

~~~~ Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, London, SE15 ~~~~

# FONC News

No 141 ~ Autumn issue ~ Sept/Nov 2018

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**Open Day in Nunhead Cemetery 19th May 2018** (see page 15)  
FONC's Publications stall is staffed by committee member Gwyneth Stokes seen here chatting with long-time member John Collings. *Photo: Ron Woollacott*

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## MEMBERS' INFORMATION

**Membership including your contact preferences:** Membership of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery costs £2 UK (£10 overseas), renewable on the 1st April each year. Donations are always welcome. UK taxpayers are encouraged to sign a Gift Aid declaration. Please advise FONC if you wish to cancel your Gift Aid declaration, or if you change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on income and/or capital gains. Data is held by FONC to enable us to send members their copy of *FONC News* and also for the purpose of reclaiming tax. You can decide not to receive communications or change how we contact you at any time. Please send your request to: FONC Membership email: [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto:membership@fonc.org.uk).

**Further information** about FONC and Nunhead Cemetery can be found on our excellent website managed by Simon Quill at [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)

**Cemetery Opening Times:** 8.30am to 4.00pm daily. The cemetery stays open until 5.00pm in March and October and until 7.00pm from April to September. *All times are subject to change.* See notice at cemetery entrances and Southwark Council's website. The cemetery may be closed without notice for safety reasons, for example during very windy and stormy weather.

**Publications and Enquiry Desk:** A wide range of books and leaflets about Nunhead Cemetery are available for sale at FONC's portacabin from 2.00pm to 4.00pm on Sundays when tours or workdays take place. If you would like to help on an occasional Sunday contact Jane Hart by email: [jane.c.hart@btconnect.com](mailto:jane.c.hart@btconnect.com)

**FONC Meetings and Events:** Committee meetings take place on the *3rd Thursday of each month*. *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 vice-chairman email [Nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com](mailto:Nunhead.stevensons@gmail.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. **Contributors:** Michèle Louise Burford; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Cathy Mercer; Hugo Simms; Carol Stevenson and Garry Wiles. **Proof-reader:** Jane Hart. All other text is by the editor. *The editor and FONC's General Committee do not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by contributors.*

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**OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND IN NUNHEAD CEMETERY**  
***Saturday and Sunday 22nd and 23rd September 2018***  
**from 1.00pm to 5.00pm on both days**

We have taken part in this annual event for a number of years. Tours of the crypt will take place throughout both afternoons and the chapel will be open to visitors. General tours of the cemetery will take place at 2pm and 3pm on both days. We shall require volunteers to act as stewards and to generally assist with enquiries and the sale of publications, etc. Unlike the Open Day this is a fairly low-key event but it is still most enjoyable, so if you can help, please contact a committee member or volunteering co-ordinator Ish Lennox. (see contacts, back page).

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**OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW**  
***by FONC Co-ordinator Jeff Hart***

We have reported previously in *FONC News* the steps we are taking to reconstitute the existing FONC unincorporated charity association, registered with the Charity Commission, into a new FONC Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission. An update on progress was also given to members at the June AGM.

Unexpectedly, the Charity Commission has accepted our application to change the status of the Friends within days of receipt. There are thus now two registered charities both with the name 'Friends Of Nunhead Cemetery', the 'new' FONC being registered CIO number 1178763. We now need to dissolve the 'old' FONC and transfer all of its assets to the 'new' FONC so that we may continue to operate on a 'business as usual' basis. This will take two meetings open to all members to achieve, in compliance with the 'old' FONC constitution.

Notice is hereby given that a Special General Meeting will be held on Thursday, 20th September 2018 at 7.45pm at the Pyrotechnist's Arms, Nunhead Green, SE15 at which the following motion proposed by the General Committee will be voted upon:

'This meeting resolves, in accordance with Article 18 of the FONC constitution, to dissolve the existing Friends of Nunhead Cemetery unincorporated charity association (number 296413). The meeting further resolves to transfer all property, assets and monies after the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities to the Chari-

*continued overleaf*

table Incorporated Organisation ‘Friends Of Nunhead Cemetery’ (registration number 1178763) with effect from the 30th November 2018. It further resolves to amend the constitution by adding “or with a charitable institution to which the assets of the Friends have been transferred” to the end of the last sentence of Article 18’.

The constitutional amendment will enable the transfer of all minutes and other records of the ‘old’ Friends to the ‘new’ Friends rather than to Southwark Local Studies Library as would otherwise be required! Adoption of this motion will require the agreement of two-thirds of those members present and voting at the meeting. A second meeting is required by Article 18 of the Constitution to confirm the decision of the first meeting, which requires a simple majority of those members present and voting at the meeting.

Notice is thus hereby given that a Special General Meeting will be held on Thursday, 15th November 2018 at 7:45pm at the Pyrotechnist’s Arms, Nunhead Green, SE15 at which the following motion proposed by the General Committee will be voted upon:

‘This meeting confirms, in accordance with Article 18 of the FONC constitution, the decision adopted on the 20th September 2018 to dissolve the existing unincorporated charity association (number 296413), Friends of Nunhead Cemetery and to transfer all property, assets and monies after the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities to the Charitable Incorporated Organisation ‘Friends Of Nunhead Cemetery’ (registration number 1178763) with effect from 30th November 2018.’

The date of 30th November 2018 has been chosen to enable the Treasurer to effect smoothly the implementation of new bank accounts, transfer of funds and other necessary accounting procedures. The Committee does not expect the business of these meetings to take very long and the dates chosen for the meetings are, therefore, those on which the Committee would normally meet and those committee meetings will be held on the conclusion of the business of the Special General Meetings. As always non-committee members are very welcome to attend the Committee meetings as well (in a non-voting capacity). We do recognise that this process may sound very bureaucratic and unappealing to make the effort to attend the meetings but we would really appreciate a good turn-out of members to legitimise this landmark development in the history of the Friends. If you have any questions or concerns, do contact me as soon as possible, otherwise, see you there!

## **NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS No. 31** *by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator*

### ***East Lodge and boundary wall meetings continue***

With the good news on funding having been made available for both the restoration of the East Lodge and Limesford Road boundary walls (see previous *FONC News*) positive meetings between FONC and borough officers

have been taking place on both issues. It is clear that work on the boundary walls will need much greater planning than anticipated and approvals required from the Diocese of Southwark and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission before work can begin. We have expressed our concerns about the possible impact on mature trees (see below) and the desire to see the mesh fencing panels replaced with railings of the same design used on Linden Grove. Commissioning enabling works on the East Lodge have been delayed by the need to await CCTV drainage examination results but we confidently expect these works to be completed by Christmas. In the meantime a further study into the viability of delivering and maintaining four key restoration outcomes is being commissioned – hopefully to a timescale to permit a decision on which option is to be followed being made before Christmas. FONC has made clear that we consider the best option is to maintain public ownership of the building, to be used as an interpretation centre and we will be working hard to ensure that this is option chosen.

### ***The patience of a several martyrs!***

Any member who can still be bothered to follow the Scottish Martyrs memorial repairs saga (see many previous *FONC News*) will be glad to know that a meeting between the borough engineers and FONC to resolve our concerns about the proposed drainage channel in front of the FONC portacabin was held on site on the 14th May. However, having discussed the proposals further, we were no closer to agreement. We were asked to reiterate our views in writing once again and then we would be informed of the Southwark Council's decision. Samples of the drainage channel, which should have been available at the meeting, were subsequently provided but they bear no resemblance to those included in the drawings presented to Southwark's Planning Committee! Our objections remain valid, therefore, but we are still awaiting a response from Southwark Council.

### ***No bats today***

Unfortunately London Wildlife Trust was unable to provide a walk leader for the proposed bat walk on the 22nd June which was thus cancelled. FONC placed notices on the gates and on our website but apologise if any FONC member (who should have booked with LWT) was inconvenienced.

### ***Further Green Flag award – but no flag yet!***

Nunhead Cemetery has been awarded Green Flag status for 2018/19 which comes with a new flag to flown from the flag-pole situated at the east

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side of the bottom of the Main Avenue. We wait with interest to see whether the missing 2017/18 flag is to be flown or whether Southwark Bereavement Services will fly the 2018/19 flag – hopefully sometime this year?!

### ***Trees, trees everywhere***

We were surprised to be told by Borough officers the day after work started that a complete survey of trees in Nunhead Cemetery was being undertaken. What, all of them??!! Well, no, only trees above 0.3 metres diameter! It seems that this is partly to inform the new conservation management plan (which was due for July but has not been seen at the time of writing) and partly to record Southwark's tree assets. Meeting the surveyors and officers on site reassured us over a number of concerns. Initially to take 4-5 weeks, the work is now to include all trees above 7.5 centimetres along the Limesford Road boundary 1.5 metres back from the boundary walls. The work will record the size, position, species and condition of the trees and each tree is individually marked with a small tag. FONC has been promised a copy of what will prove to be an invaluable data set which we hope to be able to maintain in the future.

### **STOP PRESS**

*Please see the above report about the Scottish Martyrs memorial as we heard today (26th July 2018) that Southwark Council will be proceeding with the Scottish Martyrs drainage channel but in a modified, slightly more acceptable, form.*

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## **FONC'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING JUNE 2018**

Our Annual General Meeting was held in the function room of the Pyrotechnist's Arms, Nunhead Green, on the evening of Thursday 21st June 2018. The acting Chairman, Jeremy Partington, welcomed everyone and informed them of the structure of the evening's events. He then gave a short report highlighting some of the main issues that had arisen during the year. In particular he thanked the following for their hard work over many years but who had stood down or were standing down from their positions: Ron Woollacott who had resigned as Chairman in August, after 36 years in the role, and Pat Manning and Peter Blount who were standing down as *FONC News* postal distributors after many years looking after the mailing. He also reported on the excellent news that the Borough of Southwark had allocated funds for the restoration of the East Lodge and the Limesford Road boundary walls.

At the end of his report, the Chairman presented a piece of Bermondsey glass art work to Ron which would be provided with a suitably inscribed base, in recognition of his enormous contribution as FONC Chairman over the past 36 years. After the Chairman's report and apologies for absence, the minutes of the 2017 were read and adopted as a true record of that meeting.

***The Annual Report of the General Committee*** was presented by **Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator**, who highlighted some of the main items contained in the report as follows:

***Membership:*** Membership was slightly down on last year and now stood at 809 fully paid up members. Members paying by standing order had risen to 48% of the total membership and those signing Gift Aid declarations had risen to 71%.

***National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF):*** The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery hosted the 2017 AGM of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends. FONC was represented by Ron Woollacott, Jeremy Partington and Jane and Jeff Hart. FONC's Gwyneth Stokes and Carol Stevenson attended as NFCF's secretary and treasurer respectively and were re-elected.

***FONC Meetings and Members' Visits:*** The General Committee held ten meetings during the year, and the Voluntary Work Sub-Committee met quarterly. We are actively moving towards changing the status of FONC to that of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The 2017 AGM welcomed author Brian Parsons who spoke on 'Crematoria and Cemeteries in South London.' At the Christmas meeting Jeff Hart gave a presentation on the 'Leysdown Tragedy' drawing on original research by Rex Batten who died in November. In August a very enjoyable members' outing to Gladstone Park was organised and led by Cathy Mercer.

***Sunday FONC Enquiry Desk and Website:*** Monthly and specialist tours throughout the year were supported by the presence of the publications and enquiry desk, organised by Jane Hart. The number of volunteers who cover the desk has recently fallen so we are keen to encourage new volunteers. Volunteers are asked to cover the occasional Sunday afternoon for two to three hours. Simon Quill continues to update and improve our excellent website ([www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)).

***Annual Cemetery Open Day and Open House Weekend:*** The 33rd annual Open Day on the 19th May 2018 was blessed with fine weather and attendance was excellent despite competition from the Royal wedding and FA Cup Final. Tim and Carol Stevenson work hard to plan the Day throughout the year, but we do need more support both in planning and on the day if we are to continue to maintain the high standards we have set ourselves. Open House weekend was held on 16th and 17th September attracting a good number of visitors, despite a rather chilly Saturday.

***FONC Publicity and Media Coverage:*** We have an increasing presence on social media thanks in part to the efforts of member Pete Trotman, and it is gratifying to read the positive comments made about both the cemetery and FONC. We attended Open Days at Tower Hamlets, Brompton, and Brockley and Ladywell cemeteries and at Blythe Hill Fayre.

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**Members' Journal:** The regular publication of *FONC News* has been instrumental in keeping members informed about the activities of FONC and our work in the cemetery. Issues Nos 138 and 139 were edited by Jeff and Jane Hart owing to the indisposition of the editor Ron Woollacott. The editors would like to thank everyone who sent in articles, and those involved in the production and distribution of the journal.

**Publications:** The long-awaited book *Nunhead Cemetery and the Battle of Waterloo* by Jeffery M Hart, was published in May and is our first full-colour publication. A fourth volume of *Nunhead Notables* by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford is nearing completion, and despite Ron's illness a new book on the Great Vance is expected shortly.

**Grave-search and Monumental Inscription Recording:** We are no longer able to carry out grave searches since Southwark Council entered into an agreement with Deceased on Line. We continue to receive enquiries by post and e-mail and always give advice if possible. Our grave search desk at Open Day is always busy with enquiries. Monumental inscription recordings, a number of which are on our website [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk), has now ceased as a result of a lack of a co-ordinator to organise this work.

**Presentations, Tours and Events in the Cemetery:** The monthly general tours remain as popular as ever, and our quarterly tree trail tours continue. Crypt visits and music hall tours have proved very popular. We have provided tours for special interest groups including the Society of Genealogists and Tonbridge History Group. Peckham and Nunhead Free Film Festival event was held in the cemetery in September 2017 with a showing of 'Nosferatu' which attracted an audience of 400. Presentations about Nunhead Cemetery raise funds for FONC and have been enjoyed by the Lewisham Local History Society and Forest Hill Lively Minds. Over 40 people attended a memorial service in February 2018 for Rex Batten.

**Art and Education Projects:** A continuing programme of arts events in the chapel included *Industrial Garden* in Summer 2017, *Winter Passage* in Winter/Spring 2018 with *Bear with Us* more recently being displayed. An exhibition entitled *Gargoyles and Cherubs* had been displayed to coincide with the Nunhead Arts Trail in September 2017. FONC again participated in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Living Memory Project with a display on the theme of *Unremembered* commemorating the First World War Labour Corps. Jeff Hart thanked Jolanta Jagiello, curator of the exhibitions, for her hard work in bringing these events to the cemetery.

**Religious Services:** Jeff Hart noted that FONC, after a number of years absence, had held an ecumenical All Souls Service in the chapel on the 5th November 2017 led by the Revd Ross Gunderson of St. Barnabas Church, Dulwich. We continued to run an increasingly well-attended wreath laying event on Remembrance Sunday. The Royal British Legion benefits from a donation of £250 that we make for wreaths.



**Management of the Cemetery by Southwark Council:** Jeff Hart noted that the Council had now introduced Public Space Protection Orders borough-wide which included the introduction of requirements for dogs to be kept on leads in certain parts of the cemetery. Newly promoted manager Sam Rees had agreed to allow FONC to begin a programme of repairs to prominent memorials which have been left unsightly by damage over the years. During the year the Council had commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to develop three separate conservation management plans for its cemeteries and FONC had met with LUC to give its views.

**Cemetery Improvements:** The Scottish Martyrs memorial project has still not been resolved. The 'new' First World War memorial in Square 89 suffered from subsidence which has now been completely repaired by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission after consultation with FONC. We also facilitated to repairs the Donkin monuments, together with the Nolloth and Wilks tombs. FONC has been awarded a grant under the Cleaner, Greener, Safer scheme of £5,000 for the provision of new waste bins and information banners.

**East Lodge:** In February Southwark Council's Cabinet meeting agreed £1million for the restoration of the East Lodge. Four options are to be considered with feasibility studies looking at each option. FONC's preference is for full restoration using the restored building as an interpretation centre. FONC would be represented on the project board, together with representatives from Historic England and the Southwark Council. (End of committee's report)

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Ann Coley presented the report for the financial year ending 31st March 2018, printed copies of which were distributed amongst members present at the meeting. Although receipts were down in comparison with the previous year, the total amount in the bank had increased. Major expenditure for the year had included a gate and fencing for the FONC storage area in the East Lodge grounds and a new notice board for use at the annual Open Day and other events.

**AUDITOR'S REPORT:** The Chairman highlighted the independent report, prepared by George Young, noting that this was not a requirement of the Charity Commission. He proposed a vote of thanks for George Young who said he would be willing to review FONC's accounts for 2018/2019 and this was noted.

**UPDATE OF FONC'S CONSTITUTION: (see page 3)**

At the AGM, Jeff Hart provided an update on the work to FONC's charitable status to bring it in line with new common practice. As a result of changes in legislation and update of the Charity Commission's guidance, the FONC Committee had decided that FONC needed to update its Constitution and apply to change its status from an unincorporated charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It would make FONC better fitted to attract grants and if necessary in the future, to employ staff.

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FONC had followed the constitution template provided by the Charity Commission and had recently applied to the Commission to change status. Jeff noted that formal notice would be needed to wind up the current charity with a majority of two thirds of those present at the meeting agreeing to this, followed by a further meeting, no less than two weeks later confirming, by a simple majority, to wind it up and transfer the funds. He noted that, subject to agreement by the committee in July, notice would be given in the next issue of *FONC News* due out in September.

**ELECTIONS:** The following members were elected to serve on the General Committee: Ann Coley (Hon Treasurer); Malcolm Collins; Jeff Hart (Co-ordinator); Jane Hart (Minutes Secretary); Ish Lennox; Cathy Mercer; Simon Mercer (Membership Secretary); Jeremy Partington (Chairman); Carol Stevenson (Vice-Chairman); Gwyneth Stokes; Alan Till; Maureen Woollacott; Ron Woollacott. Jolanta Jagiello, a long-serving committee member, did not stand for re-election.

**VOLUNTARY WORK SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT:** Vice-Chairman **Carol Stevenson** presented the report, identifying the hard work done by volunteers in looking after the cemetery. She reported that with increasing pressure of dog walking in the cemetery, the volunteers spent a lot of time laying path matting and putting up and maintaining dead hedges to reduce wear. Clearing fallen trees had remained a major task during the year, particularly after stormy weather. Removing high branches that obscured the St Paul's view had proved challenging but in the end successful. We uncovered previously undiscovered numbered slabs under the St Christopher-le-Stocks stone, and less welcome, some openings in around the catacombs that had to be filled in.

She thanked all the volunteers who had contributed well over 625 hours of work during the year and appealed for more volunteers to help with the work, and thanked the corporate volunteers who came to the cemetery to lay path matting and clear undergrowth, the *idverde* staff who work in the cemetery, and Candy and Mark from Southwark Council. She added, new volunteers were always welcome, and you only have to do as much work as suited you. Volunteers meet at the portacabin on the first Sunday of each month, from 10am onwards. (Email Tim and Carol Stevenson on [Nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com](mailto:Nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com) for more details).

No motions were proposed and there was no other business. *The full annual report, treasurer's report, and voluntary work report may be seen in the members' area of our website: [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)*

At the conclusion of the business part of the meeting, members enjoyed light refreshments followed by a most interesting PowerPoint presentation by Mathew Neil, Chairman of the Music Hall Guild of Great Britain and America, about the work of the theatre heritage charity. He showed numerous examples of graves of music hall personalities that had been restored by his organisation. At the conclusion of his presentation he was presented with a copy of the newly published FONC publication about the Great Vance who lies in an unmarked grave at Nunhead Cemetery.

## BOOK REVIEWS *by Cathy Mercer*

**Nunhead Cemetery and the Battle of Waterloo by Jeffrey M Hart**  
£8.00 or £7.50 to FONC members - ISBN 978-0-9569874-5-7 - 178 pages

The Napoleonic Wars went on for so long that until recently they were known as the 'Great War'. This fascinating book gives a useful introduction to the conflict before focusing on the fascinating stories of eight Waterloo veterans in Nunhead Cemetery, as well as a ninth veteran buried at nearby Brockley Cemetery.

The stories of these veterans make for amazing reading, especially the after-math of the battle. There's a lieutenant-colonel whose career spanned 81 years, eventually becoming a field marshal. Several of the veterans end up in the workhouse, though happily they become friends with each other there and, at the end, they are provided with due burial honours and avoid the anonymity of paupers' graves. Touchingly, the veterans are buried together.



*The Charge of the Royal Scots Greys*

And then there is Edward Costello, originally from Ireland, who marries a French girl after Waterloo, becomes a cobbler and eventually a warder at the Tower of London. His tale is particularly moving as we know so much about him because he published his own life story. All human life is here!

The book is beautifully illustrated in full colour and makes for a really good read, whether you're interested in history military or local or just the lives of ordinary people.

### ***The Enigmatic Mr Peck Stevens or THE GREAT VANCE***

*The Life and Career of a Great Victorian Music-hall Luminary buried at Nunhead*  
by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford

£4.00 or £3.50 to FONC members - ISBN 978 0 956 9874 33 - 98 pages

The Great Vance was a huge star in his day and this book does a great job researching his career. A comedian, impressionist, singer and songwriter, he toured the length and breadth of Britain every year at his peak, from Dublin to Deal, from Dundee to Ryde, where the 1871 *Isle of Wight Times* described him as 'the most entertaining singing comedian that has ever visited Ryde.' He appealed to all walks of life and even entertained the Prince of Wales, the

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future Edward VII. The Great Vance lived for several years in Peckham, died dramatically on stage at the age of 48 and is buried in Nunhead Cemetery, though sadly his tombstone no longer exists.



*Vance in character  
'The Chickaleary Cove'*

The authors have done a great job researching this Robbie Williams of the 1860s, so famous and yet so enigmatic that his date of birth is not known – reports seem to make this later the older he gets. Good use is made of contemporary newspaper advertisements and reviews, as well as census records. It's beautifully illustrated with contemporary etchings, photos and even author watercolours.

The Great Vance's rise was so meteoric that a simple time line might have made for clarity. The lyrics quoted on page 28 also made me want a list of his greatest hits and more witty lyrics. However, there is only so much that can be packed into a slender volume and this well-written and entertaining book will appeal to anyone with an interest in Victorians, the music-hall or the entertainment world.

NB: Both books may be purchased from our Publications Desk (see page 2 for details) or by post by visiting our website at [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk) and by downloading the order form provided.

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## THE STORY BEHIND NUNHEAD'S ONLY MAUSOLEUM

*(part one) by Ron Woollacott*

*(additional research by Michèle Louise Burford)*

I first attended a funeral at Nunhead, that of my grandmother, in 1951 when I was 15-years-old, but I had visited the cemetery before then, and I often wondered what the small unoccupied building near the top of cemetery was used for; was it a place for the gravediggers to store their tools, I wondered? or perhaps a place for them to shelter during inclement weather. Of course, by the time Maureen and I had married in 1958, and we had moved into our new home in Linden Grove, a few doors along from Daniel's stonemasons and almost opposite the cemetery's main gates, I knew then that it was a disused mausoleum. Disappointingly there was nothing on or within the structure to say to whom it belonged or why it was empty.

One day, sometime in the early 1980s, whilst I was in the cemetery copying inscriptions, a young man, a student of literature I believe, came up to me

and asked for directions to see the grave of Laurence Sterne (the author of *Tristram Shandy*). I told him that, as far as I knew Laurence Sterne had died long before Nunhead Cemetery had opened for burials, so he couldn't be buried here. I asked him why he thought Sterne was buried at Nunhead, and he replied that he had read it somewhere. The name rang a bell, and I remembered that I had a copy of *The Doulton Story* (May 1979) by Paul Atterbury and Louise Irvine, in which they called the mausoleum at Nunhead the 'Stearne' mausoleum, a mistake repeated by Hugh Meller in *London Cemeteries* (1981), but they didn't provide any further information.

My curiosity aroused, on my next visit to the cemetery records office, I discovered that the mausoleum was built to receive the remains of Mrs Laura Stearns (not Stearne or Sterne) of Radnor House, Twickenham, who had died in 1900. In fact her coffin was placed in the adjoining grave (brick vault) belonging to the Chillingworth family, pending the construction of the mausoleum. Laura Stearns was in due course laid to rest in the new mausoleum in 1902. The remains of Philip Speakman, Laura's son-in-law, were placed in the mausoleum in 1919. Both coffins were removed in June 1931 (at the request of Laura's daughter Edith), and were interred in an earth grave. The mausoleum has remained empty ever since. Despite Hugh Meller's suggestion (*London Cemeteries* 1981) it was never 'invaded'.

#### MRS LAURA STEARNS OF RADNOR HOUSE, TWICKENHAM

Laura Stearns was born in London on the 18th November 1841, the daughter of William and Ann Chillingworth, and was baptised on the 7th January 1842 at All Hallows, Barking-by-the-Tower. Her father was a wealthy wine merchant and importer of foreign wines 'by appointment to Queen Victoria', with premises at 42-44 Great Tower Street, London. He purchased Radnor House, a 17th century house at Cross Deep, Twickenham, in 1842. Laura's mother Ann died at Radnor House, and was laid to rest in the Chillingworth family vault at Nunhead in 1848. In the 1851 census Laura was aged nine and living with her widowed father and younger brother, William, aged four, at Radnor House attended by three servants.

Laura's father, William, married secondly, Sarah Browning, at All Hallows, London, on the 22nd November 1854, she was 24 and he was 58. He died at Radnor House on the 31st May 1867, aged 64, and was laid to rest in the family vault. His wealth at death was £30,000, worth around £2.4 million in 2016. Laura's stepmother Sarah wasn't mentioned in her father's will, and it is not known what became of her after his death.

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Laura Chillingworth married Alfred Charles Stearns at Holy Trinity Church, Twickenham, on the 12th June 1868. One of the witnesses at the wedding was her elder brother James Gunstone Chillingworth, and the couple set up home at Radnor House where their two children were born. In the 1871 census Laura and Alfred, an underwriter and a member of Lloyds, were residing at Radnor House with their two children, William and Edith Laura, who were both under the age of two, along with Alfred's siblings Ernest and Emily. The household was attended by six female servants.

Alfred Stearns was a member of the Royal London Yacht Club, and the owner of *Spitfire*, a four-ton yacht. He held another property, Glanymoor, at Hill

Head, Fareham, Hampshire, on the coast of the Solent, where he, Laura, and their daughter Edith were staying at the time of the 1881 census. Alfred died at Glanymoor on the 9th October 1886, aged 44, and was interred at West Norwood Cemetery. His wealth at death was £18,857 (worth around £1.8 in 2016) which was left (in trust) to his two children, William and Edith Laura. After her husband's death, Laura continued to reside at Radnor House with the two children.

Laura Stearns was the Ruling Councillor of the Local Habitation of the Primrose League which, at her invitation met at Radnor House in 1894 with the vice-chancellor of the League, G S Lane Fox. The Primrose League was set up for promoting conservative principles. Laura Stearns died at Radnor House on the 14th August 1900, aged 58. Her wealth at death was £20,970 (worth over £2 million in 2016). Her remains were placed in her parents' vault awaiting the construction of a mausoleum which was completed in 1902, in which year Laura's coffin was removed from the Chillingworth vault and placed in the new mausoleum. She was joined by her son-in-law Philip Ernest Speakman JP, who died in March 1919. In June 1931 both coffins were removed from the shelves of the mausoleum at the request of Laura's daughter Edith Laura Speakman, and were interred in a nearby earth grave. The mausoleum has remained empty ever since.



Michèle, aged nine, and the mausoleum  
*Photo taken in 1970 by Ron Woollacott*

*to be continued*

## Rest in Peace



**FONC member 2290, Mrs Valerie Capon of Barton-on-Sea, Hants, a member since June 1997 passed away in 2017, and long-time member 0208, Miss P A Fenn-Clark of Streatham, who joined FONC in 1985, passed away recently.**

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### *Letter from Pamela Hudson MBE of Beckenham*

Although I can no longer get to Nunhead these days because of my age I have good memories of times there. I lived in Jerningham Road, New Cross, for over 60 years and worked for some years in the office of Daniel's Monumental Masons which was situated opposite the gates of the cemetery. When the company closed down I was able to get hold of one of the record books which they used and gave it to the Friends.

I was also on the Board of the Tidy Britain Group and as such was able to recommend the Friends for an award for the Queen Mother's Birthday Awards and I remember Ron Woollacott coming to the lunch at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, Hyde Park to collect it. I was so sorry to hear that he has had to resign as Chairman. He has done such a lot.

I also ran the Guide Company at St Paul's Church in Consort Road, Nunhead, for many years and we rather looked on the cemetery as the nearest thing to the countryside and spent several Saturdays stalking and tracking there!

I am so pleased to receive my magazine and wish you all well in keeping the place open and flourishing.

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### **Nunhead Open Day in National Cemeteries Week**

**I**t was warm and sunny on Saturday 19th May 2018, when our 33rd Annual Open Day (the first was in August 1986), which took place during National Cemeteries Week, and there was an excellent attendance as usual, despite competition from the Royal wedding and FA Cup Final. Visitors descended on Nunhead Cemetery from all over London and even further afield to enjoy an unusual day out for both adults and children alike. A cemetery might seem an unlikely place for a day out, but historic Nunhead Cemetery is rather special, rising 200 feet above sea-level with views look-

*continued overleaf*

ing north towards St Paul's Cathedral, as well as being a delightful woodland with winding paths.

Richard Jones - the 'bug man' - to the delight of children was back again after a year's absence, and Francis Chappell's Victorian style hearse and handsome horses were greatly appreciated by visitors. The bodgers are always popular, so too are the other FONC attractions of 'Contrary Mary's' plant stall and FONC Café's homemade goodies and refreshment stall. Our grateful thanks to everyone who contributed plants and homemade cakes for sale and helped cover the stalls. The main avenue leading to the chapel was lined with stalls on both sides. FONC's stalls included: publication sales, grave search, badge making for children, and information desk. Over 30 voluntary organisations were present, and we must not fail to mention the entertainment provided by the several choirs and Morris dancers. Visitors were able to enjoy tours of the cemetery on the hour, and visit the crypt. Our thanks to everyone who helped make the day so enjoyable ■

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## **The Dickasons of Newlands, Peckham Rye**

*by Hugo Simms*

If you lived in Peckham Rye between about 1850 and 1920, the chances are you would know a Dickason; perhaps because of the Newlands Dairy, or maybe through cricket, through local Liberal party politics or Music Societies, the Selwyn Masonic Lodge, the Camberwell Vestry, or through the local billiards scene.

Most likely, however, you would know them as the family which ran the Newlands Tavern on Stuart Road, rebuilt mid-1930s (now The Ivy House), from around 1865 to 1922.

Thomas Dickason senior was born in Norfolk in 1818. In the early 1850s he and his wife Elizabeth moved from north London to a green fielded area east of Peckham Rye Common known as Newlands (incidentally, the area was called this for many years prior to then – a map of 1732 shows 'Newlands Corner' where Stuart Road and Cheltenham Road now meet). There they set up the Newlands Dairy.

By 1865 Thomas was listed in the Post Office Directory as 'Beer retailer – Newlands' and held a 'licence to sell beer to be consumed on the premises'. Around 1870 his sons Joseph and Charles took over the dairy, whilst he concentrated on upgrading his occupation to that of licenced victualler, whereby he could greatly extend the range of beverages available for consumption on his premises. Despite much support, this proved to be a frustratingly prolonged process.





The Newlands Tavern, Peckham Rye (Photo: courtesy Hugo Simms)

In 1878, for example, it was noted at the licensing sessions, not for the first time, that ‘The house is placed between Peckham Rye and New Cross on the main road, the nearest house being The Nun’s Head... which does not oppose the application’. It was further noted that, ‘There are several games indulged in near the house, including that of football, the players of which are unable, unless going a long way out of their course, to obtain spirits in the shape of brandy, whisky etc.’ Despite these favourable circumstances, the licence was still not granted.

By 1882, in his mid 60s and applying for the umpteenth time, Thomas dryly remarked to the bench that, ‘I live in hope of securing the licence before I die.’ Three years later he finally got his wish and became a licenced victualler ‘subject to the clear glass condition’. By the end of the decade the Newlands Tavern, though still owned by Thomas (as were many houses in the area), was tied in with Truman’s Brewery.

Two passions burned for the Dickason family during their long tenure of the pub: cricket and music.

Thomas, who played up to the age of 66, was a ‘stubborn left-handed bat with a wonderful knack of keeping his wickets intact’. He regularly played for the local tradesmen against the police team on Peckham Rye. In later years he was an umpire ‘whose decisions upon moot points were held in great respect’. His son Joseph played for Tramway CC, but it was Honor Oak Cricket Club which was most important to the family.

The ground was positioned a few hundred yards away from the pub and until 1920 the Newlands was the club’s headquarters. Joseph’s sons Tom and Sidney were stalwarts of the club. Tom was the captain over a number of

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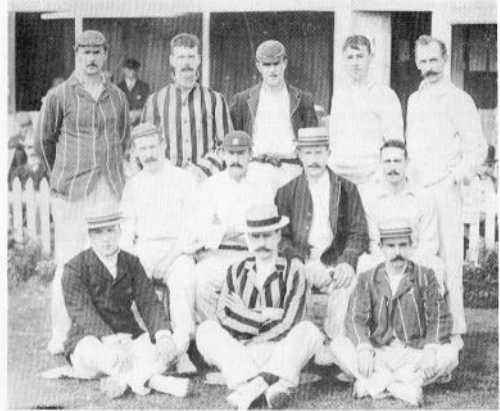
seasons and one of south London's foremost all-round cricketers. Sidney had spells playing for Surrey Colts (he was also a regular on the competitive pub billiards circuit). Daughter Kate captained the Ladies club, though its existence may have been brief! Kate, incidentally, was also renowned for her wit-ty and incisive public speaking.

In 1904 the club hosted London County CC at its pretty ground overlooking the common. The opposition was run by arguably the most famous English cricketer, W G Grace. The scorecard notes that T Dickason lost his wicket to the great man, but not before he'd scored 47 runs. It is tempting to think that Grace joined the teams back at the Newlands for a jar or three after the match!

In the 1890s the Newlands Musical Society was formed (initially hosted by Joseph and subsequently by Tom). By 1900 there were 70 members as the society bade to become the largest in south London. It was proposed that future concerts would be held in the new billiard hall, currently being built at the pub and nearly ready for use.

The *South London Press* gave regular reports of proceedings. In March 1904, in the 'handsome saloon room' which was still festooned with flags and floral decorations following Kate's recent wedding, Mr Herbert Stracey proclaimed star of the evening, 'delighting his hearers with *Ho! Jolly Jenkin* and *The Bedouin Love Song*. Sometimes, however, tactful phrasings suggested perhaps that the newspaper's columnist wasn't quite so impressed. At another evening for example, Mr Arthur Saxon offered merely 'noteworthy deliveries of *My Queen* and *Down Below*'.

Thomas Dickason, Liberal party member along with others in the family, ran the Newlands Tavern until his death in 1896. Joseph, member of the Camberwell Vestry and treasurer of Selwyn Masonic Lodge, was landlord until he died in 1909. Thereafter Sidney and Kate shared the reins, Sidney taking on brief sole control until his death in 1913 aged only 33. Tom junior then took over. In December 1922 he attended his last Newlands Musical Society with new landlord Edgar Rhodes, a week before the latter's incep-



**1902  
Team**

C. F. Skipwith, A. N. Other, S. J. Dickason, H. A. Bates, J. S. Daly  
A. N. Other, E. G. Hayes, T. R. Dickason, M. A. Jackson  
H. H. Burton, H. C. Mattingly, T. J. Gracey

Honor Oak Cricket Club

tion which ended the Dickasons' long, long connection with the pub. Tom died in 1927 and Kate in 1957.

Thomas senior, Joseph, their wives, Sidney and Joseph's little sister Susannah (who died in 1856 aged 9) are buried together in Nunhead Cemetery. Tom, Kate and other family members are buried in Camberwell Old Cemetery.

Next time you're in The Ivy House, you may wish to raise a glass to the Dickasons. The pub wouldn't be there without them ■

NB: About five years ago, somebody introduced themselves to The Ivy House to say they were related to the Dickasons. Unfortunately their contact details were lost! I have reason to believe, however, that they are a Friend of Nunhead Cemetery, and so I hope they see this article. I would love to hear from whoever it may be to find out more about their family and to share the fruits of my research – this piece is only a small part. My email address is [hugosimms@uwclub.net](mailto:hugosimms@uwclub.net) Thank you.

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## FONC's VISIT TO ABNEY PARK CEMETERY

*by Jane Hart*

**O**n a very hot Saturday afternoon at the end of June 2018, around 25 FONC members assembled at Abney Park Cemetery's Egyptian revival style main gates, complete with hieroglyphics signifying the 'abode of the mortal part of men', for FONC's annual 'outing'.

I was struck by the similarities that Abney Park in Stoke Newington, one of the Magnificent Seven Cemeteries around London, shares with Nunhead. Both were opened in 1840; are now owned and run by their local authority; have around a quarter of a million interments; are designated nature reserves; listed historic landscapes; and have chapels which were burnt down by vandals in the 1970s. However, the cemeteries have many differences - whereas Nunhead is off the beaten track and is really a tranquil, peaceful oasis of 52 acres on a hill, Abney Park is on a busy main road with housing abutting its perimeter making its 32 flat acres seem really congested. It, like Nunhead, was planted with interesting and unusual species of trees when it was laid out. Of the 1000 trees originally part of the planting scheme, 20 still survive, including Himalayan Pines, a Corsican Pine, a Weeping Holly with other species such as an Indian Bean Tree being added in the 1890s. The

*continued overleaf*

trees seem to rise high above you, giving the impression of an enclosed, confined site. In fact, the now partially restored chapel at the centre of the site with a dramatic spire, is hidden from view from most locations within the cemetery.

As a non-denominational cemetery its notables include William Booth and his wife Catherine, founders of the Salvation Army, who are

buried in a prominent position near the Church Street entrance, together with other prominent 'Sally Army' commissioners. Similar to Nunhead, a number of music hall stars are buried in Abney Park with the Music Hall Guild of Great Britain and America running conducted tours of the stars buried there. A particularly striking memorial is that to Frank Bostock and his wife Susannah, a white marble life-sized lion, Bostock being responsible for

bringing Asian and African animals to the attention of the Victorian public. During the tour, our enthusiastic guide recounted fascinating histories of some of residents including the first female solo balloonist, Margaret Graham, who described herself as the 'only English Female Aeronaut'. Ballooning was not for the faint hearted as she experienced several crashes including one during a flight to commemorate Queen Victoria's coronation! Another person buried there is one of history's most infamous and sadistic hangmen, William Calcraft, who personally dispatched as many as 400 felons over the course of his 45 year career. It was noted that he was buried as 'Calcroft' to protect his resting place from revenge attacks.



A group of FONC members set off on a tour of Abney Park Cemetery (*Photos by Jeff Hart*)



General William Booth's Memorial in Abney Park

As is common with some Nunhead guides, our engaging guide lost track of time and his one and half hour tour extended well beyond two hours but none of us, who might have noticed, minded at all. We will be extending our hospitality to the Friends of Abney Park with a reciprocal tour of Nunhead Cemetery in the near future ■

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## **Annual General Meeting of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF) 2018**

The AGM of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends took place at Newcastle (Jesmond) Cricket Club, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on Saturday 9th June, and was hosted by the Friends of Jesmond Old Cemetery. Ray Hayes welcomed the delegates and introduced the Lord Mayor of Newcastle who opened the meeting which was attended by 37 delegates representing 18 cemetery groups, including six from London. Jeff Hart represented the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, and FONC members, Gwyneth Stokes and Carol Stevenson, attended in their capacity as secretary and treasurer of the NFCF respectively. Before the start of the business meeting, delegates were invited to attend tours of the cemetery and were entertained by a choir and a brass band.

The secretary reported that several councils had applied for membership, and the handbook which had almost sold out was being revised. Among the items on the agenda was a discussion concerning changing the date of National Cemeteries Week which currently takes place in May, and it was agreed that any decision should be left to the committee. Robert Stephenson was re-elected chairman; Colin Fenn as vice-chairman; and Gwyneth Stokes as secretary. Carol Stevenson who had hoped to stand down as treasurer, agreed to continue in an acting capacity for another year ■

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## **NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS EXTRA *by Jeff Hart***

### **Testing time for memorials**

As we write we have just heard that Southwark Council will be assessing the safety of monuments along the cemetery's main path edges. This will begin at the end of July 2018 and is expected to take four weeks. We have no details about what the inspections will consist of – a visual assessment; a 'topple test'; or something else. We also do not know yet what will follow the inspections but we are promised that FONC will be informed/consulted.

## MONUMENT INSCRIPTION RECORDING

*by Garry Wiles*

I'm pleased to report that I have recently taken on the mantle of Monument Inscription Recording co-ordinator from Paul Dyer, and I am now looking to recruit a few more volunteers to help with the 'monumental' task of recording the inscriptions on a huge number of monuments in the cemetery estimated to run to more than 30,000. To date, we have recorded around 2,000 inscriptions (due in no small part to Paul's efforts), so you can see there is a long way to go with this important work.

The work involves photographing and making a careful note of the full inscription on the monuments and headstones in the cemetery so that they can be uploaded to the FONC website. Many of the monuments are fragile and crumbling or fading into oblivion, and the aim is to capture the inscriptions before this happens so that the deceased will be remembered, and their descendants can search the website for information on their family members.

I will be establishing an inscription recording work programme on the last weekend of each month, as follows:

Sunday 7th October 2018 (in lieu of September)

Sunday 28th October 2018

Sunday 25th November 2018

December – no planned visits

We meet at the FONC portacabin, which is near the Scottish Martyrs monument inside the Linden Grove entrance to the cemetery. The work day runs from 10am to 4pm, but you can come along for a couple of hours on these weekends if unable to spend all day there. I will also be carrying out some monument inscription work on a weekday in the middle of each month, as follows:

Tuesday 11th September 2018

Tuesday 9th October 2018

Tuesday 13th November 2018

As well as cemetery visits, this may also include work on transcribing the inscriptions on the FONC website, for those who may prefer the administrative side of the work to the 'hands-on' inscription recording. If you would like to discuss any of this, or volunteer to help, please contact me c/o email [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com) and I'll get back to you.

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***Important announcement: LWT Fungi Tour.*** This tour proposed for the 3rd November 2018 may not now take place as London Wildlife Trust have had a change of staff. Please check their website where bookings would have to be made.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**WOODLAND TRAIL TOURS** ► *Sunday 9th September at 2.15pm and Sunday 9th December 2018*. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the cemetery's main gates in Linden Grove.

**OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND** ► *Saturday/Sunday 22nd/23rd September 2018 from 1.00pm to 5.00pm* (for more information see page 3).

**CEMETERY SYMBOLS TOUR** ► *Sunday 14th October 2018 at 2.15pm*. Meet your guide, Keith Turpin, at the flint circle just inside the cemetery gates in Linden Grove for an interesting tour of cemetery symbols and their meaning.

**ALL SOULS SERVICE** ► *Sunday 4th November 2018 at 2.00pm*. Ecumenical service. Meet inside the main entrance to Nunhead Cemetery in Linden Grove.

**REMEMBRANCE DAY** ► *Sunday 11th November 2018 at 10.45am*. Meet at the War Memorial by the Limesford Road entrance to the cemetery. Wreaths provided by the Royal British Legion will be laid at several War Graves sites in the cemetery.

**FIRST WORLD WAR COMMEMORATION TOUR** ► *Remembrance Sunday 11th November 2018 at 2.15pm*. On this tour we will visit some of the individual graves of the fallen, highlighting what they did, together with the stories of the CWGC plots etc. The walk should finish by 3.45pm.

**FONC'S CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** ► *Thursday 20th December 2018 at 7.00pm in the function room of the Pyrotechnist's Arms, Nunhead Green*. Full details will be announced in the next (winter) issue of *FONC News*.

**MONUMENT INSCRIPTION RECORDING** ► Transcribing the inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery is an important and ongoing task. We meet at the FONC Portakabin opposite the Scottish Martyrs' monument near the Linden Grove entrance. Contact Garry Wiles (MI Co-ordinator) (see page 22 for details). *Appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear 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 near the Linden Grove entrance. 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** ► *these take place on the last Sunday in every month starting at 2.15pm*. Please meet at the flint circle just inside the main entrance in Linden Grove. There is no need to book in advance—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.

*Please note all tours and events are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If possible up-to-date information concerning any changes will be announced in FONC News, on the website at [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk) and on notice boards in Nunhead Cemetery.*

## ~ CONTACTS ~

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Membership enquiries — [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto:membership@fonc.org.uk)

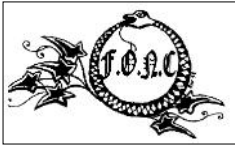
Publications enquiries — [publications@fonc.org.uk](mailto:publications@fonc.org.uk)

Volunteering co-ordinator — [volunteering@fonc.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@fonc.org.uk)

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

***The deadline for copy for the next issue is 16th October 2018***  
(Please note copy received after this date may be used in a subsequent issue)

## Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)



***Established 1981 – Registered Charity No 296413***

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A founder member of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF)  
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**[www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)**

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