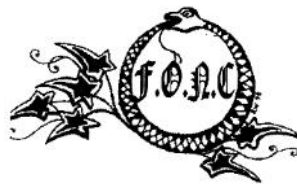


FONC News

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Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery



Recently restored monuments in Nunhead Cemetery. See page 6. *Photo: Jeff Hart*

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~ INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ~

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.

Further information about FONC and Nunhead Cemetery can be found on our excellent website managed by Simon Quill at 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 email: jane.c.hart@btconnect.com

FONC Meetings and Events: Meetings of the trustees take place on the *3rd Thursday of each month*. *Trustee meetings are open to ordinary members who may attend in a non-voting capacity.* If you would like to attend a meeting of the trustees please email the vice-chairman on 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 - email: editorfonc@hotmail.com

Contributors: Michèle Louise Burford; Bob Carlisle; Ann Coley; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Cathy Mercer, Simon Mercer. **Proof Reader:** Gwyneth Stokes.

All other text is by the editor. *The editor and FONC's trustees do not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by contributors.*

~~~~~Forthcoming attraction~~~~~

## *An invitation from Cathy Mercer*

### **A visit to Brompton Cemetery, West Brompton**

***Saturday 4th April 2020***

**W**e are very pleased to announce this visit, open to all FONC members, their friends and family.

Brompton Cemetery is one of London's 'Magnificent Seven Cemeteries' and was opened in 1840. Its 39 acres and its layout was inspired by St Peter's Basilica in Rome. It is owned by the Crown and managed by Royal Parks, the only cemetery in the country with this distinction.

Over 200,000 people lie here, with more than 35,000 gravestones and monuments. Famous incumbents include Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst; Austrian tenor Richard Tauber; Fanny Brawne, John Keats' muse; and Kit Lambert, manager of 'The Who'. There are also many Suffragette and Polish connections, with several members of Poland's government in exile buried here. Beatrix Potter lived nearby and is said to have taken inspiration here for several of her characters including Squirrel Nutkin and Peter Rabbit.

Brompton Cemetery received a Lottery Grant and has developed a visitors' centre and attractive café by the main entrance.

Our two hour tour will meet at the Old Brompton Road entrance by the gates to the cemetery and café, two minutes from West Brompton Station - turn right on leaving station. There is no charge for this tour, though a collection will be made for the Friends of Brompton Cemetery.

The nearest station is West Brompton (District Line and Overground). Buses 430 and 74. *Please note that there is no parking.* See Journey Planner on [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

*Important:* To discover the starting time and to book a place please email [cs2000hm@care4free.net](mailto:cs2000hm@care4free.net)

# NUNHEAD CEMETERY NEWS No 37

*By Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator*

## ***Dogs in cemetery update***

Following an incident on 23rd December 2019 when a jogger in the cemetery was harassed by an off-lead dog in a 'dogs-on-leads' area and its owner was abusive when challenged, Southwark Council is increasing enforcement patrols for a four week period in the cemetery. Whilst observance levels of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in the cemetery is generally now quite good, there are still some persistent offenders and others who simply do not realise that there are dog controls. As a result the Linden Grove gates notice board is to be moved to the side of the west pedestrian gate as it is currently now fenced off in front of the East Lodge. At its Cabinet meeting on 21st January 2020, despite some suggestions that the number of dogs to each handler be reduced from 6 to 4, the Council also confirmed the continuation of the existing Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) until March 2021 when it will be further reviewed.

## ***Normal Service resumed***

The All Souls Service on 3rd November 2019 was again led by Father Dele Ogunyemi and was a little better attended than last year although we hope to improve on this in 2020. Thanks go to FONC Trustee Ish Lennox for organising the event. Our Remembrance Service on 10th November was very well attended and seven wreaths were laid, culminating at the Anglican chapel entrance where the Nunhead Women's Institute also laid a splendid handmade wreath. We also repeated last year's First World War walk in the afternoon.

## ***A Christmas lock-in***

According to Southwark Council's website and the notices on the gates at Nunhead, visitors expected the cemetery to be open on 25th December 2019 from 8.00am to 4.00pm. However, it was reported to FONC that the gates were locked at around 2.30pm leaving some thirty or so visitors locked inside the cemetery. They rang the emergency contact number and were told that 'someone would come out'. The visitors waited for some time but no-one arrived. As a result one of the visitors contacted the emergency services and the fire brigade arrived at the cemetery. They cut the chain on the Linden

Grove pedestrian gate allowing the visitors to leave, somewhat cold and unhappy! Cemetery staff were unaware of the incident when we reported it to them and it appears that those responsible for locking the gates did so because the two Camberwell cemeteries were due to be closed at that time, despite having been reminded that Nunhead Cemetery would remain open until 4.00pm. Southwark Council say that steps have been taken to ensure there is no repeat in future. In the meantime, we do hope that no one had their Christmas lunch spoiled as a result of this unfortunate incident.

### ***Pray for the Anglican chapel***

The Anglican chapel survey report anticipated in the last issue of *FONC News* was received on 30th October and a site meeting was held between Southwark and FONC on 29th November. The good news is that the building remains structurally sound. However, the need to remove vegetation, re-point some brickwork, stabilise some loose masonry on gable end walls and remove friable plaster work from interior walls has been identified. Rather than a costly major project at this time, FONC has proposed some fairly straight-forward repair work that could make the building safe for it to be re-opened before our Open Day in May. This is now being considered by borough engineers and we await the results. As we write, fencing has been erected around the front half of the chapel, however, and we wait to be told whether this is the precursor of repair works or simply to keep the public away from ‘a dangerous structure’. We have also been in discussion with a London arts studio wishing to stage an exhibition in the chapel by an internationally known artist this summer. This would be a major coup for the cemetery and so we are really keen to see the chapel re-opened in time for this event. Look out for full details in the next issue of *FONC News* and on the FONC website: [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)

### ***All clear on the boundary walls***

FONC and residents of Limesford Road were informed by the Council in December 2019 of the start of vegetation clearance along the boundary walls to enable a full survey of the condition prior to the proposed re-building works. No trees are to be removed and limited scrub and bramble clearance is now under way. In the meantime repair to the two brick pillars on Linden Grove, reported on in the last issue of *FONC News*, has proceeded very slowly but the magnificent coping stones atop the pillars have now finally been reinstated.

*continued on next page*

### ***Mobile Mast appeal under way***

The appeal against the refusal by Southwark Council of the application to replace the existing mobile phone mast adjacent to the Linden Grove railings near the East Lodge with a new 20 metre high mast is still pending. FONC and others submitted further comments to the Planning Inspectorate which we hope will be persuasive. There seems a perfectly reasonable alternative to site the mast in front of the Thames Water reservoir site which is adjacent to the cemetery and will not interfere with views.

### ***Congratulations!***

Congratulations go to Jolanta Jagiello, our Nunhead arts curator, who has completed her MA History of Art dissertation based on the First World War centenary 'Women Artists in Action' exhibitions which were held at Nunhead Cemetery and other London cemetery venues between 2014 and 2018. A copy of the dissertation has been lodged in the FONC archives. We were joined by Jolanta at the December member's social event where she wore a lovely necklace purchased as a memento of FONC from the gift token she received from FONC in recognition of her great contribution to the arts events held in Nunhead Cemetery.

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## **MORE MONUMENT REPAIRS ENHANCE THE CEMETERY**

### ***A further update: text and photographs by Jeff Hart***

*The photograph on the front cover is that of the recently restored Williams/Willes/Glover/Burgess group at the southern end of the East Crescent*

**T**he second batch of memorial repairs being undertaken by Southwark Council, begun on 21st October 2019, has been greatly hampered by the continuing wet weather experienced this winter. Despite the contractors' best efforts, at times the areas around the repair works have resembled Western Front battlefields! This has left the path surfacing in a terrible state which we hope to see resolved soon. Originally eight memorials were scheduled to be taken down, stabilised and re-erected. However, as happened with the first batch of memorials, it was found that additional work became necessary.

The Cranfield and Stephens memorials, located on the East Path just north of the junction with The Slope, needed two large ash trees threatening their sta-



The restored Cranfield and Stephens memorials

bility to be removed before work could start. On completion, FONC volunteers have tidied the area around the restored urn-topped memorials and in doing so have cleared around the adjacent Naylor memorial, also with resplendent urn, that now make a real feature of this path edge. At the top of the West Hill, the very open and dangerous George vault also required the removal of a large tree to enable work to commence. This very large and deep vault was filled with tonnes of shingle to prevent further collapse before the memorial, again boasting a splendid urn, could be re-erected. Towards the bottom of West Hill the large flat slab-top Thompson vault was open to view and has been re-set on a new concrete slab.

The splendidly Gothic Wallbutton family memorial behind the Sutton vault, sadly now with no visible inscription, at the top end of the western side of the Main Avenue proved to be a real challenge. With stonework supporting the massive memorial crumbling and much stonework cracked, it was a delicate job to dismantle the structure. But that was the easy part! By the time it was intended to re-erect the memorial, the ground was so sodden that the lifting JCB sank in the mud and nearly toppled over. A temporary road had to be constructed on top of matting sheets to enable the crane to get near enough to lift the heavy stone-

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Wallbuton monument before restoration.

work on the level. The finished job was well worth the effort however. FONC volunteers had cleared vegetation around the memorial but as work started it was realised that the adjacent Wetherell family vault was completely open at the back. As a result, it was decided that this major task had to be tackled as well, adding to the cost and duration of works.

The other group of three memorials scheduled for repair were at the southern end of the East Crescent and included a popular stop on our cemetery tours - the memorial to Rueben Henry Williams who was thrown from his dog cart and killed! The two memorials to the right, firstly to the Willes family and then to the Glover family were also in terrible condition and the

restoration has completely transformed the group. In order to access this group, further mature ash trees had to be felled and the unplanned restoration of the polished red granite ledger memorial to the splendidly named Parmenas Martin Burgess also had to be included in order to safely work on the others. The damage to this group of memorials was as a result of war-time bombing and unfortunately, clearance of vegetation has revealed further severely damaged monuments behind this group, including a wonderful fallen but intact Celtic cross. FONC volunteers intend to tidy up the area around the work and to see what we can do to with the fallen stones. With the ground so wet, this has been postponed as we are likely to do more harm than good at present.

Whilst working on this group, the Albert family memorial opposite was a quick and simple task to restore and we also persuaded Priest Restoration to lift and place the headless figure atop the nearby Lee vault for us. We really do appreciate the efforts of Lewis Whybrow and his colleagues! Finally, an ornately carved headstone commemorating various members of the Fuller family held up



only by ivy, when a nearby tree was felled by wind last autumn and subsequently laid flat, was re-set.

From the originally planned eight repairs, we now have thirteen memorials almost back to their splendid original condition and greatly improving the areas in which they are sited. It is uncertain how much of the budget for these works Southwark has left but we are hopeful that there will be a third tranche of repairs in the current financial year.■

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## **SLOW PROGRESS WITH EAST LODGE RESTORATION**

*Report by Project Board member Jane Hart*

Yet again there is little good news to report on progress to restore the East Lodge. Visitors to the cemetery will be aware that work has still yet to start on the dismantling of the front wall and portico which we reported in the last issue of *FONC News* which were deemed to be in danger of imminent collapse. At the last Project Board meeting in early December 2019 FONC was told that the method statements to undertake the work were still being prepared by the contractor. Because of this it was not anticipated that work would commence on site until late January/early February 2020. This is again a significant delay in the work but FONC remains hopeful that the delays in starting the dismantling and consolidation work will not lead to a situation where the building is beyond rescue. A further Board meeting is set for early February where we hope that there will be more positive news from the Council.

Meanwhile, the catering consultants have delivered their report to Southwark Council on their assessment of the feasibility of a café and community use option for the future use of the restored East Lodge. FONC had anticipated that the consultants would have been asked to identify the minimum space required for a viable café operation, as had been discussed at previous Board meetings. Therefore we were somewhat taken aback when the consultant's report appeared to look to maximising revenue from a café operation at the expense of community space within the building. They proposed a catering concept based on what we considered to be flawed assumptions contained in the previous feasibility report for the provision of a large upmarket café taking up more than half the building space. There appeared to be little thought

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given to actual floor layouts which could be accommodated within the building. The proposed size of the kitchen area would mean that it would be situated on a different floor to the café itself and the, albeit, outline layout put forward did not even try to maximise useable space within the building. Other issues such as the requirement for appropriate and publicly accessible toilets appeared to have been skimmed over. The scale of the proposed operation was not based on current visitor numbers nor was any sampling or market testing of views sought on what type of operation might be deemed attractive to visitors. At short notice FONC submitted detailed questions and comments on the report that were discussed at the last Board meeting. It was agreed that further discussion was needed to try to identify layouts and facilities which could cater both for a provision of an attractive appropriately sized café as well as community space - be it space for volunteers working on site, meeting rooms or visitor information space - that would satisfy the Council's need for a sustainable business option and FONC's desire for appropriate community space provision.

In the meantime, we are awaiting confirmation that design architects have been appointed to carry out the detailed design brief for the restoration of the Lodge. Southwark Council's officers have also submitted a supplementary bid for capital funds for the work as it has now become obvious that costs will exceed the original £1 million allocated for the project.■

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## **Does Amazon make you smile?** *Asks Ann Coley, FONC Treasurer*



Over the last few years Amazon UK has donated about £2.4m to charities nominated by customers buying through the AmazonSmile website. If you purchase through Amazon we would like you consider nominating FONC as your chosen charity.

How does it work? Amazon has a sister site, [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk), and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the value of any qualifying purchases to your nominated charity. The account can be set up with exactly the same details as your normal Amazon account and it will pick up your existing Amazon history. It is important to note that if you want FONC to benefit, you must choose 'Friends of Nunhead Cemetery' as your nominated charity, and you must use the AmazonSmile website for your orders (although if you acci-

dently use the main site, it should prompt you to change over). I have noticed that this week, the Amazon app on my phone is now also updated to AmazonSmile just to make life that little bit simpler. If you are interested, please go to this link and follow the instructions:

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1178763-0>

Alternatively, find SmileAmazon in your search engine, log in with your Amazon details and look for 'Friends of Nunhead Cemetery'.

Whilst the donation amounts are likely to be quite small (mine would have been around a £1 last year), as we all know, every little helps!



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## Why I am a Friend of Nunhead Cemetery

*By Bob Carlisle*

**S** In *FONC News* No 146 contributions were invited from readers. Several themes were suggested including why people are Friends of the Cemetery. That set me thinking. I have had an intrinsic interest in cemeteries and graveyards for longer than I care to remember. Intrinsic in the sense that I find them inherently interesting places which, when out and about, are worth stopping to look at.

The first cemetery I made a point of visiting (as distinct from coming across when out doing something else) was almost certainly Highgate. That was probably in the 1970s when the West Cemetery was as freely open to visitors as the East Cemetery is today. Even in the terrible, vandalised state it was then in (broken tombs and bones strewn about) its faded grandeur made a lasting impression. More recently, I have been back to the East Cemetery where, among many famous names, Max Wall (comedian) is buried.

In the mid-1970s my wife Patience (also a Friend) and I moved to Plumstead in South East London. There is an extensive Plumstead Cemetery and Woolwich Cemetery where some of the victims of the Princess Alice disaster are buried. These cemeteries receive little publicity but are well worth a visit. We did not know Nunhead Cemetery then but heard of the Open Day one

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year and made the first of what would become a number of visits over the years. Although fairly readily reached by train from Woolwich (changing at Lewisham) it was not exactly on our doorstep, precluding the closer and more involved relationship that we might have wished for. But becoming a Friend was one way in which we could demonstrate our fondness for the place and admiration for what the Trustees were (and are) doing; and so we enlisted. I cannot recall when that was but FONC's Membership Secretary may have the date in his database. I find *FONC News* a splendidly informative journal and look forward to its arrival each quarter. It is one of the few journals which I read from cover to cover.

A few years ago we moved to Deal on the Kentish coast. There is a Deal Cemetery and numbers of churchyards, some of them extensive. One of the larger ones is that of Blessed Mary of Walmer with its ancient yew tree, reputedly 1,400 years old.■

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## COMMEMORATING VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY

*By Jeff Hart*

The early May Bank Holiday has been moved this year to Friday, 8th May to coincide with Victory in Europe Day, or VE Day, which marks the 75th anniversary of the formal end of fighting between the Allies and Nazi Germany. It will be the first day of a long weekend featuring numerous commemorative events across the country. To mark the occasion, Jeff Hart and Jeremy Partington will be leading a walk around the cemetery visiting the graves of some of the servicemen, servicewomen and civilians who paid the ultimate price during the Second World War. They will talk about some of the individuals represented and the campaigns they fought in. The walk will begin at 2.00pm on Sunday 10th May but, unusually, will start from the Limesford Road gates and finish at the Linden Grove portacabin.■

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## From *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* Sunday 28th July 1895

**NUNHEAD CEMETERY.** In the early part of this century [19th] the tea gardens at the Nun's Head were very popular, and hard by were forests and commons. As time went on enclosures were commenced. A writer in Hone's *Every Day Book* (1827) notes that Nun Head Hill, the favourite resort of

smoke dried artisans and other Londoners, is taken from them, and a narrow path is all that remains for their Sunday promenade. When the demand for cemeteries arose Nunhead was one of the places selected, about fifty acres on the summit of rising ground being well planted and laid out. It was in 1840, the same year that that the West London [Brompton] and Abney Park cemetery grounds were opened, that Nunhead was devoted to a like purpose, the cemetery being consecrated on 29th July, by the Bishop of Winchester. ■

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## **ADVANCE NOTICE OF FONC'S AGM** ***THURSDAY 18th JUNE 2020 at 7.00pm***

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery will take place in the function room of the Pyrotechnist's Arms, Nunhead Green, SE15 on Thursday 18th June 2020 starting at 7.00pm. Nominations for election as Trustees are welcome and may be received up to the elections themselves on the night although prior notification of willingness to stand is preferred. Motions, however, should be sent before 4th June 2020 to Carol Stevenson, FONC's vice-chairman, email: [nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com](mailto:nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com). A reminder of the meeting giving full details, including guest speaker, will be published in the Summer issue of *FONC News*.

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## **NUNHEAD CEMETERY - OPEN DAY 2020**

Our popular Open Day will be during National Cemeteries Week on Saturday 16th May 2020, 11.00am to 5.00pm, and we shall need as many volunteers as possible to help to set up trestle tables etc, and to assist in the cemetery in other ways from 8.30am onwards, and to clear up afterwards between 5.00pm and 6.30pm. This ever popular event grows from year to year so we really do need more helpers if we are going to be able to cope with all that needs to be done before, during the event and afterwards, so any time you could spare would be very much appreciated. We also very much welcome lots of donations of homemade cakes etc, to sell on our always popular refreshments stall, and lots of plants for the hugely in demand 'Contrary Mary' plants stall. We also need volunteers to help run FONC stalls and to be marshals during the day. If you are able to help in any way at all, please contact a FONC trustee (see contacts on back page of this issue of *FONC News*).

# Notable Nonconformists buried at Nunhead (1)

*By Ron Woollacott*

**COOKE DD, Revd Dr William (1806-84)**

*Methodist New Connexion Minister and Theologian*

The Methodist New Connexion (MNC) began as a protest movement amongst those Methodists who broke away from the Wesleyan Methodist Church under the leadership of Alexander Kilham (1762-1798). Kilham had been expelled by the Methodist Conference in 1796 and the MNC was inaugurated in 1797.

\* \* \* \* \*

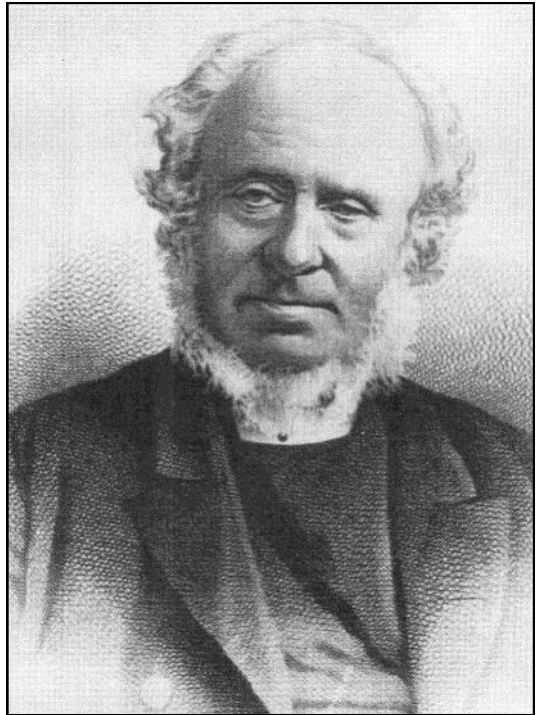
William Cooke was born in the New Inn, Market Place, Burslem, Staffordshire, on 2nd July 1806. While still a boy and being surrounded by temptation 'he fell into sin'. At the age of 14 he was taken seriously ill with fever and nearly died. During his illness the teachers of Bethesda Sunday-school in Hanley visited and prayed with him, and he also prayed asking God to restore him to health and forgive him his sins. His prayers being answered he gave thanks to God by joining the MNC. Having a natural desire to learn and by studying the Bible, he began to acquire religious knowledge; he taught himself Greek, Latin and Hebrew, and became a Sunday-school teacher. At the age of 18 he became a class leader and was employed as a local preacher.

In 1826, at the age of 20, he became an itinerant minister and was sent to Ireland on condition that he was received into the English ministry afterwards. He settled for a time in Belfast where he preached and elsewhere in Ireland for two years. In 1828 he was removed to the Chester circuit. He was received into 'full' connexion at the MNC Conference in 1831 and was appointed to the Barnsley circuit for two years and Stockport for three years.

In 1836 the Conference entrusted him with superintendence of their Irish Mission. He devoted himself to the work and during five successive years the Mission was extended to Lurgan, Dromore, Armagh, Dublin, Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and the Island of Arran, where the Gospel was preached in the Irish language. During that period he also commenced a New Connexion Society in the Channel Island of Guernsey. The Guernsey friends insisted he publish one of the sermons he preached there on *Christ's Universal Reign* as a memento of his ministry among them. That publication was his first effort as an author. On returning to Ireland he was urged to publish more pamphlets. His successful management of the Irish Mission led to his

appointment in 1840 as General Secretary of the Missions with a residence in Liverpool.

At the MNC Conference of 1843 he was elected President, and was appointed to the Newcastle-on-Tyne circuit. In that city, Joseph Barker (1806-1875), who was wavering between Quakerism and Unitarianism, had inflicted serious injury on Methodism by his lectures and publications. Barker, who had been expelled from the MNC for rejecting infant baptism, challenged Cooke to take part in a public discussion. Beginning on 9th August 1845 the debate 'What is a Christian?' took place in the



The Revd Dr William Cooke DD (1806-1884)  
Methodist New Connexion Minister

Lecture Hall at Newcastle, and lasted ten nights, and Cooke's defence of orthodoxy ended in the utter defeat of Barker. As a consequence hundreds of church members that had abandoned the MNC were 'rescued'. William Cooke was later called to a meeting by a grateful public where he was presented with a cabinet containing a complete set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and a purse of gold. A young Robert Spears, then a MNC local preacher, was also present at the debate between Cooke and Barker, but he later defected to the Unitarians.

During the years 1846, 1847 and 1848, William Cooke was superintendent of the Manchester circuit. He was appointed editor and book steward from 1849 to 1870. On removing to 4 Crescent, Albany Road, Camberwell in 1849 he began teaching theological students, one of whom, Thomas Carlisle (1838-1870), became a MNC minister and married Cooke's second

*continued on next page*

daughter Matilda. Another of his students, William Booth (1829-1912), left the MNC in 1861 to form the Christian Mission which became the Salvation Army.

In about 1862 two colleges in America spontaneously conferred upon William Cooke the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. In July 1863, at Brunswick Chapel, Great Dover Street, Southwark, Dr Cooke officiated at the marriage of his eldest daughter Martha, a music teacher, to Robert Wilkes, a Canadian merchant of Toronto. Linda, his youngest daughter, married John Hinds, a MNC Missionary in Shanghai, China. Dr Cooke's wife Martha died in April 1867 aged 60. In 1868 he married Susannah.

Failing health compelled Dr Cooke to become a supernumerary and in about 1871 he went to live at Park Road, Forest Hill, naming his residence 'Burslem House' after his place of birth. In 1875, his health having improved, he began officiating at Trinity Church (New Connexion), Forest Hill until shortly before his death. In August 1884 he undertook a preaching tour in Staffordshire and Lancashire.

He died at his residence on Christmas Day 1884, aged 78, and was buried at Nunhead on New Year's Eve 1884. Several ministers of all branches of Methodism attended the funeral.

As well as editing the MNC's magazine, Dr Cooke published over 60 theological works including: *Christian Theology Explained and Defended* (1845), which went to five editions; *The Testimony of the Ancient Jewish Church on the Holy Trinity* (1847); *A Catechism: embracing the most important doctrines of Christianity* (1851); *A Contract: Paul the Ritualist and Paul the Christian* (1870); *Discourses Illustrative of Sacred Truth* (1871); and many other works, including several controversial treatises on Roman Catholicism. ■

NB. In 1907 the MNC joined the United Methodist Church, which in turn joined the Wesleyans in 1932 to create the present day Methodist Church.

***Pedestal and urn - Grave 9479 Square 145 (unconsecrated).*** **Sources:** MI; Burial Records; Census returns 1851-1881; George John Stevenson, *Methodist Worthies*, volume II, 1886, pp 608-615; Frederic Boase, *Modern English Biography* Vol I, 1892; R. Collyer, S. Charlesworth, Dr C. S. Kenny, and A. Gordon, *Memorials of Robert Spears 1825-99* 1903, pp 5, 20; C. J. Davey *The Methodist Story* 1955, pp 65-6; Herbert McGonigle (editor), *William Cooke on Entire Sanctification*, 1978; Ron Woollacott, *Nunhead Notables*, 1984; John A. Vickers (editor), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* 2000, pp 79, 233; Ron Woollacott, *Nunhead's Nonconformists* (forthcoming publication). With grateful thanks to my daughter Michèle for her valued assistance.



## Victorian Gravedigger's Suicide in Nunhead Cemetery

*By Michèle Louise Burford*

**C**HARLES CLEMENTS was a gravedigger at Nunhead Cemetery. Born at North Waltham, Hants, in 1836, the son of Henry and Elizabeth Clements, Charles was baptised on 3rd September 1836. His father was a farm labourer. He married Elizabeth Ann Watts at St Mary Newington on 23rd December 1863, and their address was Coles Place, Newington; however, by 1865 Charles and Elizabeth were living at 3 Daniel's Cottages, Nunhead Grove, and Charles was working as a gravedigger at Nunhead.

On the morning of Tuesday 12th March 1878, he awoke at 6 o'clock and left home early in order to dig a grave, later returning to his home for breakfast. He told his wife that he'd had a 'drop of beer' at the Belvedere and appeared 'very much depressed'. He asked his wife to go upstairs for his pruning knife, and while she was away he took a carving knife from a drawer and returned to the cemetery where he went into the yard and 'plunged the instrument (carving knife) deep into his neck up to the hilt.'

At the inquest, which took place in the Belvedere Tavern, Linden Grove, Richard Richardson, a fellow gravedigger, told the coroner, Mr Carter, that for some time past he had noticed that Charles Clements was acting very strangely and suffering from delusions, especially after a hard day's work in the cemetery. He went on to say that on Tuesday morning, after having heard cries of 'murder', he ran into the garden and found the deceased lying in a corner of the lodge, grasping with both hands the hilt of a carving knife. Richardson said he withdrew the blade which measured nine inches.

Dr Roberts said he was called to the cemetery and found the man 'quite dead' with a stab wound in the throat; in fact the blade had penetrated to the vertebrae. The jury returned a verdict of temporary insanity.

Fortunately their father's suicide did not have an adverse effect on two of his sons, both of whom became successful future employees of the London Cemetery Company: Henry Charles Clements (1864-1915) became a superintendent at Nunhead Cemetery, and James Clements (1876-1955) was secretary of the cemetery company for 40 years. ■

*Grave No 14745, Square 14. Unmarked common grave. Sources:* Burial records; Census returns 1841, 1851 & 1871; *Evening Standard*, 19th March 1878; *South London Press*, 21st March 1878; *Aldershot Military Gazette*, 23rd March 1878.

## SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

*From Simon Mercer, Hon Membership Secretary*

FONC membership subscriptions are due to be paid by the 1st April 2020. The annual subscription for UK members is just £2 (£10 for overseas members). Donations are most welcome. By submitting your payment, you confirm that you are over 18 years of age and that you wish to receive our journal *FONC News*. For your convenience, please look for the reminder form with this newsletter which has your name and address and payment information.

### **Contact preference:**

There is space on the form for you to update your contact preferences. For example, where you provide an email address we will notify you when *FONC News* is available on the FONC website. If you would prefer to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, please tick 'by post'.

### **Standing Orders:**

With *FONC News* No 143 (spring 2019) we mentioned that, after becoming a new charitable incorporated organisation, FONC's bank was looking to operate a new bank account. It appears that this is not now necessary. Existing standing order payments from members continue to be received. New standing order payments can be arranged using the reminder form sent with this journal. The form includes a reference number to be quoted by your bank to link your payment with your FONC membership.

### **Gift Aid:**

With the change in FONC's status, we have applied for recognition as a charity for tax purposes. This allows FONC to claim Gift Aid repayments from HM Revenue & Customs. As this is a new registration, we must ask supporters to make new Gift Aid declarations. The reminder form with this newsletter invites UK taxpayers to sign a new Gift Aid declaration.

### **Postal address:**

Please return your form to the FONC Membership address on the form. Enquiries to [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto:membership@fonc.org.uk). Thank you for your continued support.



## ☆ House of Life -- Willesden's Jewish Cemetery ☆

*By Cathy Mercer*

Willesden in north London is full of unexpected delights and perhaps none more unexpected than its Jewish cemetery, described as the 'Rolls Royce of Jewish cemeteries' by cemetery historian Hugh Meller.

Willesden's 20 acre Jewish cemetery was opened in what was then rural Willesden in 1873, when the old east London Jewish cemeteries filled up. It belongs to the United Synagogue and was Grade II listed by Historic England in 2017. The cemetery has nearly 30,000 graves and funerary monuments, including those of some of the most eminent Jewish families in Britain: the Rothschilds of banking fame; art collectors and donors of the Duveen Gallery in the British Museum; Clores, who owned Selfridges and donated the Clore Gallery at Tate Modern, home of the Turner Collection; not forgetting Jack Cohen, founder of Tesco Supermarkets. Other famous incumbents include film director Michael Winner and Rosalind Franklin, part of the Nobel Prize winning DNA discovery team. There are also more than 100 Commonwealth Graves.

In 2015 Willesden Jewish Cemetery was awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to restore key features of the cemetery and to create a Visitor Centre and a permanent exhibition. This has been named the House of Life, a Jewish term for a cemetery.

The House of Life project will remember not only the eminent incumbents of Willesden Jewish Cemetery but also other people from all walks of life resting here: doctors, magicians, social reformers, make-up artists, nurses. As part of the House of Life project, Willesden Library hosted an exhibition about some of the many incumbents of Willesden Jewish Cemetery this winter and the exhibition will be part of the permanent display in the Visitors' Centre. The opening is planned for later in 2020.

FONC members visited Willesden Jewish Cemetery 20-odd years ago and it might be good to visit it again and the new House of Life when it opens. ■

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**MAKING DYSTOPIA** by *James Stevens Curl* (reviewed in *FONC News* No 143 - Spring issue - March-May 2019, page 18) is now available as a paperback. Copies of this important book are available via your local bookshop or preferred online retailer or email: [bookorders.uk@oup.com](mailto:bookorders.uk@oup.com)

## ***CONGRATULATIONS BROOKWOOD CEMETERY***

In September 2019, when the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management announced the winners of the national cemetery-of-the-year awards at its convention in Kenilworth, Brookwood Cemetery won silver in the large burial ground category in recognition of the on-going transformation of the cemetery as a Grade I listed park and garden. Avril Kirby, the cemetery manager received the award. Members may recall that Avril was the manager of Southwark Cemeteries, including Nunhead Cemetery, before being appointed manager of Brookwood. ■

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### ***Dreaming of a Green Christmas by Keith Turpin***

The annual FONC Christmas social saw the back parlour of the Pyrotechnist's Arms well packed for its traditional party and a presentation on the Great North Wood by Sam Bentley-Toon, an officer with the London Wildlife Trust. Sam traced the compelling history of this once great wilderness from its primordial origins to its sparse but fiercely protected remaining fragments, a number of which are nearby. Fortified by a generous spread we enjoyed the equally tempting raffle prizes in time honoured fashion. Publication sales, raffle tickets and donations largely offset our costs, boosted by donations of over £80 from a well-attended Christmas cemetery tour. ■

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### ***Nunhead and the Great North Wood by Keith Turpin***

**F**urther to reporting on the FONC Christmas social presentation on the Great North Wood by Sam Bentley-Toon of the London Wildlife Trust, we were inspired to think about the relationship of Nunhead Cemetery and environs to what was once a canopy of native woodland enveloping a huge area from Deptford down towards Croydon, and bounded by Streatham Common in the west and Penge in the east.

With its distinctive elevated treeline, abundant foliage and designation as a local nature reserve, it is tempting to think of the cemetery's green footprint as a direct relict of this great wilderness. Nearby Sydenham and Dulwich Woods can indeed lay claim to a line of direct descent, but as Sam's fascinating talk made clear, Nunhead's origins as a verdant oasis in suburban South London bear witness to a different pedigree.

If we go back far enough in time the site of Nunhead and its locale would indeed have been within the compass of this swathe of woodland, for southern England was, until the thaw of the last great ice age (c.10,000 years ago),

a forested isthmus, conjoined to the European mainland. The submerged remains of that land bridge, designated Doggerland, include the Dogger Bank of shipping forecast fame. Even before the separation of Britain the wildwood was under assault from Iron Age settlers for construction, fuel and early agricultural use.

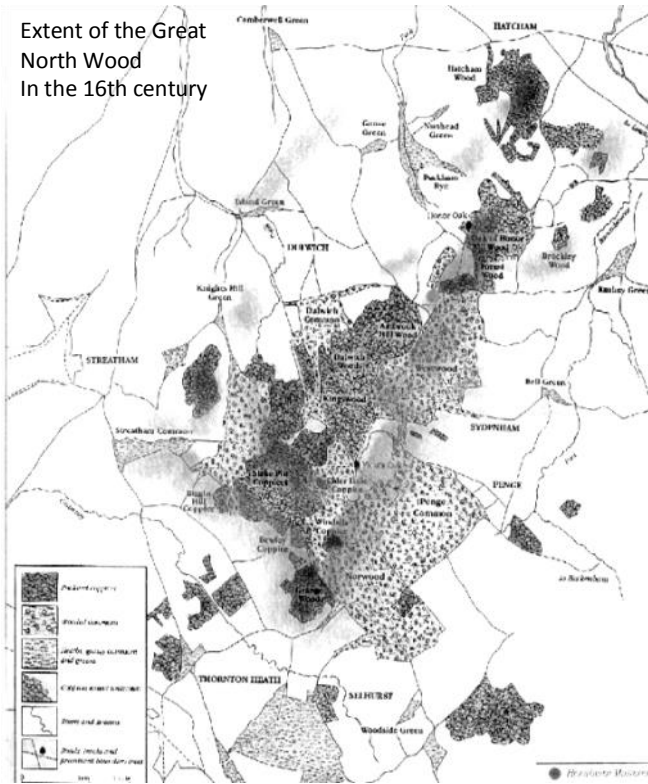
After the creation of the British Isles, as a result of rising sea levels, the forest was over the ensuing centuries, tamed, exploited and ultimately reduced to a fraction of its original area and majesty; all this many hundreds of years before the construction of the cemetery. The woods were managed, coppiced and stewarded to provide timber for the great dockyards at Deptford in their Tudor prime and bark for the breweries of Bermondsey, and utilised as a resource for fuel foraging, domestic grazing and the early industrial process of charcoal burning. As part of the commons rights (the medieval system of managed land that was held 'in common') these basic privileges survived for many centuries and sustained to some extent the remaining integrity of the wood. Reminders of this rural heritage can be found in local place names; Norwood (contraction of North Wood), Forest Hill, Honor Oak and Penge (signifying a place on the edge of the wood). The very name 'Great North Wood' is somewhat confusing for us South London locals, Selhurst demarking the approximate southern boundary.

The next great fragmentation of the already much reduced wood was the enclosure of the commons for larger scale agriculture and development, ending the medieval tradition of strip farming and grazing rights. Reduced to a 3-mile-wide area by 1745, canals, railways and urbanisation encroached, as parcels of manorial land were sold off to create market gardens, pasture and the expansion of existing rural hamlets and thoroughfares. Such was the backdrop of the acquisition and layout of the 52 acres site that became All Saints Cemetery Nunhead by the London Cemetery Company in 1840. So a wildwood no more, already largely consigned to folk memory, but nonetheless a recognised Surrey beauty spot, associated with the earlier genteel attractions of nearby teahouses and spa waters, and close enough to London to relieve the insanitary overcrowding of the metropolitan churchyards.

Furthermore, the planting and landscaping of the site were far removed from 'natural' woodland, the layout being formal and highly manicured, featuring exotic and, in many cases, non-native specimens such as Ginkgo Biloba and Holm Oak. As Nunhead's flora (including hothouse flowers produced in situ) flourished, the creeping suburban expansion, boosted by the re-siting of the Crystal Palace in 1854, squeezed and isolated the last remnants of ancient woodland into the margins.

*continued on next page*

Extent of the Great  
North Wood  
In the 16th century



The last chapter of Nunhead's and the Great North Wood's history, however, draws out some interesting parallels and the green shoots of a common regeneration. As the fortunes of the cemetery declined in the 1960s and 1970s nature reclaimed much of the site, with secondary sycamore and ash threatening to restore an arboreal wilderness, roughly concurrent with the early campaigns of the London Wildlife Trust (LWT) and other ecologically minded bodies to recog-

nise, protect and nurture the remaining nine principal remnants of original woodland. Boosted by a £700,000 Heritage Lottery grant in 2017, LWT are currently engaged in a project as part of the Living Landscapes initiative 'reviving and reimagining the Great North Wood as a home for nature and people'. With its emphasis on conservation, community and recreation FONC shares many of those values and collaborates with LWT in activities such as bat walks. Find a map or join one of our or LWT's guided walks and you can chart a course that takes in woods both ancient (technically over four hundred years old!) and, relatively speaking, modern. ■

### ~~ DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ~~

*Please note, unless otherwise indicated, that all tours in 2020 will start from inside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove at the earlier time of 2.00pm.*

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY TOUR ► Sunday 8th March at 2pm.**  
Your guide for this special afternoon tour of the cemetery will be Jane Hart.

**CHAPEL CRYPT TOUR ► *Sunday 15th March at 2pm. Meet at the Anglican chapel. Your guides include Jeremy Partington, Malcolm Collins and Ann Coley.***

**WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR ► *Sunday 22nd March at 2pm.*** Your guide for the afternoon will be Tim Stevenson.

**CEMETERY SYMBOLS TOUR ► *Sunday 12th April at 2pm.*** Your guide for this interesting tour will be John Turpin.

**SECOND WORLD WAR COMMEMORATION WALK ► *Sunday 10th May at 2pm. This walk starts from the Limesford Road entrance.*** Your guides will be Jeff Hart and Jeremy Partington.

**ANNUAL OPEN DAY IN THE CEMETERY 2020 ► *Saturday 16th May 11am-5pm.*** This is FONC's biggest event in the year. Volunteers are required to assist. *Please see page 13 for further details.*

**CHAPEL CRYPT TOUR ► *Sunday 24th May at 2pm. Meet at the Anglican chapel.*** Your guides include Jeremy Partington, Malcolm Collins and Ann Coley.

**MONUMENT INSCRIPTION RECORDING ►** Transcribing the inscriptions in Nunhead Cemetery is an important and ongoing task. We meet at the FONC portacabin near the Linden Grove entrance. For further information and timings and how to volunteer please contact Garry Wiles at: [foncinscriptions@gmail.com](mailto:foncinscriptions@gmail.com) ***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 portacabin 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.***

**GENERAL CONDUCTED TOURS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY ► *these take place on the last Sunday in every month starting at 2.00pm.*** *Please note the earlier time.* 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. There is no charge but donations are appreciated. The tours usually 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. Whenever 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.*

~ FONC TRUSTEES ~

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*Other trustees:* **Malcolm Collins, Ish Lennox, Cathy Mercer, Gwyneth Stokes, Alan Till, Keith Turpin, Maureen Woollacott**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Voluntary practical work co-ordinator:*

**Tim Stevenson**—email: [nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com](mailto:nunhead.stevensons@gmail.com)

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

*Monument inscription recording co-ordinator:*

**Garry Wiles**—email: [foncinscriptions@gmail.com](mailto:foncinscriptions@gmail.com)

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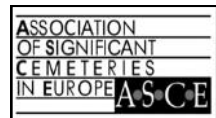
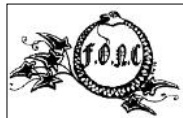
Please send all letters, news items and feature articles for publication to:

**The editor, FONC News** email: [editorfonc@hotmail.com](mailto:editorfonc@hotmail.com)

*The deadline for letters and articles for the next issue is 17th April 2020*

(Please note that copy received after this date may be used in a subsequent issue)

**Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)**



***Friends of Nunhead Cemetery - Established 1981***

***Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No 1178763***

A member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE).

A founder member of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF)

FONC is a recipient of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's Birthday Award for Environmental Improvements (National Commendation) 1998.

**FONC's website address is: [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)**

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