’ pumped dry (despite the fact that water speeds the deterioration of the building). Our project to clear the Ivydale Road boundary was halted after we discovered a small amount of asbestos, and most frustrating of all, we made the small changes the Health and Safety Officer had request-

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ed to our tower viewing platform, only to be told to stop using it.

Thanks to all the volunteers, old and new, who have turned out whatever the weather was doing and achieved so much. Special thanks to Ann Coley who has joined the supervising team. Keep coming back because Nunhead Cemetery needs you. New volunteers are always welcome. Meet at the Portakabin on the first Sunday of every month from 10am onwards. Contact Tim Stevenson Openday@fonc.org.uk for more information. Thanks also to Mark and Candy of Southwark Council, and the keen chaps from Quadron who work in the cemetery all week. [The total number of hours worked last year was 604, and the number of volunteers 29].

HON TREASURER'S AND AUDITOR'S REPORTS

As Cathy Mercer, our treasurer, was unable to attend the AGM, the chairman referred members to their copies of the accounts. Jeff Hart pointed out that our expenditure had reduced last year, and there was a surplus of £8,242 compared to last year's surplus of £6,375. After answering questions from the floor the chairman moved adoption of the report, which was seconded by Gwyneth Stokes. The chairman said that Cathy did a marvellous job in looking after our finances and proposed a vote of thanks for which there was an immediate round of applause.

The accounts are audited by George Young. The chairman invited members for their comments and there being none, he thanked George and proposed a vote of thanks which once again received an immediate round of applause. George was invited to continue as our auditor for another year to which he very kindly 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 for another year, Officers: Ron Woollacott, chairman; Carol Stevenson, vice-chairman; Jeff Hart, co-ordinator; Cathy Mercer, hon treasurer; Carole Tyrrell, minutes secretary. Committee members: Ann Coley, Malcolm Collins, Jane Hart, Jolanta Jagiello, Simon Mercer (membership secretary), Jeremy Partington, Fran Rawcliffe, Gwyneth Stokes, and Maureen Woollacott. As there were no further nominations the officers and committee were elected unopposed. The chairman explained that any ordinary member could be co-opted onto the committee, and to contact him if they were interested. A break for refreshments was followed by an interesting presentation by Emma Sparre-Slater about the funeral directors, Francis Chappell and Sons.

PRESENTATION BY EMMA SPARRE-SLATER

Report by Carole Tyrrell

After the business meeting Emma Sparre-Slater of Francis Chappell gave us an in-

formative and interesting talk. The firm began business in 1840 which was an auspicious year: Nunhead Cemetery opened, Queen Victoria married Prince Albert and survived an assassination attempt, and her image was used on the very first postage stamp.

Emma began by explaining that a funeral director was a profession created in the Victorian age due to the cult of mourning created by Queen Victoria after Prince Albert's death. There was an obsession and desire for funeral trappings to mimic the then current trend for baronial funerals. She then displayed a 19th century photo of a resplendent funeral with mutes at its head representing porters and doormen, the lead funeral director who was the herald, and finally the feather-men representing the squire. The latter were the undertakers' delight as they were expensive. Emma then revealed more of the etiquette of funerals. Mutes (hired mourners) had fallen out of favour by the late 1800s and black feather plumes on horses' heads meant that the family were in good standing, but they were very heavy for the horses and the RSPCA complained about it in 1913. By contrast, modern plumes are lightweight, as visitors to our recent Open Day saw on Chappell's magnificent black horses

John Chappell, Francis's father, was recorded as a cabinet maker in the 1851 census but by 1871 his son, John Junior, was an undertaker's assistant. By 1875, Francis, then aged 13, had joined his father and two brothers in the business which already had branches in New Cross and Deptford.

In 1905 Chappell's had expanded until by 1934 it was the UK's largest funeral director. It became Francis Chappell in 1936. Francis retired in 1939 aged 76 and died in 1949. The Chappell family plot is in Brockley and Ladywell Cemetery.

Emma then discussed Chappell's changing owners until they became part of Dignity in 2001; the most recent branch opened in Chislehurst in 2013. She said Chappell's had a good proportion of female funeral directors and that children's funerals were the most difficult and very emotional. But, by contrast, for her, the most difficult part of the job was dealing with staff.

The splendid and elegant glass sided horse-drawn hearse that Chappell's very kindly brought to the 2015 Open Day was a return to an earlier tradition. It was a star attraction and provided a wonderful backdrop for the visiting Goths. An East End funeral director, Thomas Cribb and Son, re-introduced horse-drawn hearses in the 1980s. The traditional funeral horse, the Belgian Black, was on the verge of dying out - Cribbs purchased a pair and the rest is history. Modern horse-drawn hearses are built to the same specifications as the Victorian ones and have increased in popularity. Emma brought along a display of material including original ledgers and a photo of Brockley Road showing an early Chappell's branch which has since closed, but the stone sign above the shop is still there.

The chairman thanked Emma for an interesting and entertaining evening and FONC co-ordinator, Jeff Hart, said he looked forward to welcoming her and her team, with the hearse and more beautiful horses, back to Nunhead Cemetery for Open Day in 2016. ■

Gnomes at Nunhead by Nicola Dunn

News from the Contrary Mary Plant Stall, Nunhead Open Day 2015

By the beginning of May my garden is so full of pot plants and seedlings that I can't wait for Open Day to clear the space. Indoor plants take over my spare bedroom and boxes of garden bric-a-brac stack up behind my sofa, priced and ready to go. This year a dapper gnome joined the collection. Rescued from a skip, he was a sad case with barely any paint, but being a true 'vintage' chap, he was worthy of a make-over and provided us with many comic moments on the stand.

I should explain, at this point, that there is very little left unsold by 5.00pm, but it has become a tradition to award an amusing item to Jeff Hart at the end of the day. It amuses us to see him glance nervously at the stall each time he passes, to see what might be coming his way later.

The gnome was a definite contender this year, we had even named him Jeff, but he caught the attention of a lot of people and was sold by lunchtime. Jeff, the real one, was very relieved, but we found a nice pair of flippers for him instead, which will take up much less space in his loft or maybe they will reappear at the Christmas raffle!

It's a lot of work, but thoroughly enjoyable and it's clear that the visitors love it too, many returning each year to buy plants and join in all the other aspects of Open Day.

As usual, many more plants were donated for sale throughout the morning, for which we say a big thank you - also garden tools, paddling pools, hanging baskets, pots and vases. Any garden/plant related odds and ends are gratefully received and sold to enable FONC to do its valuable work. Thank you everyone, see you next year. ■

Front Cover: Contrary Mary volunteers from left to right, Keiko, Rebecca, Margaret, David, Rita, George, Pam and Maggie—and Jeff the gnome!



Jeff with 'Jeff the Gnome'
(photo: Nicola Dunn)

Memories of School Tours *by Rex Batten*

With the cooperation of teachers a couple of decades ago, we took parties of primary school pupils on tours of the cemetery. It was very rewarding. The teachers did a lot of preparatory work helping Nunhead Cemetery to become an exciting new experience for many of the youngsters. They discovered history not simply in terms of wars and kings but in the achievements of individuals and also the fact that the hillside cemetery, where nature took over when the cemetery was abandoned by its owners, is now a natural history site. A unique location overlooking the City of London that has become far more than just a graveyard.

There are a number of contacts with young pupils that remains with me. I feel that each one has something important to say, The first came as a result of explaining the wider range of tree. Some planted as part of the landscaping design of the cemetery, and others brought in by Mother Nature when the cemetery was abandoned. Most of the pupils could understand the planting of a tree but the facts that seeds, like those from sycamore, could be carried in on the wind would settle and grow opened up a whole new world for them. One pupil pointed out that one was growing in their garden that the wind must have brought in.

It was the ginkgo that captured the imagination of another lad. The tree is growing behind the catacombs past the East Lodge. It was explained to the group that the ginkgo biloba dates back to prehistoric time millions of years ago. It did not survive the ice age in Europe but was found by explorers in China. It is reputed to be seen growing by a tomb to the ancestors and the obvious place to plant one was in Nunhead Cemetery. That was explained and to help give the pupils a concept of the immense amount of time that had passed they were told this was a tree that the dinosaurs would have looked at. FONC does possess a stone containing fossilised ginkgo leaves dating from the Jurassic period.

A couple of weeks after that particular visit the teacher sent me copies of some of the writing the pupils had done. One piece stood out and said everything. 'I liked Nunhead Cemetery. There was dinosaurs there. The man showed us a tree that they had looked at.' Three short sentences that was a lesson for the tour guide as well as the pupil!

At the top of the hill, 200 feet above sea level stands a magnificent, single solid piece of granite, an obelisk, over the grave of William Chadwick who

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died in 1852. Chadwick is listed as a stone mason, engineer, speculative builder and entrepreneur. His work ranging from churches and houses to railways held the interest of most of the group of pupils but a couple of youngsters were, obviously, too busy looking around to pay any attention to what was being said. It was when we were moving away that the teacher gave an explanation for what could have been labelled misbehaviour. The pupils were fascinated by the size of the obelisk. It was brought here a hundred and fifty years ago and must weigh tons. It's size and weight raised a whole list of questions. How did they get it to London and as they only had horses how did they haul it up through the cemetery. Most importantly, how did they get it upright?

The look on the teacher's face said everything and she added, 'You've given me an interesting couple of lessons to try and find the answers to their questions. Thanks.' The thanks has to go, not to the guide, but to the youngsters and their inquiring minds.

Tours of the cemetery usually come to and end at the Scottish Martyrs' memorial that does have a close resemblance to the Chadwick obelisk. On a later occasion, after being told it was a memorial to a group of five men who were prepared to risk everything to gain the political freedoms we take for granted today, and were sentenced to transportation for their work, one pupil asked a question. 'Sir, you have shown us several monuments like this, there is one at the top of the hill. You said they are called obelisks.'

'That is correct.'

'All the others have four sides. This has five sides. Is there a special name for it?'

I realised immediately, it was one side for each of the five martyrs hence the design. The ancient Egyptian obelisk which inspired these monuments is defined as a four-sided structure with a pyramid top. I had to admit that I didn't know, and have not been able to find the answer to his question. I am sure that many visitors to the cemetery see the monument as an ordinary obelisk. Here was a young man who deserved full marks for observing carefully what is in front of him rather than simply glancing and walking on as so many do. I think of him each time I pass the memorial.

On an early summer's day we met a party of youngsters at the main gates and, after an introduction, we moved along the path past the East Lodge taking them to the grave of Peter Marsh, the lancer who survived the famous Charge of the Light Brigade, but before we reached that piece of history one lad came up to me and said, 'I didn't expect this.'

'What didn't you expect?'

He looked around and waved his arms. ‘It’s wonderful. I was expecting to see a tidy cemetery with just rows of flowers. It’s only ten minutes ago that we got off the bus in the main road—now we could be a hundred miles from London.’

What better analysis of Nunhead Cemetery could there be? ■

Rex Batten is a former actor and teacher. Since retiring and until very recently he was for many years a Nunhead Cemetery tour guide. He has also served on FONC’s General Committee for many years and is the author of the following FONC publications, ‘The Leysdown Tragedy’, ‘Nunhead Remembered’, ‘Nunhead and the Music Hall’ and ‘The Walworth Scouts’.

Gone for (a very long) walkies...by Marion Houghton

**Cimetière des Chiens et Autres Animaux Domestiques,
4, pont de Clichy, Asnières-sur-Seine, Paris**

If you have already ‘done’ Pierre La Chaise and Montparnasse in Paris, Cimetière du Chiens is a lesser known cemetery sightseeing visit that is well worth the trip if you want some peace and quiet away from the tourist honeypots.

In the suburb of Asnières-sur-Seine, about 20-25 minutes Metro ride from central Paris and a further 15 minute walk from Gabriel Péri station, the cemetery occupies a narrow strip of land next to the Seine behind an ornate stone gateway. This little park is well tended and peaceful with a modest charge for entry payable at the kiosk at the gate where maps are also available. The cemetery was opened in 1899 but fell into disrepair and vandalism in the 1970s (sound familiar?) before being rescued by a Friends group and lovingly restored and reopened by the local authority in the early 2000s. Although one of the oldest graves is that of a dog from Napoleon’s Grande Armée, the remainder span the period right up to the present day and presumably the income from these more recent burials helps to fund the ongoing upkeep of the burial ground.

The cemetery contains, as the name suggests, mainly dogs with a fair number of cats, some horses and a few assorted other beasts including a monkey, a sheep, hamster, rabbit and even a hen that lived to the age of 16.

On entering the gate the most striking monument is to Barry, a St Bernard rescue dog, complete with a small child on his back. The inscription

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records that he ‘rescued 40 people and was killed by the 41st’. It turns out that the truth is more prosaic; apparently he happened to die from exhaustion while rescuing that 41st person.

At first sight, apart from the lack of religious references, the graveyard looks familiar. Many of the memorials are enlivened with photos and sculptures of plump and cosseted pets, which are helpful in identifying the species of the deceased as the names rarely give much of a clue. All of the monuments are non-religious and in some cases it is clear that the sculptor/stonemason was unused to representing animals, as the quality of craftsmanship is quite variable! The inscriptions range from a brief record of birth and death



Monument to Barry the St Bernard Dog
(Photo: Marion Houghton)

dates (most of the animals here appear to have lived to very good ages) to affectionate and sentimental inscriptions.

In some cases a kennel is depicted or a favourite toy. One dog’s grave has a glass bowl full of faded tennis balls and another, a cat’s plot, has a series of photos of the deceased scooping food up in his paws like a cat food commercial. In some cases whole dynasties of pets owned over a human lifespan are commemorated in a ‘family vault’. Another stone near the entrance records the anonymous stray dog that died outside the gates in May 1958 and was honoured as the 40,000th animal to be interred here.

Elsewhere the last resting place of Hollywood star Rin Tin Tin can be found, alongside dogs who served in the trenches of the First World War and medal winning police dogs Dora, Butterfly and Leo who worked in the local police service. Aristocratic pets abound, belonging to royalty, dukes and duchesses. There are also memorials to a Derby-winning horse from the 1920s and Grandma, a military mascot for all her life. There’s something heart-warming and almost cheerful about an animal graveyard jam full of

creatures which for the most part, had wonderfully happy lives at the centre of their loving owners' care and attention. A visit to Cimetière du Chiens makes a charming, quirky and enjoyable excursion and is highly recommended. ■

Art Exhibitions in Nunhead Cemetery *by Jolanta Jagiello*

In May 2015 (including Open Day) 'ANZAC In Spirit: Diggers in Gallipoli' to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the ANZAC Landings on 25th April 1915 in the Stearn's Mausoleum was attended by over 1,300 visitors including army personnel who had seen service under the grandson of General Bird-

wood of the ANZACs. 'ANZAC In Spirit' is touring other 'Magnificent Seven' cemeteries on their Open Days with a pop-up display, including Tower Hamlets and Kensal Green, as well as Ladywell and Brockley Cemetery. The exhibition was funded by the Southwark Neighbourhood Grant and follows last years very successful 'Wrenches, Trenches, and Stenches' which commemorated the start of the First World War. This is part of a five year plan of exhibitions commemorating the First World War from 2014-2018. Next year's show will be 'Animals In Service', followed by 'Women in Front' in 2017, and ending with 'Messages, Medals, and Memorials' in 2018.

The next exhibition planned in the restored Anglican chapel is 'Memorable Memorials' open the first three weekends in September from 11.00am to 5.00pm and during Open House Weekend and Nunhead Arts Trail both on 19th and 20th September 2015, 11.00am to 6.00pm. The exhibition this time is based on the photographs by FONC co-ordinator Jeff Hart with his wife Jane Hart, but this time of memorable memorials from cemeteries in South America. ■



Memorial to Bibi the Poodle
(Photo Marion Houghton)

DECEASED ON LINE

<https://www.deceasedonline.com/>

Report by Michèle Louise Burford

The burial records for Nunhead Cemetery can now be searched on-line. There is a free search facility and a free advanced search facility.

For the free search you can enter a surname (mandatory), first name, and the years to search (from and to). For the advanced free search you can enter a surname (mandatory), first name and years (from and to), include similar names (surname only), choose a country, a region, i.e. London, and a county (if you choose London as a region, the county options become boroughs, in the case of Nunhead Cemetery the option is Southwark).

At the time of writing Southwark cemeteries/graveyards on Deceased on Line are Camberwell Old, Camberwell New, Nunhead and St George's graveyard, Camberwell. Honor Oak Crematorium is to follow.

The records have been transcribed but (perhaps due to poor hand-writing) the information is sometimes incorrect. For example I was looking for someone by the surname FLAWS but it was transcribed as FLOW.

Once you have found the person you are looking for you have options to purchase the following:-

- ◆ **Burial Register Scan**—In the case of Nunhead Cemetery this is part of the burial index that has been digitised. It gives you the date of burial, surname, first name, age, whether the grave is consecrated or unconsecrated, grave number, square number, common or private grave and depth of the grave. There is no last address or next of kin which makes it difficult to confirm you have found the correct person if looking for someone with a common name. I did a test using the name Emma Smith buried in Nunhead Cemetery between 1900 and 1905 and five with this name came up. It is not until you pay the £2.00 charge that you would know the age of the deceased, so in this case, if the last Emma Smith was the one you were looking for it would have cost you £10.00. The cost is £2.00 per record.

- ◆ **Grave Details and other Burials**—shows the grave reference for the burial and any other burials that have taken place in the same grave. For each burial you will see the burial date and name of the deceased. The cost is £1.50.

- ◆ **Map of Grave Location**—this is a map of the square and does not show the grave. In the case of Nunhead Cemetery this gives you a basic plan of the entire cemetery, showing the nature reserve area in a darker green and a warning that safe access to all parts of cemetery is no longer possible. In addition you are provided with a very basic plan showing the square in which the grave is situated and a larger image of the same plan. As far as I am aware no detailed plans are available on Deceased Online which shows the exact grave location in Nunhead Cemetery. The cost is £2.50.

Subscription Voucher Pricing is £89 per annum. Subscriptions allow you to view all records except maps and whole cemetery headstone collections, for which you will need pay-per-view vouchers. With pay-per-view you pay only for the items you want to see. To use pay-per-view you have to purchase vouchers online using your credit or debit card. The voucher values are added to your account and you have six months in which to use the vouchers before they expire. Vouchers are priced at £5, £10, £25 and £50.

New chairman for NCF

Report by Gwyneth Stokes

The annual general meeting of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF) was hosted last June by the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds, when FONC was represented by Jeff and Jane Hart.

The treasurer, FONC's Carol Stevenson, reported 88 paid-up members, an increase on last year and a satisfactory balance of accounts. Expenditure was being reduced by moving correspondence to email wherever possible.

After 13 years as chairman Arthur Tait has retired and Robert Stephenson was elected to succeed him. Robert (Kensal Green and Brompton) is well-known to FONC members through his interesting lectures. Gwyneth Stokes and Carol Stevenson were re-elected secretary and treasurer respectively. Among proposals from members Jeff Hart suggested a 'National Federation Day' when members could hold simultaneous events of their choice which could generate publicity for the NFCF.

Highlight of the tour of Beckett Street Cemetery was seeing the famous 'guinea' graves. £1.1 shilling paid for burial in a common grave but unlike paupers' graves the deceased's name would be recorded on a shared headstone.

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On the Friday there was an opportunity to meet the Lord Mayor of Leeds and then tour the Civic Hall; on Sunday an interesting AGM weekend concluded with a visit to Lawnswood Cemetery, when Andrea Hetherington, chair of the Friends, led a poignant tour visiting graves connected with First World War soldiers.

Minutes of NFCF AGM available from secretary: gwyneth1@btinternet.com

NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS No 19

by Jeff Hart – FONC Co-ordinator

Fawly Towers?

We reported in the last issue that Southwark had placed a ban on using the Anglican chapel viewing platforms for the time being but that we hoped to resolve the issues before our annual Open Day in May. Unfortunately that has not been the case. We have been trying to obtain more information from Southwark about the precise concerns said to have been expressed by the London Fire Brigade, Southwark's Planning Control officers and 'others' but so far to no avail. Given Southwark's satisfaction expressed previously on the condition of the viewing platforms we can only assume that the 'evacuation plan' is the problem. We are seeking a meeting with appropriate Southwark representatives to try to resolve the matter but no date has been set yet.

Where angels fear to tread...

Southwark have also now placed a ban on FONC volunteers working in the recently cleared path along the Ivydale Road boundary (see '*Ivydale Road clearance completed*' in *Nunhead Cemetery News 18*). It appears that Southwark have determined that the danger of finding more asbestos material together with the 'hazardous' nature of much of the other rubbish that has accumulated by the boundary wall poses too big a risk for FONC volunteers to face (or perhaps Southwark is more concerned about its own liability issues?). This means that we are now unable to continue with the rescue of the numerous common grave headstones that are disappearing under the soil in this area as planned. Southwark are not interested in carrying out such work themselves and, indeed, it is their contention that as there was no right of placing such memorials on common graves in the first place under burial law (but what applied when the London Cemetery Company conditions held sway one might ask).

Beeched!

Whilst much of June and July saw the cemetery basking in glorious 'sea-side' weather there were a few days of very high winds as well. This always makes us nervous as the woodland areas of the cemetery are often susceptible to individual trees falling foul of these winds either through overcrowding, age, disease or just bad luck. Unfortunately around the evening of 5th July one of the majestic beech trees adjacent to The Beeches path towards the top of West Hill came crashing down. Luckily there was no-one in the vicinity and the tree fell away from the path itself. Almost miraculously, so far as we can see, this massive tree also managed to land in such a way that its strong branches held it up and away from the many memorials in its path such that it does not seem that any have been damaged. Southwark's tree team are scheduled at the time of writing to log up the fallen beech and also to take down a similar beech next to it. This is because it had previously been examined by Southwark tree officer Ian Williams and been found to be so diseased that it posed an imminent danger. These trees are some of the oldest to be found in the cemetery and probably pre-date the laying out of the site. It is tragic that such a distinctive facet of the cemetery has now been lost. FONC will be talking to Southwark to discuss how the characteristic nature of The Beeches can be restored for the future.

Down the drain once more

On a more positive note Southwark have engaged a specialist company to survey the drains from the top of the Main Avenue to the Linden Grove entrance. This is because they have become blocked with material that is swept down the path in heavy rains causing flooding at the bottom of the Main Avenue and around the ruined East Lodge. These drains were examined and cleared as part of the Lottery funded works in 1999/2000. The contractors have cleared the blockages but three of the drain sumps are to be further examined using CCTV to determine whether they need repair.

Bats at Nunhead

Daniel Greenwood, London Wildlife Trust's (LWT) Conservation Project Officer for Sydenham Hill Wood, led a bat walk around the cemetery on the evening of 26th June. Jointly stewarded by LWT and FONC, these walks attract between 40 and 60 attendees at other sites but approximately 170 turned up for the Nunhead event! On a balmy evening, with a nearly full moon towards the end of the walk, fortunately our bats cooperated by ap-

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pearing at a number of stops on the walk. We saw common pipistrelles, soprano pipistrelles and the much rarer noctule, the largest British bat.

In addition to our usual cemetery tours, we continue to provide guided walks for many special interest groups, the latest being the East Surrey Family History Society on 13th July and the London Explorers Group on 5th August. We also give PowerPoint presentations to groups such as the Southwark Pensioners Local History Group (23rd June), and attend events such as Tower Hamlets Open Day (6th June) and Southwark's annual memorial service (28th June). This all helps increase awareness of the cemetery and raises funds for FONC. We have several bookings to come but contact Carole Tyrell for further enquiries.

Letters



Stanley Martin CVO of Dulwich writes:

I should like to make a few small comments on Rebecca Higgins note on Mary Seton Watts (*FONC News* No 128). Her husband was not A G but G F Watts: George Frederic, who was the only artist in the first list of twelve people appointed to the Order of Merit when it was founded by King Edward VII in 1902 as the highest civil distinction in Britain. He was known as 'England's Michelangelo' and had previously twice declined a baronetcy.

Mary was his second wife (the first was the 17-year-old actress, Ellen Terry) and on their marriage in 1886, she was 36 and he was 69. G F died in 1904 and Mary was thus a widow for 34 years, during which time she devoted her life mainly to the creation of Compton as a memorial to her great husband. *Stanley Martin CVO is the author of 'The Order of Merit' (2007).*

Mrs P Wells of Ashford, Kent, writes:

I was quite surprised and pleased to see that some of the foliage (brambles) around my grandparents' grave (left of the chapel) is being cleared, it really looks like something is finally being done. I visit quite often and was quite overjoyed that I could walk round the grave rather than climb over the monuments nearby. I hope the work will be continued right up to the chapel thus I will be able to walk right near my grandparents' grave. Thank you. Keep up the good work.

Remarkable Women buried in Nunhead Cemetery

by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford

(1) ELIZABETH PEACOCK—*part one*

Self-proclaimed successor to Joanna Southcott

In the 1860s, while in search of material for his book *Unorthodox London, or Phases of Religious Life in the Metropolis*, the Reverend Dr Charles Maurice Davies went to a house in Westmoreland Road, Walworth, where it was said the followers of Joanna Southcott, the religious prophetess, assembled, only to discover that, due to the Walworth Common improvements project, they had moved to 97 Trafalgar Road. On arrival at the new address, Dr Davies was invited into the house and into the parlour where a bespectacled old man stood and a ‘wizen old woman’ was seated in an armchair. The woman was introduced to him as Mrs Elizabeth Peacock, who it was said had taken the place of Joanna Southcott. ‘I’ve been in the battle fifty year, since Joanna died,’ she said. ‘I’m an old campaigner, sir.’

Elizabeth Peacock was born at Walsall, Staffordshire, in June 1771, the daughter of Joseph Stone, bridle maker. She was thrice married. Firstly to George Wood at St Mary’s Church, Lambeth, on the 26th October 1801, and secondly to Ivan Vaughan at the recently built St Peter’s Church, Walworth, on 2nd October 1826.

AN EXTRAORDINARY MARRIAGE

Widowed a second time, she was working as a cooper when she married her third husband, John Peacock, a naturalist, at St Peter’s Church, Walworth, on the 10th January 1853. He was a 30-year-old bachelor and gave his name as ‘John Clearlight Peacock’. She gave her name as ‘Elizabeth Fairlight Vaughan’, and her age as 60, when in fact she was over 80!

As a young woman Mrs Peacock was closely associated with Joanna Southcott, the religious prophetess whose followers believed she would be delivered of the new Messiah, and claimed to be Southcott’s successor following her death in 1814. John Peacock was ‘one of the priesthood’ of the sect. By all accounts their wedding procession was a strange affair which bystanders found amusing. The men wore coronets, and around their waists and across their shoulders they wore sashes inscribed with mystical and zodiacal characters. The women, about twelve in number, were dressed in white and each wore a long showy veil.

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The procession made its way to the church bearing banners representing the twelve tribes of Israel, one of the sun, and one of the moon and stars. The bridegroom bore on his shoulder a mace, 'surmounted by a crimson velvet cap with gold fringe.' On arriving at St Peter's Church, the minister, the Revd J J Stratham, ordered the party to leave their banners outside in the porch. At the conclusion of the wedding ceremony Mrs Peacock urged the minister to convert, saying it was revealed to her that she was to introduce Shiloh, or the new Messiah, to the world. A spiritual, not a material, birth was expected. The procession then left the church in the same order as it had arrived amidst the 'hooting, laughter, and jeering' of the assembled crowd.

Later that year Mrs Peacock published a penny pamphlet written by her and bearing the extraordinarily long title: 'A warning to the whole world, being a letter sent to the bishops to let them know their dangers are near at hand, and how they may escape the overwhelming scourge that is threatened to England for their neglect.'

THE SECT IS THREATENED WITH VIOLENCE

By all accounts the Walworth Southcottians were often subjected to persecution and threats and insults by local youths. At Lambeth Police Court, on Saturday 17th October 1857, Mrs Peacock, now calling herself Elizabeth Fairlight Argus Peacock, climbed into the witness box, asking for his worship, the Hon G C Norton's assistance in protecting the lives and property of herself and husband. She gave her address as the 'Royal Manger', 12 King's Row, Walworth Road, and complained that every evening her residence was 'assailed by a mob' who abused and insulted them while at their divine worship, threatened them with violence and damaged their property. The police treated the matter with indifference, she said, and allowed the nuisance to continue. A police sergeant informed the magistrate that a prayer meeting took place at the 'Royal Manger' every Sunday evening, during which flags and banners were exhibited outside the doors, and drums were beaten inside, and this caused 'a crowd of idle boys' to assemble. On hearing this, the magistrate told Mrs Peacock that the solution rested with herself. She should remove the flags, stop beating the drums, and stop performing the service.

According to contemporary press reports the 'toothless old dame' was quite upset by the magistrate's remarks declaring that she would never lower the flags, come what might. She handed the magistrate a printed letter addressed to the bishops to let them know that 'their dangers are at hand', and on leaving the witness box 'waddled out of court'.

to be continued

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR OF THE CEMETERY ► *Sundays 13th September and 13th December 2015 at 2.15pm.* Please meet at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove.

TOUR OF THE CHAPEL AND CRYPT ► The chapel and crypt will be open to visitors at various times during Open House Weekend on *Saturday and Sunday 19th and 20th September 2015.*

LONDON OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND AT NUNHEAD CEMETERY ► *Saturday and Sunday 19th and 20th September 2015 from 1.00pm to 5.00pm on both days.* (see page 3 for details).

MILITARY CONNECTIONS TOUR ► *Sunday 11th October 2015 at 2.15pm.* Meet at the circular flower bed inside the main entrance in Linden Grove.

REMEMBRANCE DAY EVENT ► *Sunday 8th November 2015.* Meet at the War Memorial by the Limesford Road entrance at 10.45am. Wreaths supplied by the British Legion, for which we make a donation, will be laid at all the Commonwealth War Graves Commission main plots. Everyone is most welcome.

GRAVE SYMBOLS TOUR ► *Sunday 15th November 2015 at 2.15pm.* Meet at the circular flower bed inside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove.

FONC'S CHRISTMAS SOCIAL ► *Thursday 17th December 2015 at 7.00 pm.* 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*.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION RECORDING ► Transcribing the inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery is an important and ongoing task. Volunteers meet at the FONC Portakabin near the Linden Grove entrance. For more information dates and times, please contact Paul Dyer (MI Co-ordinator) fonc@btconnect.com. *Appropriate footwear and clothing is essential.*

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 starting 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 to two hours. The publications and enquiry desk will be open, weather and volunteers permitting.

~ CONTACTS ~

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

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

Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)

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