

FONC News

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Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery



One that was overlooked! see story on page 22

Photo by Ron Woollacott c.1973

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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 c/o 31 Normanby Road, LONDON, NW10 1BU* or 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: 1st April to 30th September, 8.30am - 7.00pm; 1st October to 31st October, 8.30am - 5.00pm; 1st November to 28th February, 8.30am - 4.00pm; 1st March to 31st March, 8.30am - 5.00pm. *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 on 020 8694 6079 or by e-mail: 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 e-mail fonc@btconnect.com for the Zoom website link. Other events are announced in *FONC News* and on the FONC website **www.fonc.org.uk**

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

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Contributors: Michèle Louise Burford; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Richard A Jones; Cathy Mercer; Roy Vickery; Fiona Whitfield. Uncredited text is by the editor. *The editor and FONC trustees do not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by contributors.*

Editorial:

Firstly I must apologise for omitting to include the names of Michèle Louise Burford and Ann Coley in the list of contributors in the last issue.

In this issue Jane Hart reports on the East Lodge Survey and Jeff Hart gives us all the up-to-date information relating to the cemetery including the serious damage caused by Storm Eunice. Botanist Roy Vickery describes another cemetery plant, and Cathy Mercer writes about the new trees being planted in her local park. Michèle Louise Burford writes about Arthur Burgess, John Ruskin's assistant, which is another exceptional piece of original research, and Bugman Richard A Jones tells us more about William Lucas Distant, entomologist, who is one of our Nunhead Notables. .



Ron Woollacott

East Lodge Activity Planning Survey

Report by Jane Hart, Trustee

The online survey, put together by FONC and the London Borough of Southwark, aimed to get feedback on existing ideas for the restoration of the East Lodge, its future use and activities to be provided. Questions were developed to better understand current use of the cemetery, the demographics of visitors, and in particular to find out what facilities and activities visitors to the cemetery would like to see. The survey was available online for nine weeks from early January to mid-March and was hosted on Southwark's consultation hub. It proved to be one of the most successful survey's Southwark had undertaken with a total 582 of people responding. Interestingly there were twice as many female respondents as male ones! Thank you to everyone who took time to complete it and provide valuable feedback.

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Over 90% of those completing the survey either lived in Southwark or the neighbouring Borough of Lewisham. Many of the respondents are regular users of the site with 41% visiting at least once a week and a further 27% saying they visit at least once a month. Respondents identified that they visited the cemetery mainly for exercise, to visit a green space or to explore an historic place. This is in response to the open question about what people enjoyed the most: the connection with nature is the main theme ('birdsong', 'rural feel', 'lush', 'wilderness'), followed closely by the historical interest and sense of heritage, but also a strong feeling of community ('friendly visitors', 'enthusiasm of volunteers'). When invited to comment on their feeling about the cemetery, consultees overwhelmingly expressed how much they valued it as a local green space, identifying it as a 'hidden gem', 'breathing and mental space', 'restorative', 'oasis', 'essential resource', 'lifesaver during lockdown', 'haven', and the sense of peace it offered ('calm', 'tranquil', 'serenity', 'respite from the urban chaos'). As you might expect from those comments, the vast majority of respondents felt the wellbeing benefits with 77% saying their last visit had made an improvement to their health and wellbeing and 13% somewhat improved.

With regards to the proposed facilities to be provided in the restored East Lodge, accessible public toilets were identified as the most needed facility with 89% of the respondents considering them important or extremely important. There is also a clear expectation that the East Lodge project provides a base for FONC volunteering activities. The provision of a community space was also highly valued: 54% of respondents have said they thought of it as extremely or very important. The idea of a café selling refreshments was a very popular one with 45% of respondents rating it as extremely or very important and only 10% as not important. The café is expected to offer indoor and outdoor seating options. A few respondents expressed concern of the potential impact of the café on the quiet nature of the site and risks of litter emerging from the commercial activity on site. These concerns will be addressed through the choice of operator and model/scale for the café. Accessibility and sustainability were also identified as important requirements for the restored East Lodge.

Both history and ecology were identified as the most interesting themes for display material with the history of the cemetery generally attracting support (83% very or extremely interested), as did the history of the Magnificent Seven London cemeteries (72%), and the Victorian symbols in the cemetery (72%). There was also interest in people buried in the cemetery with 77% very or extremely interested. There is equally good support for information on ecology and the wildlife found in the cemetery, attracting 78% of strong support.

With regards to new activities people would like to see: they were enthusiastic about arts events being hosted in the East Lodge and also keen on the provision of health and wellbeing activities. Regarding other activities, 138 respondents requested information regarding volunteering opportunities with FONC and we have now contacted them letting them know about the various different volunteering activities we currently undertake.

All this information has helped inform the National Lottery Heritage Fund bid being jointly prepared by Southwark Council and FONC. Hopefully our application will have been submitted by the time you read this.■

Storm Eunice batters Nunhead Cemetery

Report and photos by Jeff Hart FONC Co-ordinator

When we wrote in the last issue of *FONC News* about the criteria for closing the cemetery in anticipation of high winds, we had no idea how fierce and devastating the predicted storms would become. Storm Eunice will be remembered for many years by FONC for the extensive damage it wrought on the cemetery.

In anticipation of the storm, Southwark Council closed the cemetery to visitors on the evening of Thursday, 17th February. With a 'danger to life' red warning in place, Nunhead felt the full force of the up to 90 mph gusts of wind the next day. By the time the storm had died down on Friday/Saturday night, it was clear that extensive damage had been caused in the cemetery and it remained closed to disappointed visitors who had not realised the



The fallen Lime tree on the Main Avenue

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Damage to the Edgell memorial and Brackley headstone

continuing danger. FONC had put warnings of the closure on its website, Instagram and Facebook accounts and kept viewers up-to-date thereafter. In fact, the cemetery was not re-opened until the 2nd March.

Southwark Council reacted to the storm very quickly and assessed the damage in

the cemetery as a matter of priority. Some twenty-nine mature trees were found to have come down, spread all over the cemetery. Most were in areas where, fortunately, little damage was done to surrounding memorials. In other cases, however, the impact of falling trees was devastating. The most visible casualty was the collapse of the mature Lime tree at the north end of the east side of the Main Avenue. In falling it hit the obelisk atop the Edgell monument, restored by FONC some years ago, and also displacing its base. The obelisk in turn hit the headstone of the grave of Ernest Brackley, who ‘for many years’ as the headstone records, was for 48 years the cemetery gatekeeper until his death in 1956. On examination the core of the Lime tree was found to be rotten which begs the question on the condition of the other Lime trees flanking the Main Avenue.

Several large trees were found to have fallen across Dissenters Road by the Dissenters Triangle, destroying two small cherry trees growing in the Triangle itself. Other trees came down near path edges on the East Path, Upper Cross Path and East Crescent. Large trees in the undergrowth near The Loop fell among headstones where the damage has yet to be assessed. A tree off the path accessed by the steps on The Beeches leading to the Wetlands area knocked crosses off both the vault in which Harriet Ann Tebbutt is buried and its neighbour. Another large Lime came down at the north end of the Scouts Path narrowly missing a group of large memorials.

Southwark Council was very quick to respond to the tree damage, clearing paths, making safe hanging limbs and logging up the large fallen trunks.

Whilst this was very welcome, and with pressure to move on to other sites in the Borough, unfortunately perhaps not as much care as FONC would have liked was taken during this process. Using wheeled mechanical handling equipment, substantial damage was caused to the grassed areas on the Main Avenue and behind the Anglican chapel.



The fallen cross on the grave where the Crimean War Nurse Harriet Ann Tebbutt is buried

Large sections of trunk were largely left where they fell. Large sections of trunk and branches were also piled across the Dissenters Triangle area which FONC volunteers have nurtured over the years to provide a feature area full of blossom in the spring.



Fallen trees and damage to the grassed area behind the Anglican chapel

Towards the top of Nunhead Hill the winds battered the heavily ivy-clad pillars and mesh panels along the Brockley Footpath. With the ivy creating an impenetrable barrier, several sections of mesh panel were blown over which brought down several brick pillars and lifted a number of large and

heavy coping stones that these panels were attached to. The boundary wall along the whole length of the footpath is in poor condition and as a result

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the footpath was closed to the public from 7th to 25th March to enable essential safety works to be carried out. Again, FONC updated information on social media to keep visitors informed of the closure. Our friends Priest Stonework and Restoration were called in by Southwark to carry out this work which they did as sympathetically as they could. The coping stones have been rescued and stored on site pending, we hope, a future restoration programme.



Damage to the boundary wall and mesh fencing along Brockley Footpath

Whilst there was little we could do in regard to the Brockley Footpath, FONC practical work supervisors were able to quickly make an assessment of the damage to trees and monuments and to plan what we could contribute to the clear-up at our next practical work session on the 6th March. We were delighted by the number of new volunteers who turned up, in addition to our regulars, to help with the clear up operation. The most significant achievement was to completely remove the timber dumped on the Dissenters Triangle and to clear up the surrounding area of fallen material, ably assisted by a family of four with their two young children working like Trojans! We also cleared fallen timber away from path edges and logged up path: blocking trees the Council had missed. The Tebbutt grave was cleared in preparation for subsequent planned reinstatement of the fallen cross. It was hugely gratifying to hear the many words of encouragement and gratitude from visitors praising the work that FONC does.

As a result of FONC representations, the Council have subsequently logged up and removed the fallen Lime, the stump of which is already sprouting new growth, on the Main Avenue. This enabled us to commission Priest to reinstate the Edgell monument and the Brackley headstone which has been swiftly completed. Much still remains to be done before the impact of Storm Eunice is fully mitigated, but we believe that, already, cemetery visitors will not see the scenes of devastation that might otherwise have been all too obvious.■

Nunhead Cemetery News No 46

By Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator

Outrageous Anglican chapel repair delays continue

Despite all FONC's efforts (see *FONC News* No 155 and previous issues), repairs have still not been carried out to the Anglican chapel. This has meant yet another year without Open Day visitors being able to enjoy the performances of choirs inside this wonderfully acoustic setting. Worse still, we were told by one borough officer that on completion of the repairs, the building would still not be safe to use! Needless to say, we have robustly challenged this ridiculous situation, brought about, in our view, by inept planning and management by Southwark. We are now promised that work, to be carried out by Priest Stonework and Restoration, will begin shortly after the 21st May Open Day. Miracles may happen – the work may even be completed by the time you read this article or shortly thereafter. If not, FONC is considering a Freedom Of Information request to ascertain quite why there has been such intolerable delay in carrying out the repairs, which will hopefully put further pressure on the Council to resolve the situation.

PSPO signage also delayed

The promised improvements to the signage of the dogs on/off leads areas of the cemetery following a recent bout of vandalism have not yet taken place. Southwark envisage more robust enforcement action thereafter but difficulties in agreeing the design and siting of new notices remain. FONC is continuing to press for quicker action.

Please sir, can we have some more?

The much-anticipated National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) bid to restore the East Lodge, together with other ancillary works and revenue funding, by the time you read this newsletter, will have submitted jointly by Southwark Council and FONC by the 26th May deadline. With the support of many FONC members and supporters, we have been able to make a major contribution to this work to ensure the best possible application to give the best chance of success. This has taken a huge amount of time and effort, both

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by Borough officers and FONC Trustees, and the results will not be known until the current NHLF round results are announced in September. At the time of writing, we are still not certain of the amount of grant we will be seeking or the match-funding that Southwark and FONC will be contributing to the project. In part this is because the projected project costs are being inflated by the significant increases in construction work costs and higher inflation. We will report further in the next issue of *FONC News*. In the meantime, the on-site enabling works to the Lodge continue with expected completion in October. Thereafter, we hope to be able to start the development phase of the full restoration project in November.

FONC governance reviews

In the context of the NHLF bid, we have been undertaking further reviews of FONC governance measures to ensure that our Charitable Incorporated Organisation is managed to the highest possible standards. As a result, Trustees have adopted a five-year Strategy Document which sets out our plans for the future. It details what we do now and what, how and when we want to develop over the next five years. This will be available to members on our website in due course. It is a living document which will be reviewed by Trustees, and updated as necessary, initially on a six-monthly basis. A new Trustee Role Description has also been adopted together with a Trustee Code of Conduct. These documents set out clearly what duties a Trustee has and how their responsibilities should be carried out. Whilst we have always managed FONC affairs with probity, we have not previously documented this. We are also currently undertaking a Trustees Skills Audit to determine where we currently have individual strengths to contribute to our work and where we have weaknesses or deficiencies that we will seek to address.

Stand to attention!

During recent monument restoration work along Dissenters Road commissioned by Southwark, cemetery visitors created informal paths to bypass safety barriers. As a result FONC discovered nearby two memorials holding each other up. Unfortunately, these had not been included in the programme of repairs and so FONC decided to commission repairs to be carried out for us by Priest Stonework and Restoration. On starting work a third adjacent leaning memorial was revealed and it was decided to repair this too as they created a very visually pleasing sight when descending from West Hill and



Left: *The Ballard and Haynes memorials on Dissenters Road, which were previously hidden by thick ivy, in a precarious state. FONC volunteers had previously cleared around the area to give access to the memorials.* Right: *The completed group with the strange short, square memorial to the right also revealed* Photos by Lewis Whybrow of Priest Stonework and Restoration

turning into Dissenters Road. Priest price their work for us very competitively and this financial year FONC has spent some £10,900 on memorial repairs.

FONC AGM 2022

FONC Trustees have decided that it is important to revert to a face-to-face Annual General Meeting this year. This will be held on Thursday, 16th June at 7.00pm to 9.30pm at 'The Green', which is the community centre on Nunhead Green adjacent to the Old Nun's Head pub.

Any motions for the AGM should be submitted to the FONC Vice-Chairman, Carol Stevenson, by the 2nd June (but in view of the tight deadlines in circulating this notice, late notifications will be considered). The business meeting will be followed by some light refreshments before a presentation by a Southwark Council officer on the draft Conservation Management Plan for Nunhead Cemetery and other on-going projects. Members will have the chance to ask questions and put forward suggestions for inclusion in the Plan.

Cemetery Flora:

Winter heliotrope, *Petasites pyrenaicus*

by Roy Vickery, roy@plant-lore.com

Winter heliotrope, native to Italy (including Sicily and Sardinia) and north Africa, has been cultivated in British gardens as an ornamental since early in the nineteenth century, and first recorded in the wild in the 1930s.



Winter heliotrope Photo: Roy Vickery

Male flowers and female flowers occur on different plants, but only the male plants occur in Britain, so seeds are not produced and where winter heliotrope is found in the wild it has been deliberately planted, or results from roots being thrown out from gardens. As can be seen in the Cemetery, the plant can be invasive particularly in dampish shady habitats, forcing out other species and sometimes forming large, persistent clumps. Possibly as a result of climate change, it appears to be becoming increasingly invasive.

More positively, as its name suggests winter heliotrope's pinkish mauve flowers are produced at a time of year when little else is in blossom, and have a attractive scent, described as resembling that of almonds, cherry pies, or vanilla.

The flowers are also a good source of nectar and pollen for bees and other early-flying pollinators, and in Scandinavia plants are grown near beehives for this purpose.■

Brookwood Cemetery Society - 1992-2022

Congratulations to the Brookwood Cemetery Society who this year celebrated the Society's 30th Anniversary, and held a special commemoration tea as part of the event to mark Surrey Day on Sunday 7th May 2022.

New buildings in Nunhead named after two Nunhead Notables *writes Ron Woollacott*

Completed a year or so ago after a number of problems delaying construction, the new housing development at the corner of Nunhead Lane



Tanswell Court and Dickson Terrace Photo: Ron Woollacott

and the west side of Nunhead Green, has been named after two former Nunhead residents/local celebrities whose graves are in Nunhead Cemetery. The first, Tanswell Court, 101 Nunhead Lane, is named after John Tanswell (1800-64), archaeologist and author of *The History and Antiquities of Lambeth* published in 1858. He died at his residence, Temple House, Nunhead Grove. The second, Dickson Terrace, is named after Corporal John Dickson (1789-1880), a Scotsman, who rode with the Royal Scots Greys at the Battle of Waterloo and lived to tell the tale. He died at 6 Philbrick Terrace in Nunhead Lane.

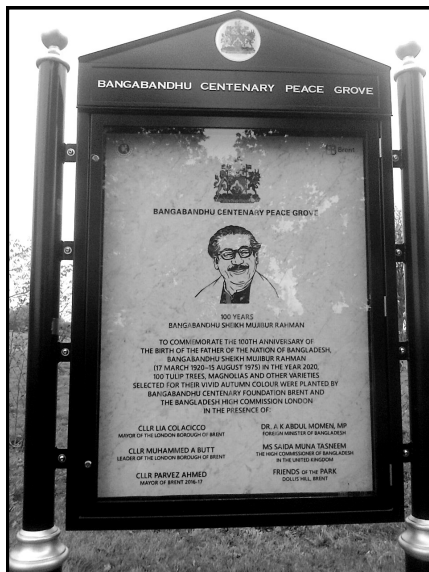
For more information see *More Nunhead Notables* for both Tanswell and Dickson, and *Nunhead Cemetery and the Battle of Waterloo* for Dickson. Both books are FONC publications and are still available.■



A New Wood in Gladstone Park

by Cathy Mercer

In January 2021 we were surprised to see little posts suddenly appear in our local park at Dollis Hill. We assumed that this was to do with recent



New trees and sign In Gladstone Park Photos by Cathy Mercer

leaks after heavy rainfall but, on enquiring, I was told that Bangladeshis were involved. This seemed so strange that I thought I had misheard.

A couple of weeks later, a few new young trees started to be planted by our parks staff, then more and more, along the paths and in groups. I tried counting them but every time there seemed to be more.

Eventually word got around that these saplings were part of a major planting of 100 trees, magnolias, tulip and cherry trees and many more, 'chosen for the beauty of their autumn colours,' according to the official sign. The planting celebrates 100 years since the birth of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur (1920-75) and 50 years since the founding of the state of Bangladesh after the 1971 War of Independence.

The Bangabandhu Centenary Peace Grove, is magnificent, The trees not

only have wonderful autumn colours but beautiful spring blossom and we enjoyed these just two months after the initial planting, in April 2021. Nearly all the trees have survived their first nine months – the damp summer helped, as did regular watering.

The Peace Grove was officially opened in September, with dignitaries including the Ambassador of Bangladesh, the Leader of Brent Council and Brent's Mayor. The Peace Grove complements a circle of 50 trees, planted in the park in 1997 to celebrate 50 years of Indian independence.

In spring 2022 we received another new wood: 100 Japanese cherry trees, a gift from the Japanese people. They are part of a gift of 6,500 cherry trees to the UK, with the first ones planted in Regents Park. We look forward to more lovely blossom and autumn colours, as well as cleaner air, thanks to all these trees.■

Obituary - Bob Hunter 1926-2022

An early member of FONC, way back in the 1980s Bob could be seen recruiting new members at our Open Days. A proud Scotsman, he will be best remembered by readers of *FONC News* for contributing interesting articles relating to Scottish cemeteries and burial grounds. His daughter, Fiona Whitfield, writes as follows of the passing of her father at the fine old age of 96, almost 97. 'He died on the 13th February 2022, peacefully, surrounded by his family at home. He enjoyed his connection to Nunhead Cemetery and contributing (lengthy!) articles to *FONC News*. Always a man curious about life... and death!' the *News* provided him with an outlet for his detailed research and I am grateful that you allowed so much of it to be published. Research - not editing - was his strength.'

RIP - Mrs Beryl Day of West Sussex

It is with much regret that we have learned of the death of Mrs Beryl Day, a generous supporter of FONC for over 22 years, who sadly passed away on the 8th April 2022. Our sincere condolences go to her husband, Mr Roger Day, who is continuing to support FONC with her membership.

~ Buried at Nunhead No 23 ~

Arthur Burgess 1843-1886 - Artist, Wood Engraver

by Michèle Louise Burford

Arthur Burgess was a talented wood engraver of the Victorian era. Despite being a pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement and someone much admired by the famous art critic, John Ruskin (1819-1900), his work has been considerably neglected since his death in 1886.

The only son of Quaker parents, Arthur was born in Gloucester on the 18th July 1843. His father was William Burgess, employed as a railway agent in 1841, and his mother was Sarah née Rowntree. By 1846 William and Sarah had moved to Peckham, and were residing at 25 Hill Street, (now Peckham Hill Street) where William was working as a glue maker. Their children were Hannah Casson aged 10, Arthur aged 7 and Sophia aged 5; two servants also lived at the property.

Aged seventeen, Burgess was already employed as a wood engraver according to the 1861 census and lived with his mother and two sisters at 1 Tudor Villas, Lyndhurst Road, (now Lyndhurst Way) Peckham, whilst his father, now a mine proprietor, was lodging at St Austell, Cornwall.

Burgess writes to John Ruskin

Around 1860, Burgess, who had been working for the *Illustrated London News*, sent a note to John Ruskin at his home on Denmark Hill, Camberwell, enclosing ‘a richly wrought dark woodcut’. Ruskin later recollects that the note was modest and to this effect: ‘I can cut wood like this, and am overworked, and cannot make my living, - can you help me? - Arthur Burgess’.

Ruskin invited Burgess to go to see him, and his first impression was of ‘the grave face, honest but reserved, distressed but unconquerable, vivid yet hopeless’. After conversing with him for some time, Ruskin offered to assist him by giving him work drawing botanical pictures for the first volume of *Proserpina, a study of Wayside Flowers*

According to George Allen (1832-1907), Ruskin's assistant, later publisher, Ruskin told him that he was struck from the first with ‘the splendid cadence of line’ and repeatedly used this phrase in speaking of Burgess’s work. The artist, writer and poet, Selwyn Image (1849-1930), who was later associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement, and a good friend of Burgess, stated

‘I know from his own lips and writing what Ruskin's deliberate opinion was as to the merit of his assistant's work - he held it in its way incomparable.’

According to Ruskin they ‘soon got into a quiet and prosperous way of work together’, and in late April 1869 he took Burgess to Verona in Italy, to study the Scala tombs. Burgess, by now, had, as stated by Ruskin, become ‘such a draughtsman in black and white as I never knew the match of, with gifts of mechanical integrity and mathematical intelligence in the highest degree precious to me.’ Sadly, all the work that Burgess did at this time was done without joy and he appears to have suffered from depression.

Ruskin's cousin, Joan Severn née Agnew, was not at all impressed with Burgess, which is made clear in a letter that Ruskin wrote to her from Verona on the 13th July 1869, as follows: ‘I’ve always been afraid of vexing you if I talked of Mr Burgess, but I think now I can tell you pretty nearly what he is. I soon found out the faults you disliked so much in manner - mode of thought &c- but though a deep stain in the surface they are superficial - It will be impossible to get the stain out - but it is only a stain - it is not corruption. He has very fine qualities - and all that is best in him is least seen - much being up side down. He has been working very splendidly lately, and he sees into things into a moment, in his slangy way - or rather - expresses his insight by a slangy part of what he sees. We have got on well, and I hope I have done him good.’

Ruskin and Burgess visit Venice

Later that July in 1869 when they visited Venice, Burgess became seriously ill. Ruskin wrote that ‘his small room opening on a stagnant canal, he fell into a fit of delirious fever, through which my servant, Frederick Crawley, nursed him bravely; and brought him back to me.’ This same year Ruskin made a gift of a book of Samuel Rogers’ poetry to Burgess, inscribed ‘Arthur Burgess with John Ruskin's sincere regards.’

On their return, Ruskin became Slade Professor, and Burgess often attended Oxford to assist with diagrams for lectures and other drawings. Burgess soon made his own circle of friends in Oxford, which included Selwyn Image, who ‘little guessed that on that day had begun one of the most valuable and the closest, and the dearest friendships that I shall ever know.’

In 1871 seven lectures by Ruskin were published with the title *Aratra Pentelici, Seven Lectures on the Elements of Sculpture*. Burgess's valuable

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*The Lady of the Rains, a wood engraving by
Arthur Burgess published in
The Century Guild Hobby Horse, January 1886*

contribution is evident in which Ruskin acknowledges: 'the help throughout rendered to me by Mr Burgess is acknowledged in the course of the lectures; though with thanks which must remain inadequate lest they should become tedious; for Mr Burgess drew the subjects of plates III, X and XIII; and drew and engraved every wood-cut in the book.' Burgess's engravings appear frequently in Ruskin's series of letters contained in *Fors Clavigera*; even the motif on the title page which Ruskin copied from the floral dress in Botticelli's *Primavera* was engraved in wood by him, and used thereafter on Ruskin's title pages.

At Ruskin's home, Brantwood at Lake Coniston in 1877, hung a painting of a

'lovely village maid from Gainsborough's easel.' The Gainsborough, a sketch in oil, had been a *trouvaille* of Burgess's who had found it in South London and had paid three guineas for it, for which Ruskin insisted on paying him 300 guineas!

Burgess visits Ruskin at Lake Coniston

As early as 1874 Ruskin had become concerned for Burgess, as he noted in his diary that: 'Poor Burgess told me sad things of himself in afternoon', and on the 9th December 1874, he wrote: 'Woke at 4 am. this morning (disturbed by poor Burgess' look, last night) and feel more dead, listless and weary this morning than I've done for months.'

On the 6th August 1875, Burgess arrived at Brantwood and enjoyed a walk up Yewdale Crag with Ruskin and Coventry Patmore (1823-1896), author of *The Angel in the House*. One of Patmore's letters at this time informs the recipient of: 'a gentleman named Burgess who seems to be a kind of artistic assistant to Ruskin, whose attention is at present given to botany. He is at present copying a patch of moss on a rockside above some water, in which water he sits half the day - of course by the help of a chair and a footstool!'

to be continued

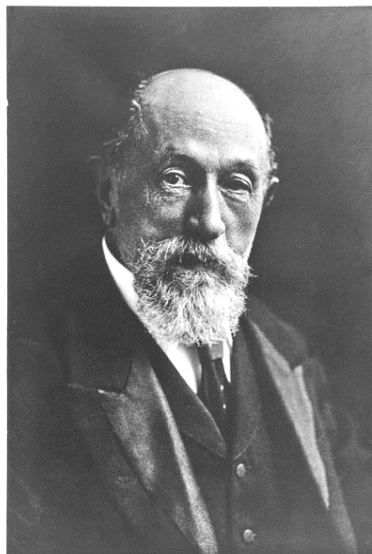
Nunhead Notable

Entomologist William Lucas Distant (1845-1922)

by Richard A Jones

I claim a particular personal interest in entomologist Mr William Lucas Distant because he lived, for a time, close by in Derwent Grove, East Dulwich. Distant was a well-off businessman in the leather industry, but was also editor of *The Zoologist* from 1899 to 1920, and a part-time curatorial associate at London's Natural History Museum, rearranging the national collection of insects - notably the plant bugs in the order Hemiptera.

He is primarily known for his very thorough work on the volumes of the grand book series *Biologia Centrali-Americana* and *Fauna of British India*. His (and other volumes) in these impressive, if rather imperious, tomes are now freely available online, but when I first saw a complete 64-volume leather-bound set of the *Biologia* on the shelves of the Natural History Museum Zoology Library in the 1980s, I was transfixed by the magnificent sight of them. At that time I was working



William Lucas Distant

Photo courtesy Richard A Jones

continued on next page

in Holborn and my lunchtime strolls took me to the ramshackle secondhand book stalls then set up on nearby Farringdon Road, where one day I found a trove of *Biologia* plates. There were hundreds of these elegant engraved insect illustrations in a large cardboard box, some already hand coloured - obviously printers 'overs' which had been made ready but never bound up into the magnificent books, and which had no doubt been languishing in some dark corner of a publishing company during the ensuing decades. I bought the whole lot for a fiver (one of my best bargains ever) though there was no accompanying text. I managed to cobble together complete plate sets of several beetle and bug volumes and bind them up into quite acceptable books at the weekly bookbinding evening classes I attended at the London College of Printing down at Elephant and Castle.

Distant's commercial travels took him to South Africa where he visited livestock farmers to check on hide quality, and researched various local tree barks for their potential in producing tannery chemicals. His *A naturalist in the Transvaal* is the usual fascinating, though pompous and (to modern ears) rather racist, travelogue.

Between dinners at the Governor's residence and trips up-country, he collected a large volume of wildlife specimens; he had the honour of having a thread snake *Glauconia* (now *Leptotyphlops*) *distanti* and various insects named after him, and he described several shieldbugs new to science.

During the 1870s, Distant, who was later to be vice-president, secretary and council member of the Entomological Society of London, was one of the eminent entomologists who were invited to the nearby Forest Hill mansion of tea magnate (and MP for Falmouth) Frederick John Horniman, to view his expanding collection of exotic insects. Horniman wasn't really an entomologist (although he was elected a fellow of the Entomological Society of London in 1876), he was really a very wealthy collector/hoarder. Horniman had either been buying specimens at the many prominent natural history auctions of the day or having them shipped directly to him by his various correspondents around the world.

Eventually he would donate his entire collection of natural history specimens and ethnographic objects to the nation, and in the build up he mingled with the scientific cognoscenti of the day who came to drool over his manifold possessions and to name the many new species found amongst his extensive cabinets. Explorer and scientist Walter Henry Bates ('of the Amazon') named a giant chafer beetle *Ceratorhina* (now *Cyprolais*) *hornimani* sent

from a missionary station at Mongo-ma Lobah, in Old Calabar on the Cameroons/Nigeria border (1877). Lepidopterist Herbert Druce (compiler of *Biologia Centrali Americana* moth volumes) described a large black, red and orange moth *Eusemia* (now *Heraclia*) *hornimani* from the same area in 1880. It was no surprise when Distant came across a large, strikingly bright orange shieldbug in Horniman's drawers, again sent from the Cameroons, and called it *Tesseratoma hornimani* (1877). Distant also went on to name a giant blue and black swallowtail butterfly *Papilio hornimani* sent from highland forests near the tea plantations of southern Kenya (1879).

Distant is buried in Nunhead Cemetery, just a few hundred metres from where I sit now typing out these words, and I recently made a pilgrimage though the dense herbage to what I believe is his gravestone. As with so many of the once grand memorials here, it is leaning precariously in the dark undergrowth and has broken and crumbled to the point of complete illegibility. Luckily Ron Woollacott transcribed the inscription way back in 1974:

Sacred to the memory of Capt Alexander Distant who departed this life on the 25th Jan 1867 in his 76th year. 'Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he be dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' / also Sarah Ann the beloved wife of the above who fell asleep June 29th 1889, aged 84 years. 'She is not dead but sleepeth.' / Freddie and Maggie, infant children of William Lucas, son of the above. / also Edith Blanche de Ruebien Distant, mother of the above two children and wife of W L Distant, who entered into rest August 14th 1914, aged 66 years. / also William Lucas Distant who died Feb 4, 1922 (remainder illegible).■ *Grave No 9394 Square 53.*

FONC News is your publication and is issued quarterly in spring, summer, autumn and winter. We include up-to-date news about the cemetery and articles about people buried there. We also like to include articles about the cemetery's flora and fauna, and other cemeteries but we can't do that without your help. Please let us know what else you would like to read about. Your letters and articles are always most welcome.

One that was overlooked!

See cover illustration

The photograph on the cover, taken by the editor in about 1973/4, shows an unidentified railed tomb in the Dissenters section in Nunhead Cemetery. During the Second World War, all metal work on tombs and monuments in the cemetery and the boundary railings were authorised to be removed by Camberwell Council (the local authority at the time) as part of the war effort, as ordered by the government. This instruction was carried out in 1942, but the tomb shown on the front cover appears to have been overlooked. It is an interesting example of an early tomb, completely enclosed by railings, similar to those that were erected during the early 19th century to deter the grave robbers, but this would have been entirely unnecessary by the time Nunhead Cemetery opened its gates in 1840. It would be interesting to know if the tomb still exists.■

~ FONC AGM 2022 ~

**THURSDAY 16th JUNE at 7.00pm to 9.30pm
AT 'THE GREEN' COMMUNITY CENTRE
NUNHEAD GREEN , SE15
ADJACENT TO THE OLD NUNS HEAD PUB**

**The business meeting will be followed by some light refreshments
after which there will be a presentation by a Southwark Council
Officer on the DRAFT CONSERVATION PLAN
for Nunhead Cemetery and other on-going projects**

**Members will have the chance to ask questions and put forward
suggestions for inclusion in the Plan**

We look forward to seeing you there



~~ DIARY DATES ~~

GENERAL GUIDED TOURS OF THE CEMETERY ► *these take place on the last Sunday in every month starting at 2.00pm.* Meet near the flint circle just inside the main gates in Linden Grove. Tours take between one and a half to two hours. The publications and information desk will be present, weather and volunteers permitting. Special tours highlighting other aspects of the cemetery are on the following dates:

WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR ► Sunday 12th June 2022 at 2.00pm. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to Nunhead Cemetery in Linden Grove.

BATTLE OF WATERLOO ANNIVERSARY EVENT ► Sunday 19th June 2022 at 2.00pm. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to Nunhead Cemetery in Linden Grove.

CHAPEL CRYPT VISIT ► Sunday 10th July 2022 at 2.00pm. Meet your guide by the chapel which is undergoing restoration work at present.

MILITARY CONNECTIONS TOUR ► Sunday 17th July 2022 at 2.00pm. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to Nunhead Cemetery in Linden Grove.

CEMETERY SYMBOLS TOUR ► Sunday 24th July 2022 at 2.00pm. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to Nunhead Cemetery in Linden Grove.

MUSIC HALL ARTISTES TOUR ► Sunday 14th August 2022 at 2.00pm. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to Nunhead Cemetery in Linden Grove.

NUNHEAD POETS TOUR ► Sunday 21st August 2022 at 2.00pm. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main entrance to Nunhead Cemetery in Linden Grove.

PRACTICAL WORKDAYS ► *these take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10.00 am 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.*

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 or by mobile phone 077 999 71 597. *Appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear is essential.*

~ FONC TRUSTEES ~

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

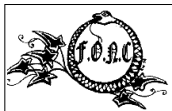
The editor, FONC News, c/o 185 Gordon Road, LONDON SE15 3RT

or email: editorfonc@hotmail.com

The deadline for letters and articles for the next issue is 20th July 2022

(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

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