

FONC News

ISSN 1478-0631

No 151 ~ Spring issue ~ March ~ May 2021
Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery



The vandalised mourning figure is now back on John Allan's tomb
See article on page 8. *Photo: Carol Stevenson*

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INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ~

Membership including your contact preferences: Membership of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) 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: 8.00am to 4.00pm daily. The cemetery will be open from 8.00am to 5.00pm in March. Future closing times are yet to be decided. *Times are subject to change.* See notice at the cemetery entrances and Southwark Council's website. The cemetery may be closed without notice for safety reasons e.g. during very windy and stormy weather.

Publications and Enquiry Desk: The Publications and Enquiry Desk (PED) is open when FONC volunteers are in attendance. 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 cemetery tours or workdays take place. If you would like to help on an occasional Sunday please contact Jane Hart by email: jane.c.hart@btconnect.com.

FONC Meetings and Events: Meetings of the trustees that take place on the third Thursday of each month are currently 'virtual'. Meetings are open to members in a non-voting capacity. If you would like to 'attend' please email fonc@btconnect.com for the Zoom web-site link. Other events are announced in *FONC News* and on the web-site.

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:

Nunhead Cemetery, Linden Grove, Nunhead, LONDON, SE15 3LP

**Many thanks for such a stimulating winter read and the West Lodge
in 1981 is a delight. *Amoret Tanner***

Editor: Ron Woollacott - email: editorfonc@hotmail.com

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Contributors: Professor James Stevens Curl; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Linda Kiss; Ish Lennox; Cathy and Simon Mercer; Carol Stevenson; Roy Vickery; Louis Whybrow. Uncredited text is by the editor. *The editor and FONC trustees do not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by contributors.*

Editorial: We do hope the last issue of *FONC News* managed to bring a little colour into an otherwise depressing winter of Covid -19 restrictions. Meanwhile the trustees continue meeting albeit by Zoom, and we all look forward to seeing the back of this awful plague sometime in 2021. In this bumper issue botanist Roy Vickery describes the cuckoo-pint plant and Cathy and Simon Mercer take a break from visiting cemeteries during lockdown and take a fascinating look at roof finials in their locality and Linda Kiss tells us why she is a Friend of the Nunhead Cemetery.



This year marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery way back in November 1981, and space permitting we shall highlight some of FONC's many achievements and special events that took place during that time in forthcoming issues of *FONC News*.

Ron Woollacott

The Cemetery of All Saints, Nunhead *By Professor James Stevens Curl*

I am always interested and pleased to receive my copy of *FONC News*: Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery. I was delighted to read the Winter issue, No 150, celebrating the 150th edition of the *News*, and remember with pleasure my visit to talk to the Friends all those years ago, an event reported in the very first number of the *News*. It was a delightful evening, and I very much enjoyed the generous hospitality provided by the Friends. And I think my talk may have caused ripples of interest too.

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I am happy to congratulate the Friends on the many achievements since those first difficult years when everything was an uphill battle to get Victorian cemeteries taken at all seriously. Vandalism has taken its toll, with serious losses, of course. I always held that the lodges (1839-43) at Nunhead were exquisite little masterpieces, generally unappreciated, but marvellous works by James Bunstone Bunning (1802-63), whose great buildings included the Coal Exchange (1846-9), the Metropolitan Cattle Market, Caledonian Road (1855), and Holloway Prison (1849-52). These have all but disappeared, apart from the Cattle Market's superb central tower and a few other structures, and of course he designed the Egyptian Avenue (but not the Circle) at St James's Cemetery, Highgate, which has managed to escape the wreckers' ball. I always thought it was a pity Bunning had not designed the chapels at Nunhead, for the Gothic work by Thomas Little (1802-59) was never in the same league as Bunning's work. It is a shame the two lovely lodges at Nunhead were neglected for so long.

Since that evening I was entertained by the Friends, I have not lost my interest in cemeteries, and indeed brought out a new, completely re-written edition of *The Victorian Celebration of Death* in 2000 and 2004, and a huge and lavishly illustrated history of the General Cemetery of All Souls at Kensal Green (2001).

I also took part in an exhibition of the historic cemeteries of Berlin as part of the celebrations to mark the 750th anniversary of the founding of the original settlement on the banks of the Spree, working with charming German colleagues, and producing a delightful catalogue entitled, in Berlin dialect, *O Ewich is so Lanck* (1987). The conservation of those Berlin cemeteries puts Britain to shame. I also took part in a week-long conference on the future of the cemetery in Seville in the early 1990s. There have also been numerous papers on funerary monuments, published in *Church Monuments*, *The Antiquaries' Journal*, *The Georgian Group Journal*, *Mausolus*, *Garden History*, and the *Newsletter of the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery* (now called *Telamon*). In 2019 I brought out a fine enlarged facsimile, limited, numbered edition, with a long essay by me, of J C Loudon's fascinating 1843 tome *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries*, and over the last year I have been working on a book on one of the most interesting burial-grounds in these islands, St Michael's kirkyard, Dumfries. This I shall publish as a luxurious, limited, numbered edition, produced to the highest standards, a real collectors' item for bibliophiles.

There is a huge amount still to be done, but at least the study of cemeteries is no longer a topic for sneering put-downs, idiotic comments, and arrogant dismissals featuring accusations of morbidity, abnormality, and sniggering imbecilities.

I wish the Friends every success in future projects, and hope that restoration work will bring fine buildings back to life. We cannot afford to lose any more of our built heritage: the damage done has been colossal, and what the Cult of Modernism has erected instead has clearly not lived up to either expectations or claims, to put it politely. And when it comes to how the only certainty in life is dealt with by architects and planners claiming to be Modernists, all one can say is that it has added new terrors to Death. ■

Professor James Stevens Curl is a Member of the Royal Irish Academy, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and Fellow of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland.

Nunhead Cemetery News No 41

By Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator

The continuing impact of Covid -19

Whilst we had all hoped that it would be otherwise, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on us all and on FONC activities. In the autumn, with risk assessments approved by Southwark Council in place, we were able to recommence our practical work days and monument inscription recording. Our very popular tours were ready to start with a pre-booked attendance of no more than ten people but at very short notice had to be further restricted to a guide and five other persons. Unfortunately, this meant disappointing many who wished to attend and even now we have pre-bookings as far ahead as August 2021.

Now the third national 'lockdown' has meant another cancellation of all FONC on-site activities which began in November and may still be in place by the time you read this article in March. The cemetery itself has remained open to visitors and the traditional seasonal opening hours have been reinstated.

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Cracking on with it!

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, on-site construction work is allowed to continue and we were very pleased to see that re-surfacing of the area around the Scots Martyrs memorial commenced on 11th January with completion due by 12th February. This follows a long period of apparent discussions on the cause of the many cracks in the surface and who may or may not be liable for resolving the problems. FONC understands that funding the work is not being met by Southwark. We do hope that this time it is carried out to a standard that does not require further rectification. The surface material removed is being used to repair damage done by heavy plant to the Dissenters Road during monument repairs. This looks a little rough at present but will hopefully mellow as the weather improves.

Cleaner, Greener, Safer practical work-days

It seems a very long time ago now that FONC trustee Keith Turpin submitted an application on behalf of FONC to Southwark Council for a Cleaner, Greener, Safer grant award, for the purchase of equipment to enhance our capabilities for safe working on our regular monthly practical work days. Our application was successful in full and we have now spent the £1,000 grant on a powerful 1.6 tonne lifting capacity winch and lifting strops; a four-metre reach professional pruning saw; fifteen pairs of top-quality leather work gauntlets; half-a-dozen secateurs; and 20 new Hi-Viz FONC branded tabards. FONC volunteers are now itching to get on with much needed work on site!

Raising our eyes to the skies!

Talking of grant awards, Southwark Council invited suggestions, by Council ward, for community projects to be funded by its accumulated Community Infrastructure Levy of £6.1 million. This comes from a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new development in their area and is described by the GOV.UK website as ‘an important tool for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area’. FONC rather hopefully suggested re-roofing the Anglican chapel, currently open to the elements, at an estimated cost of £100k! This was supported by a number of others who visited the consultation site. As we discovered subsequently, however, the Nunhead and Queens Road ward share of the Levy is less than £90k. Nevertheless, the submission was well worth making because £5k has been allocated to fund a feasibility report into

roofing the chapel. Southwark would not commission this if it did not think that that funding might become available from somewhere (Historic England?) - so fingers crossed! In the meantime, we had been told that the essential safety repair work needed to re-open the chapel structure to visitors would be carried out once the current on-site monument repair programme has been completed. However, it now seems that this will have to wait until funding is available in April 2021.

New trees planted

The planting of replacement trees by Southwark, delayed from last year, took place in early November 2020. This follows continued pressure from FONC to ensure that when diseased or wind damaged specimen trees in the cemetery unavoidably have to be felled, suitable new planting maintains and improves the original Victorian regime and enhances the ecological diversity of our Grade II* historic landscape. As a result, ten fastigiata (upright) hornbeams have been planted around the Limesford Road entrance to reflect the original linear planting of Lombardy poplars which gave the impression of an 'avenue' approach into the cemetery from this gate.

On the Main Avenue, a new lime has filled the gap left by one of the 1842 plantings lost as a result of bomb damage during the Blitz. To the west of the chapel in front of the open green area, two Judas trees replace some very dead buddleia and will complement the flowering viburnum behind them. Finally, another species new to the cemetery, a magnolia, will hopefully take the place of a magnificent (but diseased) horse chestnut on the corner of the Chapel Approach and Scouts Path.

Portacabin electric in short supply

Possibly as a result of the very wet weather this winter, it seems that the electricity cabling to the FONC portacabin has deteriorated to the point of causing the supply to continually trip out. At a site meeting on 18th January 2021, Southwark Council officers agreed that the solution is to lay new cabling which involves digging a trench from the portacabin to the junction box in the East Lodge grounds. This will likely add to the current (pardon the pun) mud-bath conditions in this part of the cemetery. We are hoping that this can be funded by Southwark Council and carried out as quickly as possible and before FONC activities on site recommence.

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Third Tranche of Monument Repairs Begins

Text and photos by Jeff Hart except where credited

We have previously reported that central government made funds available to local authorities to undertake ‘health and safety’ works in their cemeteries. This has resulted in a major programme of monument repairs commissioned by Southwark Council in Nunhead Cemetery. In early 2019, some 40 or so monuments and vaults on and around the Main Avenue were dismantled, made safe and re-erected (some funded by FONC). In the following winter and spring 2020 another 15 or so memorials in various parts of the cemetery, including West Hill, and the Reuben Henry Williams group on the East Crescent were transformed. In November 2020, a third tranche of repairs began.

This time, the work has concentrated on some of the most precarious major memorials along Dissenters Path and others near the junction of Windsor Walk and West Hill. Once again, the work is managed by Southwark Council’s principal major works contractor, Conway, who also carry out the below ground shoring and reinstatement of brick vaults and new concrete pads for smaller reinstatements. The more delicate work of dismantling, repairing and re-erecting the memorials is carried out by sub-contractors, Priest Stonework and Restoration Ltd. The work was originally due for completion by 4th January but the appallingly wet winter weather conditions (why schedule such work at this time of year?) and the usual unexpected complications discovered when a memorial adjacent to a planned removal was found to be in a parlous state has delayed work well into 2021.

Unfortunately, the movement of heavy lifting plant has also helped turn paths into a good approximation of a First World War battlefield. We have been promised that reinstatement will follow, and some spoil from the old Scottish Martyrs surfacing is being used, but it is hard to see at present quite how the damage will be fully put right.

However, it is thrilling to see how much of an improvement the restored memorials make to the overall impression given to cemetery visitors. Along Dissenters Road, the John Hare, George Cannon and John Burgess memorials at one end, and the Massey, Browne Webb, Hannah Wilcox vaults have been repaired. The important broken column memorial of Charles Rolls has also been restored as have several adjacent vaults not so readily identifiable.

Near the junction of Windsor Walk and West Hill the massive collapsing William Foreman and George Briggs vaults are to be restored. Unfortunately, in this case the removal of a large oak tree, which has caused much of the damage, is necessary in order to rebuild the vaults. Elsewhere sycamore and two hawthorn saplings have had to be removed after consultation with FONC. We make the case for retention where feasible and no tree is removed unless essential.

At the top of West Hill, the huge red Aberdeen granite Covington headstone has been stabilised and its kerbstones and its 'rock and anchor' symbol have been rescued from the ground into



The William Turner pedestal memorial
Photo by Jane Hart



The Covington memorial before – note the headstone leaning backwards and the kerbstones disappearing – and after restoration. *Photos by Lewis Whybrow*

which they were sinking. FONC's monument inscription recording team also found a lovely pedestal memorial to William Turner opposite the Stearns

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Memorials under repair on Dissenters Road. Here the vaults have been in-filled with shingle and new concrete pads installed on which the original memorial will be placed. Note the mud!

mausoleum that could readily be pushed to the point of toppling with one finger!

This too is now being restored. Taking advantage of economies of scale whilst Priest Stonework are on site and a convenient gap appearing in the work schedule, FONC has, with Southwark Council's approval, also commissioned

some further small-scale repairs. Our excellent relationship with Brian and Lewis Whybrow, the father and son company owners, and their team mean that we are quoted excellent rates for the work.

They also often carry out extra tasks for us at no cost this time including, for example, repair to the Figgins memorial and restoring the vandalised mourning figure thrown to the foot of the John Allan vault to her rightful place. In all FONC has committed £3,700 for additional monument repairs which includes a group of fallen headstones adjacent to the



Part of the group of collapsed headstones to be restored that FONC is funding.

Dissenters' chapel picnic area, re-setting the Marshall pedestal on Dissenters Road and reinstating missing flame symbols on the Henry Daniel memorial opposite the Anglican chapel.

Once work has been completed, these repairs will quickly weather-in and become almost unnoticeable. However, they will contribute greatly to the visual impact of the cemetery's memorials to our increasing numbers of visitors enjoying both the architectural grandeur and ecological diversity of this wonderful place. ■

Annual General Meeting Report

By Jane Hart

We explained in the last issue of *FONC News* why and how the trustees had decided to hold a 'virtual' AGM using the Zoom platform on 17th December 2020 in place of the usual June date. The papers for the meeting and details of how to join were given in the FONC Members section of the FONC website (*see separate article*). Not having attempted to host such a meeting before, it was with some trepidation that Jane and Jeff Hart waited to admit members to the meeting and a considerable relief when enough joined to be able to validate the decisions of the quorate AGM!

Following brief introductions, the Minutes of the 2019 AGM, the Trustees Annual Report and the Annual Accounts were adopted and the On-site Practical Work and Independent Examiners Reports were noted. In accordance with Clause 13 of the FONC Constitution, the current five longest serving trustees (*Ann Coley; Malcolm Collins; Jeremy Partington; Carol Stevenson and Gwyneth Stokes*) were required to stand down but stood for re-election and all were re-appointed for a three-year term. We were also delighted to appoint the current monument inscription recording co-ordinator, Garry Wiles, as a trustee. However, trustee Cathy Mercer had decided to stand down this year after many years of service to FONC, notably as a past treasurer, and the meeting unanimously adopted a vote of thanks to Cathy proposed by Chairman Jeremy Partington. Cathy has volunteered to continue to organise the popular occasional members outings. This means that there is still one trustee vacancy and anyone interested in putting themselves forward

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should contact Jeff Hart. There being no further business, the IT gremlins struck Jeff Hart's attempts to begin his short PowerPoint presentation updating members on the progress of the East Lodge Restoration Project until more competent FONC members talked him through how to share the screen so that all could see the slides! ■

The Members Area of the FONC Website

Jeff Hart explains what it is and how it works

When organising the 'virtual' AGM it became clear that some, if not many, FONC members were unfamiliar with the role of and access to the Members Area of the FONC website (www.fonc.org.uk). It is in this area that all of the papers for this year's AGM could be accessed and where details of how to join the Zoom platform for the meeting itself were given.

For any membership organisation it is important that those who pay a subscription to belong to it are entitled to access certain benefits which are not available to non-members. FONC has always done its utmost to make our charity as open, transparent and accessible as we possibly can (hence the very low subscription rate). Membership is open to anyone who is sympathetic to the objectives of the charity and although we do have a constitutional mechanism to rescind membership, it has never been used! Nevertheless, it is equally important that certain aspects of our affairs - such as accounts; members journal; discounts and other added benefits - are accessible only to members. Any such material has a degree of confidentiality to members and is thus placed in the FONC website Members Area which is password-protected.

In order to improve security in the Members Area, we updated the login requirements some time ago. Members will now need a personal username and password. If you have already been issued with your username and password, you can log in by filling in the login form on the website to the left under the menu. If you are a member and would like a personal log-in, please email membership@fonc.org.uk stating your first name, last name and home postcode. (Please allow 7 days for our response as this process is not automatic). You will then be issued with a username (your email address) and a password.

We are aware, of course, that many members do not necessarily have the means to access the website. These members can still obtain necessary documents or information by traditional means on application to the relevant FONC trustee (*see contact details on the back page*). ■

All Souls Service at Nunhead Cemetery 2020

By Ish Lennox

In recent years FONC has reintroduced it's All Souls Service providing an opportunity for individuals to remember those we have loved and lost and to remember the 288,000 plus people that lie buried at Nunhead Cemetery. The cemetery is in the parish of St Antony with St Silas, Nunhead, and we are very grateful to the Reverend Dele Ogunyemi from that parish for leading this year's service for us

However we process grief and bereavement it always includes moments to pause and remember. Bereavement isn't a short process and Nunhead Cemetery provides an area for quiet reflection and mourning all year round. These moments of reflection can happen at any time, but early November, known in the church as All Souls Day, provides a special focus, which can be very healing. Whether we have been bereaved this year or long ago, it can be very helpful to have a special moment when we collectively remember all those who have shaped our lives and who are no longer with us.

This year's All Souls service took on even more significance after restrictions on funeral attendance and the highlighting of unjust Black deaths. We were pleased to welcome the choir from the Lighthouse Cathedral in Nunhead who opened the service for us by singing the hymn Amazing Grace. We would like to express our thanks to Ali Angus for her help in leading us in an act of remembrance for all those who have lost their lives through racial inequality.

Our All Souls Services are designed to be creative and interactive enabling people to join in at any point in the service. Our service began at the Flint Circle where we lit candles of remembrance. Lighting a candle gives us the opportunity to be alongside those who are living with sadness and grief.

For this year's service we used several monuments in the cemetery to help

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us pause and reflect. The Livesey monument on the Main Avenue was our first stop. This monument bears the inscription ‘The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear, The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid.’ This quote is taken from Psalm 27 and we took some time to reflect on these words during this Covid time.

A new resource had been developed for this year’s service, a picture of a remembrance garden. As we paused at the monument we took time to plant a flower in this remembrance garden.

Our next stop was the Fitter monument which has an inscription that reads: ‘He that dwell in the secret place of the most high.’ These words gave us an opportunity to reflect on our more personal losses and to make a personal memorial. Our final stop was at the Whichelow monument where we were led in a reflection on justice and hope by Ali Angus and the Cathedral singers. The rain held off for the service but joined us in time for tea and coffee. FONC recognises the importance of an All Souls event where everyone is welcome for as little or as long as they would like to join us and we plan to host another such service next year. ■

Annual Act of Remembrance 2020

By Jeff Hart

As with much else, the coronavirus impinged upon the FONC Act of Remembrance in the cemetery planned for 8th November 2020. Usually a well-attended public event, this year we had to plan more carefully with Jane Hart, now our expert in these matters, producing a risk assessment subsequently approved by Southwark Council officers to ensure social distancing and groups of no more than six people together. However, shortly before the event, England went into lockdown with government guidance actively discouraging any public participation.

A quick re-think led to FONC trustees deciding that the public event had to be cancelled and that, instead, individuals would be nominated to place wreaths on the principal war plots at 11am without a formal ceremony. Notices cancelling the event were placed on cemetery notice-boards and on social media (*thanks to our webmaster Simon Quill and Instagram and Facebook posters Fran and Pete for prompt action in this respect!*).

At the Anglican chapel and mixed Commonwealth plot, music from the service at the Cenotaph was played on mobile phones and then the guns signalling the two-minute silence followed by the playing of the Last Post. Wreaths were laid and poems read at other sites. All this caught the attention of passers-by, with others attending especially, and socially distanced gatherings joined in with the silence. A member of the public also brought their own wreath to lay at the Limesford Road memorial. Their appreciation of our efforts to mark the occasion made it all the more poignant and we have also learnt how to improve next years' Act of Remembrance.

Recognising the loss of income for the British Legion as a result of not being able to send out the usual collecting tins, FONC made an increased donation of £300 for the wreaths we laid.■

The following poems were read at the civilian and Australian memorials

<p>~ Civilian ~ September 1939 - Vera Brittain</p> <p>The purple asters lift their heads Beneath the azure autumn skies; Above the sunflower's golden cup Hover the scarlet butterflies</p> <p>Not in the sandbagged city street Where London's silver guardians soar, But through the cottage garden throbs The aching grief of England's war.</p>	<p>~ Australian ~ Inscription for war - A D Hope <i>Read by Carol Stevenson</i></p> <p>Linger not, stranger; shed no tear; Go back to those who sent us here.</p> <p>We are the young they drafted out To wars their folly brought about.</p> <p>Go tell those old men, safe in bed We took their orders and are dead.</p>
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At the Limesford Road memorial wall
Ann Coley read the following:

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Written by a Battle of Britain pilot, Flight Lieutenant William Walker in memory of those who lost their lives in the Battle. The poem is inscribed on the Memorial Wall at Capel-Le-Ferne.

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Our Wall by *William Walker*



Here inscribed the names of friends we knew,
Young men with whom we often flew.
Scrambled to many angels high,
They knew that they or friends might die.
Many were very scarcely trained,
And many badly burnt or maimed.
Behind each name a story lies
Of bravery in summer skies;
Though many brave unwritten tales
Were simply told in vapour trails.
Many now lie in sacred graves
And many rest beneath the waves.
Outnumbered every day they flew,
Remembered here as just 'The Few'.

Cemetery Flora: Lords-and-ladies, *Arum maculatum* By *Roy Vickery, roy@plant-lore.com*

Also known as cuckoo-pint, and by approximately 160 other local names, lords-and-ladies occurs in woodland areas throughout the cemetery.

Its flowers, a dull purple or yellowish spike - 'spadix' - partly enclosed in a greenish sheath - 'spathe', develop into a blunt spike covered in red berries. The leaves usually have dark purple spots - hence the Latin *maculatum*, spotted or stained.

Like other plants with spotted leaves, lords-and-ladies was sometimes said to have become stained when it grew at the base of Christ's cross. Lords-and-ladies, and similar names, such as angels-and-devils (in Somerset) and gentlemen-and-ladies (in Oxfordshire) are said to refer to the variation of the spadix colour. Other names refer to the spadix's resemblance to an erect penis. 'Pint' is said to have derived from the Old English *pintel*, meaning penis.

For some unknown reason lords-and-ladies seems to have particularly associated with priests, thus a widespread name was priest's pintle, and parson's pintle was recorded in Devon.

Perhaps not surprisingly lords-and-ladies was associated with pregnancy. According to a Dorset woman born in 1924: 'when we were very young (and innocent) we used to say you (girls) should never touch a cuckoo-pint; if you did you'd become pregnant'.

In the sixteenth century the root tubers of lords-and-ladies were valued as a source of the starch used to stiffen the elaborate ruffs worn by the aristocracy. However the use of such starch, was, as John Gerard observed in 1597: 'most hurtfull to the hands of the laundress that hath the handling of it, for it choppeth, blistereth, and maketh rough and withall smarting'. Hence the name devil-in-the-washtub. Soon after the use of lords-and-ladies starch declined, but about two centuries later the starch was rediscovered, when Mrs Jane Gibbs of Portland, Dorset, produced 'starch or arrowroot, as it was usually called by crushing with a mortar the corms of *Arum maculatum*, stirring the mass with water, and straining off the liquor, from which the fecula was allowed to subside; this was again washed and afterwards dried'.

In 1824 it was reported that large quantities of lords-and-ladies roots were gathered on Portland, treated and made into a powder, and sold in Weymouth 'for starch, nourishment for invalids' and also for use in pastry, soups and puddings. But by the mid-nineteenth century only one elderly woman continued to make starch.

Rather intriguingly I've seen what I think was an eastern European family collecting lords-and-ladies leaves in the cemetery; I have no idea what use they intended to make of them. ■



Arum Maculatum
Photo: courtesy of Roy Vickery

Observing architectural features, part 2

~ Roof finials ~

Text by Cathy Mercer - photographs by Simon Mercer

Regular readers of *FONC News* may recall my recent article about examining front doors during ‘Covid lockdown’ walks. When we exhausted front doors, I suggested that roof finials would be a good option - common but not too common and varied. Another big advantage is that they are easy to spot from the road and don’t involve going too close to people’s houses and inviting accusations of snooping.

Finials are the decorative features that mark the tip or end of roofs on special ridge tiles. Finials often appear elsewhere, for example on bed posts, lamps or benches. They are often balls or, on churches, crosses.

A roof finial or acroterion was often found on classical buildings such as Greek temples, decorating the corner or apex of a roof pediment. These acroteria are often splendid - ornate and beautiful. Many features of classical architecture have stood the test of time. For example, fancy fluted columns are common on porches and we wondered if this would be the case with roof finials. We didn’t think we’d find many very fancy finials in Dollis Hill!

How successful were we? Well, we soon discovered that there aren’t too many roof finials at all, at least not in London NW10! Some houses have them but many apparently never did and most that did seem to have lost them.



Dollis Hill Lane - an original roof finial



Park View Road - three original finials in a row

Our own road in Dollis Hill is Edwardian and here we have spotted just two roof finials on a road of 50 plus houses - neither very impressive - small lead spikes rising from the bonnet over the bay window, but maybe size doesn't matter with roof finials. Both roofs are original slate and so we assumed that the finials were all part of the original roofing. There are no other houses with roof finials, not even on original slate roofs. It's interesting but perhaps not surprising that these rather unimpressive and no doubt pricy architectural features have not been maintained.

How wrong can we be? Simon dug out an old photo of our road and we saw that the original roof finials were not the current spikes at all but the curved ones which the 1930s houses on nearby Dollis Lane still sport - see photo on page 18. They must have bought up the end of the line!

In contrast to our own street, Olive Road in nearby Cricklewood is particularly well endowed with roof finials on its Victorian houses. It's a very long straight road with nearly 200 houses arranged in terraces between side roads and about 50% of houses have some sort of roof finial. There seem to be

Examples of roof finials in Olive Road, Cricklewood



Well maintained finial



Original finial - smoke emerging from chimney?



Modern dragon finial



Modern replacement

continued overleaf



Modern replacement on modern roof

three types, all ceramic - two quite small types, a wooden spike or a ceramic pole with a knob on top, and one more extravagant type, with a dragon rearing out of the roof. This latter type is, we are sure, a modern adornment and we have seen such dragons elsewhere in London. Olive Road's development moved from Victorian to Edwardian houses, the latter with attractive Arts and Crafts pargeting. The roof finials evolved in line with architectural fashion and perhaps also because of availability from local builders merchants.

Dollis Hill Lane and nearby roads also have a good number of surviving roof finials, generally on original tiled roofs. The houses here are later - mostly 1930s semis, and perhaps the finials have survived because the original 1930s roofs survive. Maybe the developer thought that roof finials would be a cost-effective way of adding a bit of panache to the properties? It has to be said though, that these roof finials are totally lacking in style, being small, ceramic and rather droopy, with a tiny knob on top. The roof finials have not generally been replaced on new roofs - extra decoration lacking in decorative qualities and of course extra cost.

However, most streets and developments, certainly in our part of west London, seem to be totally lacking in roof finials and, crucially, they often lack suitable gables for roof finials, so we can only assume they never existed. This is especially the case in roads with long terraces without gables on individual houses, where the roof just runs as one continuous slope - nowhere for a finial to rest.

I would invite readers of *FONC News* to have a look at their own roads and see how many roof finials there are and of what type. Maybe like us you'll discover roof finials where you never looked before. However, I doubt whether people will find many more than we did.

If you're interested in exploring current fashions in roof finials or even in rigging your house out with one, the best online supplier we found was based in Hockley in Essex - see www.rooffinials.co.uk And so our next architectural feature to explore? I thought we would pursue porches, building on our observations of front doors last year. Watch this space! ■

***Friedhofs Kultur* - a new magazine about cemeteries**

By Cathy Mercer

New developments in the cemetery world are always good news and we were very pleased when a new glossy 48-page A4 size magazine devoted to cemeteries landed on our door mat. Any catch? Well yes, for UK cemetery fans anyway, as it's a German magazine, called *Friedhofs Kultur* and published by the Haymarket Press in Germany.

Like most commercial magazines, it's funded by advertising and there are a lot of advertisements aimed at gardeners as well as for cemetery managers. The magazine has an eye-catching front cover head-lined 'Der Friedhof auf Netflix', cemeteries on Netflix, flagging up a piece on how the Südwestkirchhof, a cemetery near Berlin, is attracting fans of the new German time-travel series 'Dark'. The series is largely filmed at the cemetery, which is often used in films.

There is also a beautifully illustrated piece about Nienstedten Cemetery, near Hamburg. FONC members will be particularly interested in a four-page article about Nunhead Cemetery: 'In the picturesque landscape of death'. Written by Martin Glauert of Kassel, it's a well-researched and beautifully illustrated piece which will hopefully bring in many visitors. *Friedhofs Kultur* is an attractive and readable magazine and we wish it a prosperous future! ■

Why I am a Friend of Nunhead Cemetery

By Linda Kiss

I discovered Nunhead Cemetery in 2007 when I was given the memorial card for my Uncle Henry Jarvis and in small print along the bottom of the card was 'Nunhead Cemetery - Grave No 34125 Square 3'. I googled and found the FONC website and became a Friend. My research into my Uncle Henry was published in *FONC News* No104, Summer Issue (June-August) 2009. At this time I was living in Spain and did not visit Nunhead until Sunday 4th November 2012 - a memorable day. It was the occasion of the dedication service of the new memorial to 266 First World War soldiers buried at Nunhead, including those in common unmarked graves; my Uncle Henry be-

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Lance Corporal Henry Jarvis
Photo courtesy of Linda Kiss

ing one of them. It was a tremendous thrill to read in the Autumn 2020 issue of *FONC News*, that his name is one of those that has now been added to the panels on the memorial by the Limesford Road entrance. Eddie Barclay's item in the Autumn issue gives the background to those lost names. Myself and other families are tremendously grateful to Eddie who helped to have the new memorial built in 2012, and organised the dedication ceremony; working with the Commonwealth War Graves (CWGC) on one of the biggest research projects they have organized in the UK. At the ceremony, the minister conducting the service, gave thanks for the invention of the internet and modern technology which had made the whole event possible, as without those tools these

men would have lain there undiscovered and never remembered. I was one of 50 people who laid wreaths - my own wreath on behalf of myself and three cousins. My thoughts that day were for our Grandmother Beatrice Jarvis Henry's mother, who lost her youngest son, enlisting under age and killed a few months later aged 18. I always look forward to reading the next issue of *FONC News* when it arrives and perhaps we will learn the stories of the other names that have been added to the panels. ■

Editor's comment: The First World War Memorial dedicated in 2012 covers the exact site of the original monument i.e. the Cross of Sacrifice, which was sadly vandalised in the 1970s and later removed by the CWGC. The site contains the bodies of a great many naval, army and air-force personnel and one airwoman. Representatives of FONC, including member Eddie Barclay, spent many months negotiating with the CWGC in order that a suitable memorial might be erected on the site which resembled a plot of waste ground. FONC volunteers cleared rubble and scrub from the site in preparation for the new memorial. Elsewhere in the cemetery there are many more service personnel resting in common and private graves and those identified are commemorated on the First World War Memorial erected in the 1980s close to the Second World War screen wall by the Limesford Road gates.

~ Mr Arthur Tait BEM ~

By Gwyneth Stokes

Secretary of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends

It is with regret we report the death in January of Arthur Tait, aged 86, who, as chairman of the Friends of Brompton Cemetery since 1998, became one of the leaders in the now accepted idea of the conservation and preservation of cemeteries by volunteers. Two years ago at the launch of the award-winning, newly restored Brompton Cemetery, he spoke of the Friends' 20 years of struggle and concluded 'this is a dream coming true'.

Arthur's willingness to help others was evident when in 2003 he agreed to fill the long-time vacancy of chairman of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (NFCF) and remained in office until 2015. He was responsible for strengthening the Federation's constitution and helped steer members' through the government's surveys and questionnaires for a programme which followed Select Committee findings on the state of cemeteries. Some FONC members will have met Arthur when in 2007 he came to Nunhead to be chairman at an academic 'Witness Seminar' organised by Chris Knowles, a founding member and former FONC vice-chairman, as part of an MA he was working on at the Centre for Contemporary British History at the University of London. Arthur kindly agreed to chair the Witness Seminar, despite having no direct involvement with FONC at the time and very little guidance on what to expect from the meeting or from the participants. Typically, he took it all in his stride, and handled the meeting superbly well. In the 2020 New Year Honours, Arthur was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the local community. To that community and also to Cemetery Friends nationwide, he will be a great loss. ■

Subscription Reminder

Please note that all subscriptions are due to be paid on or by the 1st April 2021. Donations are welcome. The annual subscription for UK members is £2, and for overseas members the rate is £10 which helps to cover the cost of mailing four issues of *FONC News* abroad.

If you received a subscription reminder form with this issue please return it with your payment to Simon Mercer, membership secretary. If you didn't receive a reminder form that will be because you have already renewed or have sent FONC a bank standing order. As always, thank you for your continued support.

Friends of Nunhead Cemetery 1981 -2021 ~ 40th ANNIVERSARY YEAR ~

By Ron Woollacott

PRELUDE: *THE SAD STATE OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY IN 1980*



Desecrated memorials in the Dissenters' ground at Nunhead c.1980. *Photo: Ron Woollacott*

The sad neglect of Nunhead Cemetery by its former owners, the London Cemetery Company Ltd and its successor United Cemeteries Ltd, and the vandalism that had continued and worsened since Southwark Council took possession by Act of Parliament in October 1975, had left the cemetery in a sorry state; the general appearance of the cemetery was that of a rubbish tip. Trees had been felled destroying monuments; catacombs and vaults had been broken into and desecrated, and abandoned cars dumped in the cemetery were

set alight. Southwark's cemetery staff were based at Camberwell New Cemetery, and Nunhead was left unattended. By 1980 local residents had had enough, and Jeff Hart, the enthusiastic erstwhile vice-chairman of the Nunhead Residents' Association (NRA) was determined to do something about it. He convened a meeting of like-minded people and local councillors, and brought together representatives of the NRA, Peckham Society, Southwark Friends of the Earth, the London Wildlife Trust and others who had expressed an interest in the cemetery.



Abandoned car in Nunhead Cemetery c.1980
Photo: Ron Woollacott

NOVEMBER 1981: *THE FOUNDING OF FONC*

On the 4th November the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC), a non-party political voluntary organisation, was inaugurated when ten concerned and interested persons met at the Nunhead Residents' Association's Centre in Evelina Road, Nunhead. Jeff Hart, the prime mover, was elected co-ordinator, Ron Woollacott was elected chairman, Chris Knowles was elected vice-chairman, and Mary Anne Bonney was elected minutes secretary. The new Friends group immediately entered into discussions with Southwark Borough Council in an attempt to influence the future development of the cemetery as a nature reserve and as a local amenity, as well as a place of historic and ecological importance and of course, remembrance.

JANUARY 1982: *FONC REPS MEET COUNCIL OFFICERS*

At Southwark Town Hall on Monday 18th January, a meeting took place between representatives of FONC and officers of Southwark Council. Those present were Bob Cook and Ian Williams of the Borough Engineer's Department, the department responsible for the cemetery at that time, and Philip Collins of the Council's Landscape Architect's Department. Jeff Hart and Chris Knowles attended on behalf of FONC. Bob Cook maintained that the aspirations of Southwark Council and FONC were the same, although differences were bound to arise in both emphasis and details.

JUNE 1982: *LECTURE BY JAMES STEVENS CURL*

At the Linden Grove Tenants Hall on 22nd June at the invitation of FONC, Dr (now Professor) James Stevens Curl, a leading authority on Georgian and Victorian architecture, and one of the first academics to draw the general public's attention to the plight of the great commercial cemeteries of the 19th century, gave a well-received illustrated lecture (by means of two slide projectors) to a packed meeting of 'Friends' and their guests, entitled 'Nunhead Cemetery in the Context of the Nineteenth Century Cemetery Movement'.

SEPTEMBER 1982: *FONC MEETS THE COUNCILLORS*

Being somewhat concerned at the apparent misunderstandings between certain local councillors and FONC, an informal get together between our members and Southwark councillors on the Cemetery Working Party (which was set up at the instigation of FONC) met at the Old Nun's Head Tavern on Friday the 24th. There was a good turn out from FONC members but the evening suffered from a lack of councillors; two had given their apologies,

continued overleaf

however, Councillors Bob Smyth and Liz Bendall attended, as well as Councillor Nick Snow who was not actually on the Working Party. Everyone enjoyed the evening and FONC members were able to swap views with both councillors and each other - all in all a worthwhile exercise!

NOVEMBER 1982: *FIRST ALL SOULS SERVICE HELD*

The first All Souls Service, organised by FONC member Alan (now Revd Alan Bond) took place on the 7th and was attended by over 70 people. This was without doubt an indication of how overdue such an event had been.

SUMMER 1983: *FONC'S FIRST BOOKLET IS PUBLISHED*

The late Wally Macfarlane's booklet: *The Scottish Martyrs - The Story of the Political Reformers*, whose towering granite monument may be seen in the cemetery was published. Several members took part in stapling dozens of copies together in the late Diana Ladas's back garden at Peckham Rye.

to be continued

Nunhead Cemetery News No 41 - *continued from page 7*

Brief East Lodge up-date

Progress on site for the East Lodge enabling works has been very slow partly because of the poor weather, a confirmed Covid-19 case and the need to re-design the proposed drainage works. The latter is because it has been discovered that the Thames Water sump intended to be used is higher than the lodge basement (!).

We had hoped to give much greater detail on the design brief and intended use for the restored East Lodge following a delayed meeting of the Project Board on 2nd February. However, at that meeting it became clear that concerns, detailed written comments and alternative layout plans submitted by FONC were not to be discussed and that the Southwark Borough officers were proceeding without consensus on the way forward. At the time of writing, we are urgently seeking a meeting with the Council Cabinet Member for Leisure, Environment and Roads and the cemetery ward councillors to express our belief that current plans are going in the wrong direction. We will provide a full update in the next issue of *FONC News*.

A poem from *The Talk of the Household: Poems*
by Marian Richardson (see *FONC News* Nos 148, 149 and 150)

The Exile's Grave

'Tis past, thy time of strife and pain,
Thy life's long agony.
And thou art gone where strife shall cease,
And tears be wiped away.
At rest - in peace - we leave thee here
Beneath our English skies,
No longer Exile, in that Heaven,
Where thy brave soul shall rise:
Son of that noble Land, for whom
Thou would'st have died to save,
Her tyrants cannot reach thee here,
Within thy quiet grave.
Our tears avail thee nothing now,
This shall thy requiem be -
The Patriots' spirit cannot die,
And 'Poland shall be *Free*.'

Update on Future FONC Events

It is very difficult under the present and possible future Covid-19 restrictions to give clear information about future FONC events. As we write we can give the following information:

Cemetery tours: up to the end of February all tours were cancelled; March to May 2021 - please check the FONC website for current status. *From June 2021 onwards, we hope to run the current programme.*

Monument recording sessions: currently cancelled; check the FONC website for current status.

Practical workdays: presently cancelled; check the FONC website for current status.

Annual Cemetery Open Day: currently planned for 15th May 2021 but may be put back to coincide with Open House weekend (provisionally 18th -19th September 2021).

FONC AGM: will take place at 7:00pm on 17th June 2021 but probably by Zoom. Details will be announced in the summer issue of *FONC News*.

FONC trustees meetings: these continue on Zoom for the time being.

~ FONC TRUSTEES ~

Chairman: **Jeremy Partington**

Vice-chairman: **Carol Stevenson -**

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Hon membership secretary: **Simon Mercer** - email: membership@fonc.org.uk

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

The editor, *FONC News*, email: editorfonc@hotmail.com

The deadline for letters and articles for the next issue is 16th July 2021
(Please note 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

Printed by Catford Print Centre, PO Box 563, LONDON SE6 4PY
and published by Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, email: editorfonc@hotmail.com

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