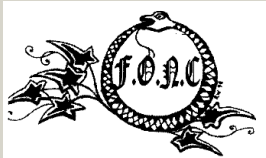


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FONC News

No 163 ~ *Spring issue* ~ March ~ May 2024

Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery



Artist's impression of the restored East Lodge courtesy of Southwark Council—see p.3

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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: Due to a temporary absence please direct all membership enquiries to the acting Membership Secretary, Carol Stevenson. email: membership@fonc.org.uk until further notice.

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 Enquiries Desk: The Publications and Enquiries 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 fourth Monday of each month at 7.00pm 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

Contributors to this issue: Michèle Louise Burford; Ann Coley; Malcolm Harris; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Cathy and Simon Mercer; and Roy Vickery. *The editor and FONC trustees do not necessarily agree with the views expressed by the contributors.*

Editorial:

By the time you receive your copy of *FONC News* spring will be around the corner, and we can bid farewell to those bitterly cold months and awful winter storms that have caused so much havoc and damage to the cemetery and elsewhere. I'm sure Roy Vickery's piece on primroses, one of my favourite spring wildflowers, will help brighten your day, and there will be scores of primroses blooming throughout the cemetery during the months of March and April.



I think you will find a lot of interesting reading in this issue. Jane Hart provides an update on the East Lodge project, there are reports on the All Souls and Remembrance Day services by Jeff Hart, which we were unable to include in the last issue, and the latest monument repairs and cemetery news. Malcolm Harris tells us about his experiences recording inscriptions in the cemetery and Cathy Mercer continues her series looking at houses in her locality. Michèle Louise Burford concludes her piece on the stained glass windows that once adorned the cemetery's Anglican Chapel, and Ann Coley reviews FONC's latest book. RW

East Lodge update *report by Jane Hart*



As anticipated in the report in the last edition of *FONC News*, the application for delivery phase funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund was submitted in mid-November and we are now eagerly awaiting the outcome which we anticipate will be by the end of March.

This has not meant that all work has ground to a halt however: the joint Southwark Council / FONC East Lodge project team met with the Evaluation Consultants in late November so that the Evaluators could

continued on next page

prepare a report on what went well and what could have been improved on during the development stage of the work. The Evaluators also contacted all the other consultants seeking their views. Their report was very complimentary, identifying that the partnership between Southwark Council and FONC provided a strong foundation for future delivery, as would the strong relationships between the East Lodge team and the consultants who will remain involved in the Delivery Phase.

During the development phase, the project team working with our fundraising consultants, successfully secured funding from other funding bodies to contribute towards the cost of the East Lodge project. Part of the Fundraisers brief was to provide a session for FONC Trustees on advice and training on successful fundraising practices - five trustees will take part in what we anticipate will be a useful and informative session.

The provision of a replacement FONC cabin, as the continuing base for undertaking practical activities, is part of the East Lodge project, and pre-planning advice was received earlier this year. As a result, full architectural drawings have now been drawn up and the full planning application for this replacement cabin (occupying the same footprint as the now dilapidated existing FONC cabin) has been submitted for approval.

The Southwark Project Manager is now drawing up tender documents for construction work so that we will be ready to start work on site as soon possible after the grant outcome is announced.

So, although we are awaiting the National Lottery Heritage Funding application outcome, we have still been very busy working in the 'background'.

A Monumental Effort - *A further update by Jeff Hart*

The monument repairs described in the last edition of *FONC News* (No 162 pp. 6-9) were successfully completed on the 8th December despite the appallingly muddy and wet working conditions during November 2023. Notwithstanding the poor winter, seed sown grass is already sprouting from the topsoil placed around the disturbed work areas.

The photograph on page 8 of *FONC News* No 162 shows the row of pedestal monuments with the Hockley memorial yet to have its needle installed. This has now been done as has reinstating the grey granite kerbing around the English Heritage Listed 'At Risk' Proom memorial on the



A recently restored monument and vault in
the Beeches area

Photo: Jeff Hart

In loving memory of Edwin Barnett
(late Captain of the 3rd London Regt)
who fell asleep in Jesus
on the 7th June 1880, age 69.
RIP (Paradise).

Erected by his loving, sorrowing widow.

Daniels of Nunhead

the figure did belong where it currently stands, it could then be reinstated. This view has been supported by Southwark's Bereavement Services and the Conservation Officer but as doubts have been expressed by English Heritage the masons have been reluctant to proceed without EH approval. Thus the 'squatter' remains at present.

More good news on the memorial restoration programme has been received. The next tranche of repairs is to be carried out early in the 2024/5 financial year and FONC has made its suggestions on which memorials should take priority. The even better news is that Southwark has

west side of the Main Avenue. Those visitors who regularly pass by the latter imposing column will have seen that there are two figures adorning the memorial - a mourning female on top of the column and a figure with what remains of outstretched arms at the bottom. This latter figure is cemented to the grey rounded ledger stone over the vault. In FONC's view, this was never part of the original memorial as it obscures the inscriptions on the plinth behind and simply does not look right. Our theory is that it was a figure found adjacent to the memorial and placed there, unusually securely, when Southwark first acquired the cemetery and was dealing with the results of much vandalism after the cemetery was closed in 1969. FONC had proposed that it be removed, and placed on a concrete pad immediately adjacent to the Proom memorial on a grave plot that has never been used. If it could be proved that

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further funding for repairs for each of the following three years thereafter. This should allow a really significant impact to be made on the appearance of dilapidated parts of the historic core of the cemetery. We also understand that the future of the Proom figure has now been agreed and will be placed as FONC has proposed! It is also hoped that FONC will be able to fund some additional memorials of our choice during each subsequent tranche of repairs.

Memorial Inscription Recording **(or a grave mistake by me?)** *by Malcolm Harris*

As a complete novice I arrived one Wednesday morning at Nunhead Cemetery to learn about memorial inscription transcribing. Garry Wiles was there and detailed what was required. He then took me to square 112 in the cemetery. He then left me to assist some visitors trying to find a grave. Relatives travel long distances to trace a grave. However, a path cuts through square 112 and I was working on the northwest side.

Many grave plots at Nunhead Cemetery have been painstakingly recorded for posterity over the years. However, the records will always be incomplete with many inscriptions lost now to the passing years. Some missing or fallen headstones and some just impossible to read. The first thing I needed to determine was my precise location within the cemetery. I was asked to work about two or three plots in from the path. I spotted an upright gravestone which was in reasonable condition. I found a grave number on the bottom left of the headstone which appeared to be 1846 and I saw this was already noted as a 'Burwash' grave recorded on my sheet. I now knew where I was within the cemetery. This specific grave was the family plot of a David Burwash. I recorded the epitaph wording. The upright stone appeared to be limestone and had what also appeared to be raised lead lettering. Some of the letters were missing, but there were very small holes in it, where the letters had been.

Having never thought much about graves, I discover a 'gravestone' marks the actual spot of a grave whereas a 'headstone' is meant to mark and honour the person buried there. Now a Commonwealth grave can be marked in three ways. Each is inscribed with the details of the individual, including name, rank, awards, service number (except officers) and a per-

sonal inscription, if provided by the family. Pedestal style CWGC markers can also be seen, often in combination with what remains of any private memorial. I have learnt this as I have just discovered information about my great uncle who died in action, he being the son of my great grandfather who rests at Nunhead. That might be for a future short article here.

I now wondered what the process might be to actually make the memorial I was looking at. That's the engineer in me. After some research a method that could have been used was to drill very small holes into the limestone and then hammer very thin lead into it. Characters were then 'cut' to create the inscription with very sharp hand tools. It was a very time-consuming process and therefore quite costly to make. I deduce the Burwash family had some wealth. Indeed, part of the wording said 'City of London'. I could not read the other location as some letters were missing. I think it was one or two numbers then three letters followed by KHAM. (possible wording being XX XXXKHAM PARK, SURREY & CITY OF LONDON).

Someone reading this might work it out, but I could not. The raised lettering process has eight steps in the making. Letters are drawn by hand on sheets of paper which are then laid over the stone and drilled in the desired place. The paper is then removed and lengths of thin lead are beaten into the holes to create a key. The paper is then laid back over the lead as a template so that the letters can be carved out by hand with a sharp tool, leaving them in relief. The lead is made darker so it is easier to read. This type of memorial lettering is very rarely used nowadays.

In my next articles I will reveal my research into the Burwash family and my research on my great uncle, who was killed in action on the 13th October 1917, possibly at the first Battle of Passchendaele in Belgium. I have only just found out about him, his father being buried in Nunhead Cemetery. There is of course the large screen wall War Memorial at Nunhead, honouring our fallen brave.

All Souls Service remembers all those interred at Nunhead Cemetery

Report by Jeff Hart

Many thanks go to Ish Lennox for organising our Annual All Souls Service held on the 5th of November 2023. Thanks also to Father Dele Ogunyemi of the Church of St Antony with St Silas, Nunhead, for conducting the service and the Lighthouse Cathedral singers for their uplifting voices which resonated around the inside of Anglican Chapel. The service was followed by some much needed hot tea and homemade cake provided by Ann Coley, which included traditional mourning biscuits, and Jeremy Partington's 'famous' Victoria cream sponge. We hope that those FONC members unable to attend, and everyone with loved ones buried at Nunhead Cemetery, feel some comfort from this service.

Remembrance Service well attended

Report by Jeff Hart

The FONC Annual Act of Remembrance held on the 12th November 2023 was attended by over thirty people, including Cllr. Renata



FONC Chairman Jeremy Partington stands by our 2023 Remembrance tributes in the Anglican chapel. *Photo: Jeff Hart*

Hamvas, who laid a wreath at the Limesford Road memorial wall on behalf of Southwark Council. Wreaths were laid at all the CWGC sites in the cemetery and the event concluded with Royal British Legion wooden multi-faith symbols being placed adjacent to the principal wreath on the bench at the back of the chapel. We try to ensure that all faiths held, and those of no faith, who served are represented.

In recent years, FONC has chosen a particular theme for our Act of Remembrance and this year we chose the theme of 'Refugees', a theme perhaps particularly pertinent in the light of recent events. Poems

including 'The Refugee Child' written by Afrooz Jafarinoor, who is an English teacher in Tehran, and 'She Speaks to Me' written by Peter Devonald, were read by FONC Trustees. Several of those attending said that they felt this was a particularly appropriate theme this year.

In the afternoon, our annual First World War tour was led by Jeff Hart and Jeremy Partington and was attended by around a dozen people. It was most gratifying to see on Facebook the following comment by Declan McGill: 'I don't need an excuse to visit the hauntingly beguiling Nunhead Cemetery, but today I chanced upon a walking tour that made my visit all the more memorable. Thanks to Friends of Nunhead Cemetery for guiding an informed and genial (to counterbalance the tragedy) tour of the War Graves on Remembrance Sunday. Remarkable stories with the madness of war looming over them'.

We know that many others who are unable to attend appreciate our efforts on this important commemoration.

Cemetery Flora: Primrose, *Primula vulgaris*

by Roy Vickery

Primroses are widespread throughout Britain and seem to be doing well in London at present, though in some woodland areas they are being forced out by rampant ivy.

Although their flowers are typically pale yellow with darker centres, they exhibit considerable diversity, ranging from pale pink to dowdy purple. Plants with non-yellow flowers appear to be coming more frequent, presumably as a result of hybridisation with cultivated polyanthus plants. It was commonly believed that the colour of primrose flowers could be changed by planting their roots upside down, or in cow dung or in



Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*)

Photo: Roy Vickery

soot. In the 1920s this belief was examined by Miller Christy, who published the results of his experiments in an article, 'On the variability and

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instability of coloration in the flowers of the primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and cowslip (*P. veris*)' in *Vasculum*, volume 14 (1928). He concluded that it was possible to change the flower colour of primroses by planting their roots in rich, well-manured soil, but his evidence seems weak. Another investigator, writing in the *Journal of Botany*, vol. 71 (1933), concluded 'unless very good evidence to the contrary is forthcoming it may be assumed that the alleged change of colour does not take place'.

Also widespread was the belief that if you brought less than 13 primroses indoors you would have bad luck with your poultry. Traditionally 13 eggs were placed under a broody hen, so it seems that each primrose flower represented a chick, and if, say, seven primroses were brought in only seven eggs would hatch.

In Ireland and on the Isle of Man primroses were amongst the plants used on May Eve (30 April) to protect homes and cattle.

In Yorkshire the grave of St John of Beverley, in Beverley Minster, was traditionally decorated with primroses gathered at Harpham, his birthplace, on 7 May, the saint's feast day. In recent years the grave has been decorated with wild flowers from Harpham, presumably because primroses have usually finished flowering by early May.

The Primrose League which was formed in 1883 to support the political ideas of Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81) promoted the wearing of primroses on 19 April, the anniversary of his death. The League reached its peak with two million members in 1910, thereafter it went into a slow decline and was disbanded in 2004, though there have been rumours of revivals which appear to have been short lived. Nunhead Cemetery contains the grave of Mr and Mrs W H Byartt, their gravestone recording that Mrs Byartt 'passed peacefully to her eternal rest on "Primrose Day" April 19th 1911'; see *FONC News*, numbers 15 and 16 (2006).

In folk medicine primroses were used to treat burns and jaundice in Co Longford, skin complaints in Dorset, and ringworm in Suffolk. There are records of primroses being eaten both on the Isle of Wight and in Brittany. Referring to the Isle of Wight, a correspondent in 2015 recorded that her 93-year-old mother remembered that 'her mother used to cook primroses in a pie, due to low income, and the children ... would be sent out to pick the primroses from the woods/hedgerows'. More recently some recipes for simnel cake, traditionally eaten on Mothering Sunday, suggest that such cakes should be decorated with sugared primrose flowers.

Please send any comments to roy@plant-lore.com

What's in a name?

Jeff Hart reminds FONC members of the importance of the Main Avenue's lime trees

Many members will no doubt be aware that the major paths in the cemetery all have names. These are reproduced in several FONC publications, appear on maps of the cemetery available on our Publications and Enquiries Desk and also on the colourful plan of the cemetery inside the Linden Grove entrance. However, were you to consult the burial plans of the cemetery, whilst you will be able to see the individual grave plots marked in each square of the cemetery and paths shown where they intersect each square, no path names are given. The only

named path was the Main Avenue. This was originally a walkway or promenade for pedestrians only, as shown in engravings of the time, and is called the Central Walk on early plans. It was never intended for the use of horse-drawn hearses and carriages (or motor vehicles) which had to use the semi-circular paths either side of the Main Avenue (now known as the East and West Crescents). This would bring them in line with, and would take them through, the Anglican Chapel's porticochere (carriage porch), where the coffin was off-loaded along with the mourners.



The new lime tree at the bottom of the Main Avenue *Photo: Jeff Hart*

So, if the London Ceme-

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tery Company did not give names to the paths from 1840 onwards, where did the names we are familiar with now come from? The answer is that they were invented by the first FONC Chairman (and current editor of *FONC News*) Ron Woollacott! This was long before the formation of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, from the early 1970s when Ron was researching the lives of those buried in the cemetery and needed a way to orientate himself in hacking through the undergrowth and giving directions to others searching for family graves. The names Ron chose were self-evident in some cases, such as the East Path or West Hill, others reflected the origins of some of those interred along the path edges, such as the Welsh Path or Scouts Path.

The path leading from the imposing Linden Grove gates up to the Anglican Chapel was given the name Main Avenue, and that name appears on our maps. However, many visitors to the cemetery, perhaps of a more romantic nature than Ron, refer to it as the 'Lime Avenue'. It might be more appropriate to call it 'Linden Avenue' as it leads from Linden Grove (which was originally known as Cemetery Road). Another name for a lime tree is linden tree, hence the change of road name in later Victorian times when the trees planted just after 1840 began to mature.

The small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) can grow up to about 38 metres (125 feet) in height and can live for up to 400 years. Such trees also provide valuable dead wood for beetles and nesting holes for birds. The lime's sweet-smelling flowers attract bees, other insects and birds, including woodpeckers. At Nunhead, our ring-necked parakeets

have been busy enlarging holes created by woodpeckers to provide their nesting holes. However, disease, the effect of weather and human activity can shorten the lime's life span. Although most of the original limes



The sapling planted to replace the bomb victim has a way to go to catch up with its newest partners. *Photo: Jeff Hart.*

on the Main Avenue survive there have been some losses over time. Towards the chapel on the east side, one tree fell victim to Luftwaffe bombing during the Second World War and in 1987 London's hurricane led to the felling of the tree second from the bottom of the Avenue on the west side. More recently, some two years ago the first lime nearest the gates



The large lime sapling on the west side of the Avenue in front of the Ptoom monument. The grey granite kerbstones of which have now been restored

Photo: Jeff Hart

on the east side came down in strong winds, knocking over a recently restored (by FONC) obelisk memorial. Despite monitoring by Southwark Council's tree team, this tree turned out to have been seriously weakened by disease which left most of the massive trunk completely hollow. Earlier this year, another lime on the west side of the Avenue was found to be similarly diseased. It was heavily pruned and then in November 2023 was felled.

The impact of these losses is to seriously endanger the visual impact of the London Cemetery Company's original planting scheme. The need for a succession plan for these trees is recognised in the newly adopted Nunhead Cemetery Conservation

Management Plan. The tree lost to the 1987 hurricane has regenerated and, by judicious pruning by FONC volunteers, has now substantively filled the gap almost exactly in the original position. Nearly three years ago, FONC persuaded Southwark Council to plant a new lime in the spot left empty by war-time bombing (why on earth did it take us so long to think of this?!). Now, following FONC requests and to our great delight, Southwark Council have planted 45cm diameter limes in the remaining two gaps which already look quite imposing. It seems that this provides the model to ensure that the Main Avenue retains its imposing lime trees well into the future.

Faith & Hope

Stained Glass Windows in the Anglican Chapel at Nunhead

(Part 2) by *Michèle Louise Burford*

As told in the last issue of *FONC News*, Dr George Newport Pickstock of Peckham commissioned Clayton & Bell of Regent Street, to design and make a stained glass memorial window for his late wife, which was installed in the Anglican Chapel. It featured two of the three virtues described as ‘two elaborately designed life size figures of Faith and Hope.’ This seems to have been a stock design as it may be seen in other church buildings,

On the 20th March 1878, Mrs Lucia Hornsby Simons, of Queens Cottage, Albert Road (now Consort Road), Peckham, a patient of Dr Pickstock, passed away. She had started life as a domestic servant, but in her later years she married and had inherited a substantial sum of money from her husband, who died just three months earlier. In her will she left just £50 (worth around £5,000 in today’s money) to her brother, who was greatly offended and initiated proceedings on account that she was so addicted ‘to intemperate habits’ that she would have been incapable of appreciating the consequences of what she was signing.

Mrs Simons had her will made out at Brighton in Sus-



Faith and Hope stained glass windows by Clayton and Bell of Regent Street, the same or similar design to those installed in the Anglican chapel in Nunhead Cemetery c.1879

sex on the 26th of February 1878, where she was staying in a boarding house with her sister and Dr Pickstock who was in attendance. Whilst there, according to witnesses, she took no food, but simply drank brandy and water. In any event, Dr Pickstock was found not guilty by a jury of unduly influencing the deceased. He, therefore, inherited the remainder of the estate, which amounted to around £4,000, worth something like £397,000 in today's money.

Although Mrs Simons' husband had been buried in a private grave in nearby Camberwell Cemetery (now Camberwell Old Cemetery), Dr Pickstock arranged for her remains be placed in a catacomb compartment in the Anglican Chapel at Nunhead. He also arranged for a 'handsome tablet' to be erected in the chapel to her memory, as well as a stained-glass memorial window, again designed by Clayton & Bell, under the direction of the undertakers Messrs G C May of High Street, Peckham.

As yet I have been unable to find any details as to the wording on the long-lost tablet or any information about the stained glass window.

Sources: *South London Observer* 6th April 1878 and 29th November 1879; James Stevens Curl, *Nunhead Cemetery, London - A history of the planning, architecture, landscaping and fortunes of a great nineteenth-century cemetery*, 1977; Ron Woollacott, *The Victorian Catacombs at Nunhead*, 2003; British Newspaper Archive; Ancestry.co.uk

Nunhead Cemetery News No 53

by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator

Our first Noel

Last summer, Trustee Teresa Neary proposed that we try holding a Carol singing event in the cemetery. Despite some misgivings about attendance and practicalities, we thought we would give it a try. Based in the chapel, atmospheric Christmas lighting and candles were provided and a rather wonky PA speaker to play a soundtrack procured. Lyrics were printed and placed on a QR code. We also used site lights recently acquired from Camberwell Art College to illuminate the chapel walls. We also thought that it would be a suitable gesture to provide some Christmas refreshments for attendees, including non-alcoholic mulled wine (FONC has a no alcohol on site policy) and mince pies.

Using our social media resources to advertise the event, we thought

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that, with luck, we may attract 40 or so people. Unfortunately, just before the event on the 16th December, Teresa came down with the dreaded Covid and was unable to lead the event.

With refreshments available from 3.15pm, the number of people milling around the cemetery seemed to increase and very quickly a queue started to form around the refreshments for which we simply asked for any donation people wished to make.

As 4.00pm approached it was evident that the enthusiasm for carol singing in the cemetery was much greater than we had anticipated. Young and old, children and adults, those who could sing and those just doing their best, assembled in and around the chapel and the event ran for over an hour. What a marvellous atmosphere! And such goodwill and enjoyment from those attending despite the slightly chaotic nature of the event on the night! Our visitors made their way to the exit in orderly fashion, telling us how much they enjoyed the event and were already looking forward to next year's singing. We think some 200 people attended and gave generously of over £500 in donations. What a great success!

A celebratory Christmas 'do'

The FONC Christmas social on the 11th December was intended by Trustees to be something of a 'thank you' to our volunteers who contribute in so many ways to conserving and enhancing Nunhead Cemetery. We were delighted with the turn-out which saw monument inscription recorders, practical conservation volunteers, publications and enquiries desk helpers, tour guides, Trustees and other members chatting away to each other whilst enjoying some excellent refreshments and, of course, an own bought drink or two! Our Christmas raffle proved as entertaining as ever with a melange of prizes on offer and no-one left empty handed. We shall be repeating this format again next year.

CPZ goes round the bend?

The controversial plans for a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in the Nunhead and Queens Road Ward of Southwark seems not only to have gone into reverse (see Cemetery News No 52) but has now gone off track! Following considerable local opposition, the areas around the cemetery have now been excluded from the scope of the CPZ and the proposed hours of application in the remaining areas have been substantively modified. Strangely, the area in front of Nunhead Station is also excluded from scope. It seems, therefore, that it is unlikely that the environs of the cemetery will be impacted if the current proposals are adopted.

‘X’ marks the spot

From time to time a new piece of the cemetery’s history is discovered. During the recent monument repairs, a marker post for the grid plan of the cemetery was unearthed. These were placed in the four corners of each of the squares into which the cemetery was divided to help orientate cemetery staff and visitors on site. Made from very heavy cast iron and some two feet long these stakes were topped with a square head, on the four sides of which were moulded the numbers of the four squares against which they abut. Once the cemetery was abandoned by the private owners in 1969 these markers began to disappear, either stolen and lost in the earth and undergrowth. The only example we have now was found near to the recently renovated Charles Fox vault near The Beeches path.

We have also just acquired a previously unseen photograph taken in the 1960s of the undamaged Boy Scouts memorial thanks to the diligence of FONC member Bob Clarke. It was purchased for our archives on e-Bay from a seller in Australia! We also have some remarkable ghost-like scans of the structure of the Anglican Chapel produced by Philip Hudson, the Tech Team Leader of the School of Design at the University of Greenwich. These can be accessed as follows at: <https://blogs.gre.ac.uk/captivate/scan-survey-nunhead-cemetery-chapel/> .

After the winds - come the floods

The cemetery has suffered from the very strong winds during several storms in November/December. A number of large and smaller trees, some dead, some living, have come down in various parts of the cemetery. It has been difficult to assess the possible damage to monuments in the more inaccessible areas but, fortunately, those on the path edges seem to have largely escaped, despite some near misses.

Southwark’s tree team has been quick to log up large trees found blocking paths. However, they do not have the time to ‘tidy-up’ as much as we would like and so FONC volunteers usually do this as and when we can. In the couple of days leading up to the January 2024 practical workday (7th), several more trees had come down and blocked parts of the East Path and the West Crescent. Fortunately, we had a very good turn-out of volunteers and by the end of Sunday all the paths had been cleared. The work on the East Path was not helped, however, by the severe flooding at its southern end caused by the amount of rainfall we endured over the previous few weeks. Our volunteers found themselves

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Quagmire in Nunhead Cemetery *Photo: Jeff Hart*

working in ankle deep mud and water in a number of places but were cheered by the number of cemetery visitors who took the trouble to thank them for their efforts.

Book review *by Ann Coley*
Nunhead Cemetery 'The Entertainers'
by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Burford

This book gives abridged life stories of more than one hundred entertainers buried in Nunhead Cemetery. Around half of these have been mentioned in the various 'Nunhead Notables' volumes but more information can be found in this book than has previously been published. For the rest, they have not been covered elsewhere and the information is all new.

The amount of research that has gone into this book is astonishing. Ron and Michèle have clearly spent hours following up leads in censuses,

cross referencing reviews and generally pulling information together from many sources. This is made more challenging when the entertainers adopt stage names. This was particularly brought home to me in this example – ‘Fanny James, formerly Collee née Cubitt aka Annie Leonie’.

So, who are the entertainers? Having spent many hours in the cemetery I was well aware of the Music Hall connection, but hadn’t really thought any wider than that. I wasn’t expecting to find set builders, acrobatic bicyclists, a screen actor or a TV actor. I definitely wasn’t expecting to read about Beckwith the human frog, or an Artist in Fireworks.

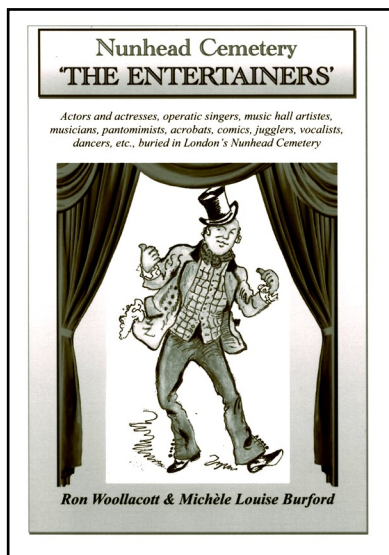
This book is also a reminder that lives

were just as messy and complicated as some are today with a full range of divorce, desertion, illegitimate children and even child support cases. In fact, it gives a fascinating insight into life for these people in the 1800s and generally early 1900s. Reading through I was sad to note the number of people who had died young, but also surprised by the amount of travel that was included with Miss Billie Barlow (for example) performing in New York and Sydney and then touring in South Africa.

There are a number of quotes from reviews and articles about the performers. I think that this particular one given in respect of Alfred Concanen, dramatic reader, could be paraphrased to apply to many meetings, and perhaps even a FONC Trustee meeting ... ‘It was a pleasant evening’s entertainment, but we would like to take the liberty of suggesting to Mr Concanen that a shorter programme would be an improvement.’

The book is well worth reading if you are interested in the social history or lives of people buried in Nunhead Cemetery and is available from the FONC Publications and Enquiries desk in the cemetery, which is open when tours are running, on FONC Open Day on the 18th May 2024, and on the first Sunday of the month when the practical work group is in action. Alternatively, it can be ordered using the order form on the website. <https://www.fonc.org.uk/publication-list/>.

ISBN 978-0-9569874-6-4 Illustrated paperback 202 pages price £7.50, members price £6.50. If ordering via the website p and p is extra.



Odd man out

by Cathy Mercer, photos by Simon Mercer

There are so many things we take for granted in the streets of London, but one of them is their regular patterns - terraces of Victorian and Edwardian houses, roads with similar 1930s semis, all much of a muchness, two up two down, house after house. Then every now and then you come across something different, tucked away in the middle of the other identical homes, and you wonder how it got there and why it's different.

This is exactly the case with our own road, a street of identical Edwardian houses in Dollis Hill, north London, with sash windows, a generous porch and balcony above. So why is there a larger house at the end of the terrace (figure 1), same height and decorative features as the neighbours but double-fronted and without a balcony, instead a lush garden sweeping round three sides?

Our road was built in 1906, so there is no one left to tell the story of this 'odd man out'. Our guess is that the builder of our road liked it so much that he wanted to live there, away from



Fig. 1

the noise of the main road but conveniently close to the park and shops. So, he built his own house on the final plot, just a little bigger and wider than its neighbours, though too small for two houses and without the balcony, because who needs a balcony when you've got a lavish garden sweeping round three sides of your house?

The central front door is also missing the deep porch of its neighbours, but that gives a bit of room inside and the door is protected from the elements by a neat little roof that also features on the estate houses which don't have balconies. That's just a suggestion and it would take a bit of research to find out the real story, but it's fun to try to work out a theory for a house being the 'odd man out'.

Elsewhere on our Edwardian estate, on Hamilton Road, are a few houses that look almost but not quite the same as their neighbours (figure 2). These houses are a little smaller and a little plainer than their neighbours, lacking most of their decorative features: they have plain balconies and no porch to the doorways and certainly no fancy woodwork, which is such a feature of the Edwardian neighbours.



figure 2

In fact, there are two sets of these ersatz Edwardian terraces on parts of the road, slightly different from each other in detail of porch and balcony, but both lacking sash windows and fancy woodwork of their neighbours. You can have a good game of 'spot the difference' here. Perhaps they were built by different contractors? Certainly, both sets of houses are in a similar Modernist style that manages to retain essential features of their neighbours but without their fancy work.

We guessed that these houses were either later in-fill or replacements for victims of Second World War bomb damage. I asked Walter, one of the residents, and he had a good story to tell: the German bombers were aiming not specifically at Hamilton Road but at the Dollis Hill Bunker, built deep underground as a last resort government hideaway in the event of London falling. He evidenced this by saying that a straight line could be drawn between the Hamilton Road replacements and other post-war replacements on Chapter Road.



figure 3

Fortunately, the bunker was never hit and so there is no evidence for the motivation for the bombing.

We went straight to Chapter Road to have a look (figure 3). Sure

continued on next page

enough, there is a large 1950s infill semi between the Victorian terraces. The house numbers show that the wide semi is infill for four Victorian terraces and each half of the semi is divided into two spacious maisonettes. Their numbering fits exactly with the old terraces and reflects that neighbouring terraces had nearly all been turned into flats. You can also see remains of the chimneys and old back wall on the left-hand semi. However, the style is pure plain 1950s, with yellow bricks and none of the Victorian decorative features and does not fit in with the neighbouring houses in the same way as the Hamilton Road Modernist houses do.



figure 4

The austerity and housing shortages of post-war Britain meant that there was no time or money for fancy features in replacement housing. It is interesting that very different approaches to infill housing have been taken on the two roads, reflecting the differing housing usage of the neighbourhoods (figure 4).

Further along Chapter Road, tucked into a corner by Dollis Hill Station, is a small new development of flats named Grunwick Close. (figure



figure 5

5). The name Grunwick tells its own story, because this estate is built on the site of the old Grunwick factory, famous in the 1970s for developing photographs cheaply and, of course, for the infamous Grunwick strike. By the time we moved to Dollis Hill, the factory had started producing delicious Indian snacks and, in turn, this factory was redeveloped as housing. This often seems to happen

near stations, where the original Victorian development included coal yards and other light industry. The same thing happened by Ladywell

Station, where we used to live in the 1980s, when there was still a coal yard which is now a small row of houses. As for the Grunwick Factory, this is immortalised in the street name and in the murals on the wall of a nearby shop and bridge.

Unlike the post-war developments, nearly no attempt has been made to fit the new blocks of flats into the surrounding environment: they tower above the small Victorian terraces, contrasting completely and deliberately, perhaps marking the wish to rise above the masses and join the modern commuters living close up to their station.

Have a look round your own streets next time you're having a walk and see if you can spot any 'odd man out'. Is the 'odd man out' infill or an old bomb site or an old industrial site or something else? And how does the newer property fit in with or contrast to its surroundings?

Reminiscences of a Local Historian (5)

by Ron Woollacott

When Terry Philpot, the journalist, was in the throes of compiling yet another book about London cemeteries, I received a 'phone call from him enquiring about Nunhead Cemetery and I was pleased to answer his many questions. His book, *31 London Cemeteries to Visit before You Die*, was published in 2013, Regrettably some of the information about Nunhead Cemetery it contains is incorrect, having been lifted from a previously poorly researched book by another writer who shall remain nameless. Sadly, once incorrect information enters the public domain it is repeated time and time again. Researchers and historians get somewhat irritated when incorrect information is bandied about as facts. It is always advisable to carry out one's own research if possible. It's a great pity I was not shown the entry on Nunhead Cemetery before Terry Philpot's book went to press. Bearing this in mind, the book is still worth a read and is nicely illustrated. Why not see if you can spot the mistake?

Local history is an addictive passion of mine. I have spent much of the last 70-odd years or more walking the streets and looking closely at the areas of London in which I am interested and recording what I see, much of which has now disappeared, as well as burying my nose in musty old

continued on next page

books and records. Now with the World Wide Web, research is that much easier, but there is also a lot of incorrect information out there, so one must be extremely cautious before accepting what one reads as gospel. These days my eldest daughter Michèle, who assists me, is a keen local and family historian in her own right, and a dedicated Ruskinian since borrowing my copy of John Ruskin's autobiography *Praeterita*. She is a stickler for the facts and has found numerous errors in published works on Ruskin.

I shall conclude these reminiscences by recalling the start of my interest in Nunhead Cemetery. The cemetery was still a working cemetery when in 1958 Maureen and I moved into 125 Linden Grove, a Victorian bay-windowed house, built about 1874 and sadly demolished by Southwark Council a little over a century later in 1976. I knew of the cemetery long before then of course, because I had witnessed my dear grandmother's funeral and interment there in 1951 and my step-grandfather's in 1956.



From left to right: Nos 121 to 137 Linden Grove, Nunhead in 1972. We lived at No 125 from 1958 to 1976. Ernest Brackley, the cemetery gatekeeper, lived at No 127. The terrace was built c.1874 and demolished in 1976.

Photo: Ron Woollacott

I started 'selective' recording of the cemetery's gravestones in the autumn of 1969. Although the cemetery had been shut down by the owners (United Cemeteries Ltd) earlier that year, the gates were still opened to visitors on a couple of days a week. I took advantage of the situation and decided to note down some of the more interesting memorial inscriptions (MIs). My new found pastime came to an unexpected end however, when I was approached by a suspicious temporary employee of the cemetery company who thought I was working (spying) for Southwark Council and, despite my explanation, still wasn't happy and asked me to stop what I was doing and leave the cemetery.

Later that year the cemetery was abandoned by the company and the gates were officially closed to the public. I began recording again a couple of years later before Southwark Council took possession of the cemetery in 1975, and by the time FONC was founded in 1981, I had recorded about 3,000 random MIs or fragments thereof, from which I was able to carry out biographical research. I also carried out hundreds of grave search enquires for families, both on site and at the cemetery office on behalf of FONC, until the Council decided to take over the task and charge a fee. We never charged but often received a donation.

Well that completes my foray into the past. I am sorry, reader, if these reminiscences might seem like something of an ego trip, but that was never my intention. My sole aim was and is to simply to let readers know how fascinating and rewarding local history and indeed family history can be, and to share some of my experiences. As you are, no doubt, aware such an activity can become an obsession and take over one's life. It took over mine.

Subscription Reminder

Please note that all subscriptions are due to be paid on or by the 1st April 2024. Donations are most welcome. The annual subscription for UK members is £2 and for overseas members the rate is £10 to cover the cost of mailing four issues of *FONC News* abroad. If you received a reminder form with this issue please return it with your payment to FONC Membership. If you did not receive a reminder form that will be because you have already renewed or have sent FONC a bank standing order. We thank you for your continued support.

A new edition of *Classical Architecture* by James Stevens Curl is to be published in 2024

First published in 1992, a new edition of Professor Curl's *Classical Architecture — Language, Variety, & Adaptability* is to be published in 2024 by John Hudson Publishing, 22 Stratford Grove, London, SW15 1NU. The book will be in hard cover in a large and accessible format, with approximately 300 pages and high production values.

The price of a signed copy with your name included, to include carriage will be £70, or \$US 100 outside Europe. These prices will be guaranteed until 31st March 2024, and compare with £90 for the regular hardback on publication which is expected to be in the second half of 2024. Those who reserve a copy will be kept informed of progress. To order a copy, or with any queries, please contact the publisher by email at john@johnhudsonpublishing.com

ANNUAL OPEN DAY *Saturday 18th May 2024* *An appeal for assistance*

FONC's Nunhead Cemetery Open Day will be on Saturday 18th May 2024 and will be open to the public between 11.00am and 5.00pm. It's a great day out for visitors and volunteers alike. We shall need as many helpers as possible to assist us on the day, and it would be of great help if you could spare an hour or two of your time. We start setting up, putting up gazebos and controlling vehicles between 8.30am and 9.30am, and between 9.30am and 10.30am we put up tables and chairs, continue to control vehicles, and set up FONC stalls. During the day we need some extra help on FONC stalls, selling publications and helping with refreshments, etc, and between 5.00pm and 6.30pm we need to control vehicles as they leave the cemetery, take down tables and chairs, and take down the gazebos and put them away, and take any rubbish to the collection point. Your generous donations of plants, homemade cakes and pastries are always wanted so please bring them along on the day.

If you can help with any of the above tasks, if only for an hour or two, on the 18th May, please contact: volunteering@fonc.org.uk

~~~ 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 Enquiries Desk will be present, weather and volunteers permitting.

THEMED TOURS DURING SPRING 2024. All tours start promptly at 2.00pm on Sunday afternoons except Open Day and Open House Weekend or as may be shown below marked thus*. Meet your guide/s for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY TOUR: *Sunday 10th March*

* **BAT SIGHTING WALK:** *Thursday 14th March at 6.00pm*

CRYPT & CHAPEL VISIT: *Sunday 17th March (meet at the chapel)*

WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR: *Sunday 24th March*

* **SPRING BIRD WATCH:** *Saturday 6th April at 7.00am*

CEMETERY SYMBOLS TOUR: *Sunday 14th April*

SECOND WORLD WAR TOUR: *Sunday 12th May*

* **OPEN DAY:** *Saturday 18th May from 11.00am to 5.00pm. General tours etc*

* **CRYPT & CHAPEL VISITS:** *Saturday 25th May*

WOODLAND TRAIL TOUR: *Sunday 9th June*

WATERLOO ANNIVERSARY EVENT: *Sunday 16th June*

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 MIs in the 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: Due to a temporary absence please direct all membership enquiries to: Carol Stevenson, email; membership@fonc.org.uk until further notice

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, Charles Newman, Keith Turpin.**

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email: practicalwork@fonc.org.uk

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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 19th April 2024

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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