

FONC News

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No 159 ~Spring issue ~ March ~ May 2023
Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery



The Torr vault - *photo: Ron Woollacott* - see story on page 15

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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. *Just 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 portable cabin 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

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

Proof Reader: Gwyneth Stokes. **Contributors:** Michèle Louise Burford; Ann Coley; Chas Evans; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Cathy Mercer; Simon Mercer; Jeremy Partington; Sam Radonich; Sue Roberts; Carol Stevenson; Garry Wiles. Uncredited text is by the editor. *The editor and FONC trustees do not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors.*

Editorial:

In May we shall have at least two special events to enjoy, the coronation of King Charles III on the 6th, and Nunhead Cemetery Open Day on the 20th. At the dawn of the new Elizabethan Age in 1952 I was a teenager, and we had so much to look forward to after six years of war and subsequent years of austerity. Let's hope the new Carolean Age will bring peace and harmony at home and abroad.



In this issue Jane Hart reports on the East Lodge project, Jeff Hart keeps us up-to-date with news about the cemetery, and Cathy Mercer reports on seeing bears at Chislehurst, and describes a hearse made from bicycle parts. Chas Evans tells the tale of his parents' graves, and Garry Wiles writes about another 'notable' person buried in the cemetery. There is also the tragic story of the Worthing Boating Disaster of 1858, plus the continuing reminiscences of a local historian.

We have hundreds of members and every one should have an interesting tale to tell, so why not tell us yours. For example, tell us why you joined FONC; your family history in connection with Nunhead; about your favourite historic cemetery; or what you would like to read more about in *FONC News*. Why not put pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard now!

Ron Woollacott

East Lodge up-date *by Jane Hart*

In the last edition of *FONC News* we reported the successful award of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the development stage of the restoration of the East Lodge project. Due to the deteriorating state of the East Lodge, and the pressing need for the work to start onsite on its restoration as soon as possible, Southwark Council and FONC have set ourselves an ambitious timeline to submit the delivery phase funding application in the November of this year. This would enable construction work to start in the first half of 2024! New display boards have been erected on the

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fencing around the East Lodge explaining the work to date and providing further information on the project. As so often with large organisations, bureaucracy resulted in the official 'Permission to Start' notification only being received in December. However, we are now in full swing putting in place the necessary consultants' contracts to develop in-depth plans in support of the project. These include a business plan for the restored East Lodge, including the operation of a café and the development of additional programmes of engagement to widen participation, extend educational outreach, enhance volunteering facilities and opportunities and for the provision of a mix of exhibitions, lectures and arts events. There will be busy months ahead for FONC Trustees and Borough officers which will hopefully result in a strong, robust and successful application for funding the delivery phase of the project.

Nunhead Cemetery News No 49

by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator

Anglican chapel - one step forward, half a step backwards, and then a giant step forwards ?

At long last the necessary repairs to the Anglican chapel have been completed and supervised access is once again possible. After removing friable and loose material, a number of stretches of brick wall near the top of the chapel have been re-built. The crumbling gable ends of the entrance portico have been reinstated and new coping stones and end-stones have been carved to replace those beyond repair. There may still be the need for a snagging revisit and we hope that this time re-growth of vegetation, which has previously been ignored, will be resolved once and for all. We had hoped that water-damaged electrical wiring for lighting in the crypt would be replaced by now. However, Southwark's electrical contractors have been changed, sending the contract back to square one. It is expected that new quotes will be available shortly. In the meantime, an allocation of £5,000 from the Council's Construction Industries Levy (CIL) is to be spent on a feasibility report looking at the options for re-roofing the chapel. FONC is sure that this would be possible but, of course, finding the funding to carry out any proposed work will be the most difficult task.

No Entry!

As reported in Cemetery News No 48, there have been recent incidences of unauthorised vehicles driving in the cemetery. Following FONC represen-

tations Southwark Council has now installed a collapsible bollard at the Limesford Road gates to prevent such access in future. Visitors who cannot access the cemetery any other way may apply to Southwark Bereavement Services for a one-off dispensation by prior arrangement although such permissions are kept to a minimum.

Olé, El Vermut!

The FONC members' Christmas social took place at the Spanish El Vermut wine bar on the 15th December 2022 and our hosts could not have been more welcoming. On a bitterly cold evening, which reduced anticipated attendance considerably, it was great to find piping hot mulled wine on offer which several participants of the carol service on Nunhead Green opposite also enjoyed! Plentiful delicious food was prepared by FONC volunteers and the excess was also enjoyed by the El Vermut staff at the end of the evening. Our raffle was a fun interlude which helped off-set the costs of the evening. We were pleased to welcome Father Dele Ogunyemi to the event, who fortuitously(!) won a number of prizes to distribute to less fortunate parishioners at Christmas.

Long awaited monument repairs in progress

As I write (end of January), new contractors are on site carrying out the long-awaited re-instatement of the Foreman and Briggs vaults and repairing three dangerously open vaults on the chapel end of the west side of the Main Avenue. Although still under the management of Conway, these new sub-contractors, who have recently carried out a number of monument repairs at Camberwell Old Cemetery, have been engaged to carry out this work. Having seen this work and been shown the start they have made at Nunhead, we are confident the repairs will be to a very high standard. Simply seeing the massive tree stump removed from in front of the Foreman and Briggs vaults is a cause for celebration! Look out for a fuller report in the next issue of *FONC News*.

Flying the flag again

As part of the mourning period following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II, Southwark Council removed the Green Flag from the flagpole at the end of the Main Avenue nearest the Linden Grove gates. On returning the flag to FONC, it was found that the pole itself was rusted and potentially unsafe. As the flag regularly snagged on adjacent trees, the flagpole has been replaced and moved forward slightly. The flag is now proudly flying again - just a shame it is for 2021/22!

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Month of the Dead tours

Two tours of Nunhead Cemetery on the 23rd October 2022, led by FONC guide Keith Turpin, and organised by Antique Beat as part of their Month of the Dead events, were fully subscribed and raised £150 for FONC funds. A mix of walks, podcasts, lectures and audio guides take place during the month all over sites in London and a number of cemetery Friends groups participate.

Nothing happens until it does

There has been no further progress yet on repairing the Scottish Martyrs surface cracks or finalising the long awaited, and increasingly important and urgent, Conservation Management Plan for the cemetery despite continuous pressure from FONC. Similarly, better enforcement of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which ‘controls’ dog walking in the cemetery is in abeyance at present. This is because we are waiting for a dispute (not with FONC) over the placing of new signage to be resolved. There has also been significant vandalising, presumably by disgruntled dog-walkers, of the indicator posts in the cemetery which mark on/off leads paths. There is a review of the conditions of the PSPO to be held in public by the Council in 2024. Whilst the lack of progress by the Council on these issues is depressing, there has been some recent surveying of the Limesford Road boundary walls in preparation for the planned re-build. Better still, following a further site meeting with FONC, the tree boughs and vegetation increasingly obscuring the St Paul’s view last year were cleared in good time before the bird nesting season allowing visitors to enjoy this protected view.

Fancy a day off work?

FONC is now able to offer the hosting of corporate work days in the cemetery. A dedicated section of our website explains what we can offer and how to go about booking a session. Many companies or public bodies now look to involve their employees in volunteering work to give something back to their communities and to develop team building, and practical work on a site such as Nunhead Cemetery is particularly popular. FONC provides all the supervision, tools and facilities for such events so why not approach your employer to see if this is something they might find attractive? Of course, the cemetery benefits from additional volunteers to help carry out in a day tasks that might otherwise take FONC volunteers months to complete. For further details please go to <https://www.fonc.org.uk/corporate-volunteering/>

Saturday 20th May 2023 is Open Day in Nunhead Cemetery

An appeal for assistance from Ann Coley

Over the years the Nunhead Cemetery Open Day has just grown and grown and incorporates many activities and organisations who come together to provide an event that helps to attract visitors to the cemetery and help them appreciate the space that we have.

As the event gets bigger (in 2022 almost 4,500 people came through the gates) we struggle each year to actually run the event on the day. For example, last year we had ten people on the refreshments stall and were all run off our feet all day, and anyone manning a FONC stall was working all day with very little chance of a break.

In 2022 we also sold out of cake! We only sell home-made cakes so if you have a speciality bake you would like to donate then please bring it along to the FONC cabin at any point in the day and we will happily add it to our range (please label it so we know what it is).

What would be really helpful would be if you could put the 20th May 2023 in your diary and plan to give FONC an hour or two of your time. A few extra volunteers would enable us all to have a quick look at what was going on, have a break and sit down with a cup of tea for a few minutes.

This is what you might end up doing depending on the time of day:
8.30 am to 9.30 am

- ◆ Put up the big gazebos that cover the plant stall and refreshments stall. We can do it with six people, but it's easier with eight
- ◆ Put up the smaller gazebos for the FONC stalls, first aid and bug hunt, and put the tables into the right place
- ◆ Help control the vehicles coming on to the site
- ◆ Get publications boxes to the right place

9.30 am to 10.30 am

- ◆ Put up tables and chairs
- ◆ Put signage in place
- ◆ Continue to help control vehicles
- ◆ Set up refreshments
- ◆ Set up FONC stalls / information

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between 11.00 am and 17.00 pm

- ◆ Help on FONC stalls with booking tours, signing up new members, and selling publications
- ◆ Help with the refreshments, either behind the scenes buttering scones, keeping the urns and teapots full, or on the stall selling tea and cake
- ◆ Keep the choirs running to time
- ◆ Help keep the main avenue clear as the vintage hearses move about
- ◆ Help direct people to tour start points
- ◆ Check the toilets for paper and change rubbish bags

17.00 pm to 18.30 pm

- ◆ Controlling vehicles as the site is cleared
- ◆ Taking tables and chairs down and moving back to collection points
- ◆ Packing up FONC stalls and moving contents back to where they belong
- ◆ Taking down gazebos and putting them away
- ◆ Putting rubbish in the collection point
- ◆ Eating any leftovers (or taking home)

Most of the tasks are very straightforward and there will be an experienced volunteer nearby to help you. Also, most of our visitors appreciate it is a volunteer effort and are tolerant of our queues and understand that we don't always have all the answers.

It is even better if we know you are coming, so if you would like to help on the 20th May please contact: volunteering@fonc.org.uk and we will be in touch towards the end of April.

Hope to see you in May for another busy day.

Advance notice of future event

FONC trip to Paddington Old Cemetery on Saturday 23rd September 2023 - Invitation from Cathy Mercer

Paddington Old Cemetery (POC) is in Kilburn, north London, and opened in 1852, and was one of the first public cemeteries in Britain. At 24 acres, it is half the size of Nunhead Cemetery, and its two Grade II listed chapels and lay-out are by Thomas Little, who also designed Nunhead's Anglican chapel. Just to round things off, Little is also buried at POC. Probably the best known incumbent is Michael Bond of Paddington Bear fame, but

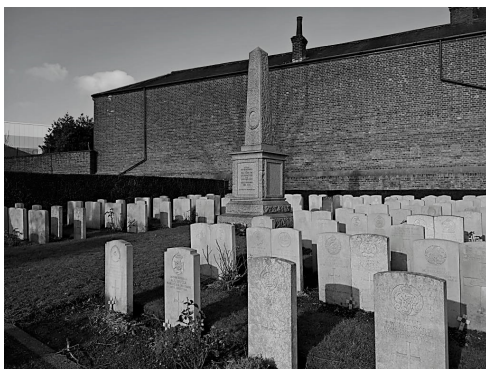
there are many other interesting tombs, including the Grade II listed Goetze Monument and 213 war graves.

Set up by the Paddington Cemetery Board, POC came under Westminster and is now managed by the London Borough of Brent. POC won a ‘cemetery of the year’ award in 1999 and many trees were planted for the millennium. There is also an apiary.

The Friends of POC are an active group. They have a helpful website www.fopoc.com and recently set up new interpretation boards. They are kindly laying on a guided tour for us on the morning of Saturday 23rd September – free, but donations welcome. We’ll meet at the entrance to Kilburn Station (Jubilee Line) from where it’s a 15 minute walk to the entrance on Willesden Lane. For lunch afterwards, there are lots of cafés and pubs etc, nearby, notably Vijay’s, a highly regarded Indian restaurant, also on Willesden Lane; nearby is Queen’s Park with a good café or there are picnic tables laid out in POC. All are welcome to join.

To find out the meeting time, please contact Cathy on 020 8452 5239

email cs2000hm@care4free.net



Commonwealth War Graves
Paddington Old Cemetery



One of several fine mausolea
Paddington Old Cemetery



Impressive memorial cross at POC

*All photographs by
Simon Mercer*

Cemetery Services bring comfort to many

by Jeff Hart

Our annual All Souls Service, organised by Ish Lennox, was held in pouring rain on the afternoon of Sunday 6th November 2022 and led, as



usual, by Fr Dele Ogunyemi, vicar of St Silas with St Antony.

The spirits of those attending were raised by the beautiful singing of the Lighthouse Cathedral choir who subsequently joined us for tea and home-made cake while sheltering from the rain under the FONC gazebos. Father Dele also invited FONC members to attend the

Rain did not deter All Souls remembrance service on the 6th November 2022 in Anglican Chapel *Photo: Ann Coley*

International Evening at St Antony with St Silas Church held on the 2nd December. This was a joyous multi-cultural evening with foods from Barbados, Pakistan, Nigeria and elsewhere on offer. FONC attendees contributed foods from Scotland, Ireland and, of course, England represented by cucumber sandwiches and Victoria sponge!

Remembrance Day

Our traditional Act of Remembrance event on the 13th November 2022 was well attended and took conflicts since the end of the Second World War as its theme. Several poignant readings were followed by the laying of wreaths purchased from the Royal British Legion at each of the principal war grave plots in the cemetery, including one laid by Councillor Renata Hamvas on behalf of Southwark Council. The event culminated in placing wreaths in the Anglican chapel, which we had not been able to do in the previous two years.

Although we would love to see more people actively participating, we know both services are greatly appreciated by our members, particularly those less physically able with loved ones buried in the cemetery.■

A tale of two graves by *Chas Evans*

My father, Jack Evans, having died in June 1945, aged 48, and being buried in Nunhead Cemetery, I (very much later) got married in 1971 and moved from Camberwell to West Kingsdown in Kent, where my wife and I remain to this day. My mother, Priscilla, remained in Camberwell and died there in 1982. She too was buried in Nunhead Cemetery, but in a separate grave some distance from where Dad lay.

About 18 months after my mother's death, my brother telephoned me to say that Dad had come to him in the night and that our father had indicated that he wished to be placed with Mum. We applied for an exhumation order and, as far as I can recall, we received full details of what would be allowed at such an event, including those who could attend and the times that the exhumation could be performed. I recall that we proceeded to carry on correspondence to pursue the outcome that we sought, but then my brother 'phoned me again to say that Dad had reappeared to him and stated that he wished to remain in the existing grave. Consequently, both parents remain in their original graves to this day.■

New cemetery ecological data being collected

Report by Jeff Hart

We were recently delighted to be approached by a new volunteer, Sam Radonich, asking what FONC does to monitor the ecology of the cemetery. Somewhat embarrassingly, we had to admit that we simply did not have appropriately skilled volunteers to do this very necessary work. Fortunately, this led to an immediate offer to help! And since then Sam has been joined by two others offering to help him in collecting data.

Sam now writes:

At the moment I am carrying out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which will give us an ecological map of the cemetery. It divides the area up into different habitats and highlights any target notes (i.e. trees with bat roosting potential/log piles/evidence of animals). The idea with this is to give us the ecological baseline, a list of plant and animal species seen and highlight any areas that have high potential to support certain species. Once we have done this, we can then start to

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think about how to improve these areas and increase biodiversity in the cemetery. In terms of volunteering opportunities there will be plenty of scope for fun surveying activities that could easily be carried out with volunteers.

Winter

Wintering bird surveys - involves walking transects through the cemetery and recording any bird species and their behaviours. Badger/mammal surveys - involves surveying the cemetery for signs of badger/mammal activity.

Spring/Summer

Reptile surveys - involves putting out reptile mats in suitable areas of the cemetery. The mats are just bits of felt which get warm in the sun so reptiles go underneath to warm themselves up. These would be left out for a few weeks and checked every couple of days, recording which species (and sex and age). I can provide fact sheets to help any volunteers.

Bat surveys - Walking transects at dusk/dawn with a bat detector once a month of the season, The bat recorder records everything so if I'm not there I can identify the species later when I listen to it back. I also know people in the London bat group who I'm sure would like to get involved.

Newt surveys - I will know if there is any likelihood of newts once I've done the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. But if there is any chance then there would be a few different surveys we could do with volunteers.

In summary, depending on what comes up on the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal there is a lot of potential for getting volunteers involved in Ecological Surveys in the cemetery and the bulk of it is fairly straightforward (with a little training and fact sheets) and fun.

So there is the challenge! Could you help with this important and fun task? If so, please email the Co-ordinator at fonc@btconnect.com and he will put you in touch with Sam.

The Bears of Chislehurst

by Cathy Mercer

Chislehurst is full of lovely woods, and if you go down to their woods today you're sure of a big surprise, because you'll find 25 brand new statues of bears to welcome you and a bear trail to help you explore Chislehurst.

The Chislehurst Bear Trail takes you through parks and green spaces in Chislehurst - it's about 12 km in total and the official start is at Elmstead Woods Station, where you'll find a gardening bear, a fishing bear and a bear bench, but you can start and finish wherever you like. The whole trail and bears have been funded by the Chislehurst Society.

The bears are all individual and carved from oak, cedar, redwood and many other tree types. They vary in size, from teddy bear size to the size of small children, but they are all cuddly and their colours come from natural woods, not paint, and so will look lovely for many years to come. They make a delightful focus for gentle walks which can be enjoyed by children of all ages, whether you're a fan of bears or woods or fresh air and exercise.

To find out more about the bears of Chislehurst and to download a free bear trail, please visit www.chislehurst-society.org.uk ■



The photograph by Sue Roberts shows Cathy and a bear on Chislehurst Recreation Ground

The bike-hearse - a bicycle made for two

by Cathy Mercer

The famous music hall song 'Daisy, Daisy' offers the consolation of a 'bicycle made for two' in place of a 'stylish marriage.' But it seems that bicycles are also becoming popular for funerals and the German journal *Friedhof und Denkmal*, (Cemeteries and Monuments), reports that in Europe a three-wheeled hearse is becoming popular; that is a bicycle converted for transporting coffins. Artist Michael Olsen from Oldenburg, near

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Frankfurt, has created this splendid hearse-bike which he has given the snappy name of Sarg-Rad. His aim is to make death more accessible and open, moving away from what he sees as the secrecy of the funeral business. He reports that his Sarg-Rad is not seen as being disrespectful but is generally popular, earning many a 'thumbs-up' from cy-

clists and funeral directors.

Michael's idea for a Sarg-Rad came from his mother, who wanted to be taken to her final resting place by bicycle, but sadly no suitable one could be found. After her funeral he spent three years designing a suitable Sarg-Rad - the main problem was weight, as coffins and corpses are heavy.

Michael argues that his silent Sarg-Rad is also much better for the environment. Similar bike-hearses are also becoming popular in Denmark and Switzerland.

Nunhead Cemetery often has a parade of vintage motor hearses at the FONC Open Day and it would be interesting to know what members think about hearse-bikes.■

Illustration: The three-wheeled hearse (trike rather than bike) complete with coffin from *Friedhof und Denkmal*

BOOK REVIEW: **ENGLISH VICTORIAN CHURCHES** **Architecture, Faith, and Revival, by James Stevens Curl**

Hardback ISBN 978-1-7398229-3-4 pp xvii and 222 price £50

This beautifully written and illustrated hardback book was published in October 2022 by John Hudson Publishing, and is the latest offering by Professor Curl. Fully illustrated with numerous colour photographs, many by the architectural photographer Geoff Brandwood, who sadly died before its publication. Professor Curl introduces the reader to the religious buildings of the various Christian denominations such as the Established Church, Nonconformity and Roman Catholicism, and describes the development of the Gothic Revival. Synagogues and the first purpose-built mosque in Britain are cov-

ered in the chapter headed ‘Non-Anglican Buildings for Religious Observance’.

The contents are best described by the author himself. He writes, ‘The riches of ecclesiastical architecture were created in less than 70 years.... Such a legacy is of the greatest importance to our country’s heritage: it may, in the end, only be remembered by a few as something that was wonderful, yet was lost through widespread indifference to the terminal decline of all that once was held to be of value, the finest architecture that England ever produced.’

This book, which is a must for all lovers of church architecture, has a useful glossary, select bibliography and index. *RW*

The Worthing Boating Disaster of 1858

by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford

In August 1858, George Torr, a wealthy animal charcoal manufacturer of Maitland House, Greenwich, whose factory was in Deptford, was enjoying a summer holiday with his family at Worthing in Sussex. He was staying with Elizabeth his wife and their four children, Ada, George, Elizabeth, and baby Florence, who was just eight months old, at Augusta House (late Trafalgar House), the former residence of Princess Augusta Sophia (1768-1840), the second daughter of King George III.

During their stay at Augusta House, the Torrs were joined by William Smith, George Torr’s brother-in-law, a successful builder and undertaker of No 1 Camden Place, Greenwich, and his wife Martha, the sister of George Torr, and their five children, Clara Anne, George Henry, William Thomas, Martha Sarah and Richard Torr Smith, all of whom were under the age of ten. Accompanying them was Elizabeth Torr’s four-year-old niece Clementina Jackson.

On Thursday 26th August 1858, Mr Torr and the other adults went to the Littlehampton regatta leaving all the children in the care of the servants. Later that day the servants decided to take the children out for an afternoon boat trip. The servants, together with the children, left the beach at twenty-past-two in the afternoon, and a small boat carried them out to the *Mary Eliza*, a 22 ft long pleasure yacht that George Torr knew well and had sailed in. There were 21 persons, adults and children, aboard the yacht. The weather was fine; the wind was not blowing very hard and the sea was quite calm.

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THE UPSETTING OF THE YACHT

The *Mary Eliza* was about three quarters of a mile out from the shore, and everyone on board was cheerful. Some of the adults were singing, when quite suddenly and without warning, the yacht overturned and everyone was flung into the sea. Some, however, managed to cling to the upturned yacht. The master of the *Fairy* lugger, which was heading for the shore, saw the accident and immediately sailed over to the stricken vessel. In doing so he managed to save eight persons.

Of the 21 persons that were cast into the sea, 13 sadly drowned; four adults and nine children. The victims were: Florence Torr (8 months); Ada Torr (3); Elizabeth Torr (7); Clara Anne Smith (1); George Henry Smith (3); William Thomas Smith (5); Martha Sarah Smith (9); Clementina Jackson (4); Ann Heness (27), Mr and Mrs Torr's head nurse; Harriet Humphrey (adult); Edwin Blann, master of the *Mary Eliza*; and Ellen, the wife of Edwin Blann. The body of Richard Torr Smith, the nine-year-old son of William Smith, had yet to be recovered. Of the ten children that went on that fateful boat trip only five-year-old George Torr survived.

INQUEST HELD AT WORTHING

On Friday 27th August 1858, Mr Blagden, the coroner for the Western Division of the County of Sussex, together with the jury, assembled at the Spaniard Inn, Chapel Street, Worthing. The jury then viewed the bodies of the deceased persons at the Royal Baths on the Parade, after which the evidence was heard.

STATEMENTS BY TWO SURVIVORS

Ellen Redding, a servant employed by William Smith, was the first to give a statement. She said she arrived at Worthing about a fortnight ago with Mr and Mrs Smith and their family, which consisted of six children at that time. She went on to say that she did not know where Mr and Mrs Smith were on the day of the accident. She went out with the children at about two o'clock in the afternoon, together with Matilda Lacy, a nurse, Emma Sharp, a nurse to Mr Torr, and Mr Torr's head nurse, Ann Heness. There were ten children altogether, six of Mr Smith's and four of Mr Torr's. Ellen Redding then described what happened after the boat had capsized. She said she was saved by clinging to a sailor (she didn't know his name), and was picked up by another boat.

Jacob Tester told the court that he was a boatman and went out with the *Mary Eliza*. The boat belonged to Thomas George Wood of Worthing. He said another boatman accompanied him whose name was Edwin Blann. They

both went out with the boat as a rule, which took 19 persons as well as themselves. They had sometimes taken as many as 28 adults in her. He explained that he was in the fore part of the vessel tending the foresheets and Edwin Blann was steering her. He concluded his statement by saying that when the boat went down he clung to the topmast and several children and adults caught hold of him, but some of them were unfortunately washed away.

THE VERDICT

At the conclusion of the inquest, the following verdict was returned: 'We, the jury, are of the opinion that the several deceased persons met with their deaths by drowning, arising from the oversetting of the *Mary Eliza* pleasure boat, and that at the time of such oversetting, considering the number of persons on board, the boat was not competently manned, nor were the sails so fastened as to guard against such oversetting. The jury cannot separate without strongly recommending that the local authorities should take the necessary steps to ensure the proper regulation and management of pleasure boats within the district of Worthing.'

THE LAST BODY IS FOUND

On Monday 30th August, after a continual and thorough search at sea and on the shore, the body of the missing boy, Richard Torr Smith, aged nine, was found just before midday. His body was thrown up on the beach near a small breakwater at the east end of the town and had only recently rolled in. The boy's body had been washing about in the sea for three days and four nights, and had travelled eastward from the spot where the accident had happened some three miles or more. The body on being identified, and after contact with the coroner, was removed under his authority and taken to Greenwich for burial with his brothers and sisters, who had been taken there on Saturday 28th August. The body of four-year-old Clementina Jackson was taken home to her parents in London.

MELANCHOLY SCENES AT THE CEMETERY

The interment of the Torr children and their nursemaid took place at Nunhead on Saturday 4th September 1858. The funeral procession consisted of two hearses and two mourning coaches, each drawn by four black horses. In the first hearse was the body of Ann Heness, the children's nursemaid. In the next hearse were three small coffins containing the bodies of the Torr children, Ada, Florence and Elizabeth. The 'mournful cortege' proceeded along Greenwich Road and New Cross Road to the cemetery, and all the shopkeep-

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The Torr and Smith monuments *Photos by Ron Woollacott*

ers marked their respect by partially closing their shops.

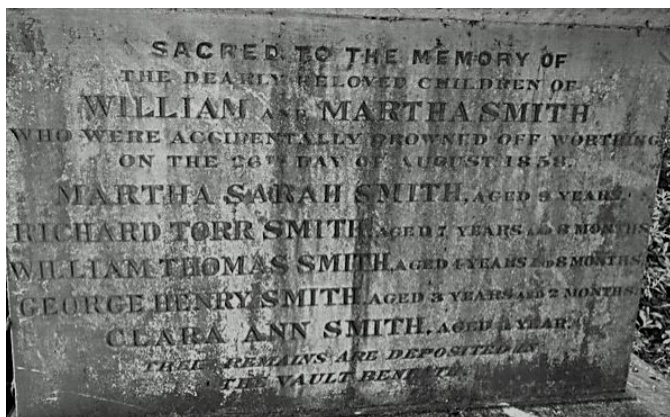
On arriving at the entrance to the cemetery the crowd of persons that had assembled was extremely large, and the screams of women trying to gain admittance to the chapel were very prevalent. It became necessary therefore, to close the outer doors of the Anglican chapel by force, as the police were unable to control the ‘multitudinous assemblage’.

The funeral service was read by the Reverend Benjamin S Finch, rector of St Paul’s, Deptford, during which ‘scarcely a dry eye was visible among the assembled crowd.’ At the conclusion of the service the procession left the chapel and walked towards the open vault which was a short distance from the chapel. The body of the nursemaid in a black covered coffin was the first to be lowered into the vault, followed by the bodies of the three children in white coffins. *Grave No 5332, Square 110.*

FUNERAL OF THE FIVE SMITH CHILDREN

On Monday afternoon 6th September, the funeral of Mr William Smith’s five children took place. At two o’clock the ‘heart-rending’ procession entered Nunhead Cemetery, stopped in front of the Dissenting chapel, and the five coffins containing the bodies of Clara Anne, George Henry, William Thomas, Martha Sarah, and Richard Torr Smith, were taken into the building, followed by the father of the children and six other mourners. The coffins were placed on trestles in the middle of the chapel in front of the pulpit,

and the mourners stood on either side. The crowd that had gathered outside tried to gain admission to the chapel, but the several policemen on duty, with great exertion, succeeded in stopping them.



Inscription on the Smith monument *Photo: Jeff Hart*

The Reverend George Rose, minister of Jamaica Row Independent Chapel, Bermondsey, delivered an eloquent address, referring feelingly to the ‘melancholy catastrophe’ that had taken the lives of Mr Smith’s five children. At the conclusion of the service and prayers, the coffins were carried to a nearby spacious vault on the west side of the cemetery. The crowd surrounding the spot was immense, but the policemen under the charge of Police-Sergeant Castleton kept perfect order. *Grave No 5345, Square 131*

Quite soon after the terrible boating disaster that had resulted in the loss of nine children, George Torr and his brother-in-law William Smith, removed from their homes in Greenwich. George Torr moved with his family to a grand house called Garbrand Hall at Ewell in Surrey, and William Smith’s new residence was Oak Lawn, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood.■

Sources: Burial records; Census returns, 1841-1861; Baptism registers of Saint Paul’s Church, Deptford, 1858; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 2nd September 1858; *The Berkshire Chronicle*, 11th September 1858; *Kentish Mercury*, 11th September 1858.

FONC POLICIES

Over the years FONC has adopted a number of policy statements. The Trustees would like to remind members that some of these apply to the activities of members on site and when representing FONC. In particular, policies regarding child protection and vulnerable adults have been updated. Please familiarise yourselves with these policies by visiting the FONC website at <https://www.fonc.org.uk/fonc-policies/> If you have any questions regarding these policy statements, do please contact the FONC Co-ordinator.

Obituary-Alan Till

(Member of FONC from 2004 to 2022)

by Carol Stevenson, Ann Coley and Jeremy Partington

We are very sorry to announce the death of Alan Till, a longstanding member of FONC who joined us in 2004, and a valued Trustee from 2020 to 2022, who died on the 28th December 2022. FONC Trustees, Jeremy Partington, chairman, Carol Stevenson, vice-chairman and Ann Coley, honorary treasurer, attended Alan's packed memorial service at Lewisham Civic Centre, Catford, on the 23rd January 2023, and learnt more about Alan's busy life.



A London Borough of Lewisham Councillor for 26 years, he was elected in a by-election to represent Perry Hill (now Perry Vale) in 1992, and stepped down in 2018. He was a keen advocate of groups supporting children, homelessness support, crematorium and burial services and grief support, and was the civic Mayor of Lewisham in 1995-96.

Alan also represented Lewisham on the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management for over 20 years, served as chairman and was the first elected president in 2006. A kind and self-effacing gentleman, his other interests included heritage railways, canals, and riding roller coasters - the faster the better. You wonder how he found time for everything.

We would like to extend our condolences and best wishes to Alan's wife and family at this very sad time.■

Another 'Nunhead Notable' discovered ?

Report by Garry Wiles

As well as co-ordinating the work on recording monument inscriptions at Nunhead Cemetery, I also carry out grave searches at the request of those looking for the final resting place of their ancestors.

I reported in the last issue of *FONC News* (No 158) about the bravery of PC William Cole, who was awarded the Albert Medal for his actions during a bomb attack on the House of Commons in 1885.

I would now like to bring to your attention another notable person buried at Nunhead who is not yet recorded in the excellent *Nunhead Notables* series

of publications: Thomas Reid, founder of the Prudential.

I was approached in the midst of the Covid 19 restrictions by someone looking to locate grave number 2268 of the Jones/Reid family in square number 116. I was eventually able to check this many months later, and found an impressive chest tomb along the West Path, not far from the Brockley Footpath perimeter wall. The inscription turned out to be on the flat stone atop the monument, and I had to clamber up on the side of this imposing tomb to record it. The extensive inscription reads as follows:

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
SAMUEL JONES OF PECKHAM RYE
WHO AFTER A LINGERING ILLNESS ENTERED HEAVEN WITH PRAYER
ON THE 8TH OF SEPTEMBER 1852 AGED 38
ALSO OF
JOHN BAYLIS JONES
LATE OF WHITBOURNE LODGE, EAST DULWICH.
DIED 17TH NOVEMBER 1857. AGED 73
AND MARY HIS BELOVED WIFE
DIED 26TH NOVEMBER 1863. AGED 71
SUSANNA, WIFE OF THOMAS REID
DIED 18 DECEMBER 1882. AGED 65 YEARS
ALSO OF EDITH MARY DAY,
DAUGHTER OF THOMAS AND SUSANNA REID
WHO DIED 16 DECEMBER 1884, AGED 40 YEARS
AND MARY KNILL JONES
DAUGHTER OF JOHN BAYLIS AND MARY JONES
WHO DIED 21 FEB^Y 1885, AGED 65 YEARS
ALSO OF THOMAS REID
OF BROCKHURST ADDISCOMBE
WHO DIED 18 SEP^R 1886 AGED 74 YEARS
ALSO SUSANNA JONES
WIFE OF SAMUEL JONES
WHO DIED (1?) DECEMBER 1916
AGED 94 YEARS
JESSIE JONES
YOUNGER DAUGHTER OF SAMUEL AND SUSANNA JONES
DIED 2ND SEP^T 1928, AGED 81
ELLEN SUSANNA JONES
WHO DIED 8TH FEBRUARY 1932. AGED 86 YEARS

continued on next page

The enquirer got back to me after I had provided this information to him, sharing the following information:

‘I have been researching further the family but there are more buried therein than I had imagined, I am trying to find more of the Jones’s. Thomas Reid, my direct ancestor, died very wealthy on the back of founding the Prudential which was a real money tree but I think the Jones’s were also very wealthy.’

I have contacted the enquirer to ask whether he has any further information about Thomas Reid or Samuel Jones, and will update readers further if I hear anything of interest. I have also reported the tomb for possible repair work to the side panel, which is badly cracked and in danger of falling away due to the action of the tree growing next to the tomb. ■



Front and side views of the Jones/Reid tomb on the West Hill in the Dissenters' section at Nunhead Cemetery. *Photos: Garry Wiles*



Trustees view work in progress at the East Lodge

On the chilly but bright Friday afternoon of 20th January 2023, those trustees who were unable to join an earlier visit to view the work to the inside of the lodge, included Oliver Lomer and Maureen and Ron Woollacott, accompanied by Jane and Jeff Hart. The visit was kindly arranged by Nina Chantry, Parks Service Development Officer, London Borough of Southwark. ■



Work to the interior of the lodge *Photos courtesy Nina Chantry*



Jane and Jeff Hart on site *Photos above and below: Ron Woollacott*



Maureen Woollacott and Oliver Lomer



Nina Chantry of LBS

Reminiscences of a Local Historian (2)

by Ron Woollacott

In the last issue I recounted how I became interested in local history at an early age, and my interest in Nunhead Cemetery. Sad to say Nunhead Cemetery was permanently closed by the ailing cemetery company in early 1969, but was re-opened to visitors once or twice a week when Southwark Council took possession in 1975. These days, of course, the cemetery is being cared for jointly by the council and FONC, and is opened daily.

When I had collected what I thought was enough interesting information about individuals from memorials, I sent a list of names and dates to the late Lou Hedger, superintendent of Southwark Cemeteries, requesting grave numbers etc, and he very kindly obliged. Having sent one request too many, however, Mr Hedger invited me to his office and allowed me to search the burial records for myself. Thereafter I spent many a spare afternoon, or day off, over very many years, ‘burying’ myself in the enormous dusty ledgers, and continued to do so with the permission of succeeding superintendents Mr Jeff Webber and Mr Terry Connor.

In addition to visiting the cemetery office, I used to spend virtually every lunch hour in Westminster Reference Library near my place of work, and carried out some research in Southwark Local Studies Library and at the Society of Genealogists of which I was a member. I also wrote to the secretaries and archivists of numerous learned societies and other organisations for biographical information, always including a donation, and all but a couple were most obliging.

The reason for collecting this material was that sometime in the not-too-distant future I might publish some of my research. The opportunity eventually arose on joining the Peckham Society in 1975, when Bob Smyth, a journalist, founder and chairman of the Society, invited me to write ‘A Brief Guide to Nunhead Cemetery’ which was duly published in *Newsletter No 4* of the Peckham Society, Feb/March 1976. Although it can hardly be called a piece of scholarly writing, Dr James Stevens Curl, now Professor Curl, the eminent architectural historian, saw fit to refer to it in his paper ‘Nunhead Cemetery, London’ (Ancient Monuments Society’s Transactions) 1977, and in *A Celebration of Death*, 1980. I also gave a talk to members of the Peckham Society and took them on a guided tour of the then still derelict cemetery.

Although I had been concentrating on researching the cemetery for some time, I was still very much interested in the history and development of Peck-

ham and Nunhead. When I was a boy, our house in Nutt Street, Peckham, a cul-de-sac (long since demolished), backed onto the Grand Surrey Canal, and although children were warned not to play on its crumbling towpaths, of course we did. The canal had always fascinated me, so I decided to carry out a little research into its creation and demise which was duly published as 'The Grand Surrey Canal - A brief history' in *Newsletter No 5* of the Peckham Society, April/May 1976. Canal enthusiast Martyn Denney read the article when visiting Southwark Local Studies Library, and referred to it in his book *London Waterways* published in 1977.

The canal article was followed by 'The Story of Transport in Peckham'. I also spoke on this subject at a crowded meeting of the Peckham Society, illustrated with drawings and photographs projected by means of an epidiascope, yes really, my epidiascope, and much to my surprise the presentation was a resounding success.

One day in 1980, and quite out-of-the-blue, I was invited by the author and historian Christopher Hibbert (1924-2008), to write three short pieces for a proposed encyclopaedia of London. Having read my contributions on the Licenced Victuallers Asylum, the Peckham Experiment, and the Girdlers' Almshouses, Mr Hibbert then asked me to write the entire entry for Peckham, and I was only too pleased to oblige. I received a cheque for £25 for my trouble, but would have been quite content to have written the entries for nothing, as I was delighted to see my modest contributions appear in such a large and important reference work as *The London Encyclopaedia*, first published in 1983.

Visitors to Nunhead Cemetery wanted to know who of interest was buried there, and the formation of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, instigated by Jeff Hart in 1981, provided the opportunity to tell them. I had amassed quite a large collection of mini-biographies of interesting persons buried at Nunhead, and FONC's committee agreed to publish them in book form. The slim volume entitled *Nunhead Notables* was published in 1984 and was an instant success. It received excellent reviews in the local papers, and I appeared with it on commercial television in Thames News at Six. I also gave slide shows on the subject to various groups.

In 1985, Alan Godfrey of Gateshead, asked me to write the blurb for a forthcoming historical map of Brockley. It was one of an excellent series of early Ordnance Survey maps that he was publishing. The 1868 map also included a major part of Nunhead Cemetery and the Newlands area of Peckham Rye, as well as the Deptford and Ladywell cemeteries. My research was not limited to Nunhead and Peckham, so I was only too pleased write it.

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I think it was sometime in 1987, or thereabouts, that I received a ‘phone call from the biographer Claire Tomalin. She was interested in knowing something about the hamlet of Nunhead in Dickens’ time, and thought that I, as a local historian, could help her. She was writing the biography of Ellen Ternan, the actress and alleged mistress of Charles Dickens. When I was living in Linden Grove, Nunhead, I had borrowed a book from Nunhead Library entitled *Dickens Incognito* (1959) by Felix Aylmer. It was a slim volume, fewer than 100 pages, but a fascinating read, and I now have a copy of my own. In his book, Felix Aylmer recounts the story that Dickens had once secretly leased a house in Linden Grove for Ellen Ternan under the name of Tringham, and sometimes stayed there. Claire Tomalin ‘phoned me several times and we shared a brief correspondence. I also had the pleasure of meeting her and her future husband, the playwright Michael Frayn, and treated them to a walk around historic Nunhead Cemetery. I also gave Claire a draft copy of *A Historical Tour of Nunhead*, which Maureen and I later self-published as *A Historical Tour of Nunhead and Peckham Rye* in 1995. Claire’s award-winning book, *The Invisible Woman - the story of Ellen Ternan and Charles Dickens*, was eventually published in the UK and USA in 1990.

Soon after the publication of *The Invisible Woman*, Claire ‘phoned me to say that she had received some interesting information from the great-grandson of the Revd John Chetwode-Postans of Linden Grove Congregational Church, with the suggestion that Dickens had not died at Rochester but had in fact died at Windsor Lodge in Linden Grove, Nunhead, and that his body was surreptitiously taken to Gad’s Hill in order to avoid scandal. In the summer of 1991, a paperback edition of *The Invisible Woman* was published by Penguin with an additional chapter relating to this strange but interesting theory entitled ‘The Death of Dickens’.

to be continued

Subscription Reminder

Please note that all subscriptions are due to be paid on or by the 1st April 2023. 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 FONC Membership c/o 31 Normanby Road, LONDON, NW10 1BU. If you did not receive a reminder form that will be because you have already renewed or have sent FONC a bank standing order. Thank you for your continued support.

~~~ DIARY DATES ~~~

GENERAL GUIDED TOURS OF THE CEMETERY *take place on the last Sunday in every month starting at 2.00pm.* We 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.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY TOUR: *Sunday 12th March 2023 at 2.00pm.* Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR: *Sunday 19th March at 2.00pm.* Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

CRYPT AND CHAPEL VISITS: *Sunday 19th March at 2.00pm.* Meet your guide/s outside the Anglican chapel.

CEMETERY SYMBOLS TOUR: *Sunday 16th April at 2.00pm.* Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

SECOND WORLD WAR TOUR: *Sunday 7th May at 2.00pm.* Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

ANNUAL CEMETERY OPEN DAY: *Saturday 20th May from 11.00am to 5.00pm. See page 7.*

WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR: *Saturday 27th May at 2.00pm.* Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

PRACTICAL WORKDAYS *take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10.00am to 4.30pm.* New volunteers are always welcome. Meet at the FONC cabin 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 cabin 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.*

Please note: *All tours and events are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. If possible up-to-date information concerning any changes will be announced in FONC News or on our website www.fonc.org.uk and notice boards in Nunhead Cemetery.*

FONC TRUSTEES

Chairman: **Jeremy Partington** - 07909 561654

Vice-chairman: **Carol Stevenson** - email: practicalwork@fonc.org.uk

FONC Co-ordinator: **Jeff Hart OBE** - 020 8694 6079 email: fonc@btconnect.com

Minutes secretary and Volunteering Co-ordinator:

Jane Hart email: volunteering@fonc.org.uk

Hon treasurer: **Ann Coley**

Hon membership secretary: **Simon Mercer** - 020 8452 5239

c/o 31 Normanby Road, LONDON, NW10 1BU

Monument inscription recording Co-ordinator: **Garry Wiles** - 077 999 71597

FONC News editor: **Ron Woollacott** MBE, FRSA - email: editorfonc@hotmail.com

Other Trustees: **Oliver Lomer, Teresa Neary, Keith Turpin,
Maureen Woollacott**

Voluntary practical work Co-ordinator: **Tim Stevenson**

email: practicalwork@fonc.org.uk

FONC News Hand-delivery Co-ordinator: **Nicola Dunn** - 020 8314 0361

FONC News Postal Co-ordinator: **Linda Martin**

Webmaster: **Simon Quill**

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 the 19th April 2023

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

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