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# FONC News

No 166 ~ Winter issue ~ Dec 2024 ~ Feb 2025

*Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery*



*The Scottish Martyrs monument in Nunhead Cemetery See page 23*

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## ~ INFORMATION FOR FONC MEMBERS ~

**Membership including your contact preferences:** Membership of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) costs £2, (£10 overseas if paper copy of *FONC News* is requested), renewable on the 1st April annually. 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 *FONC News*, for the purpose of reclaiming tax and to communicate other FONC matters. You can decide not to receive communications or change how we contact you at any time. Just send your request to [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto:membership@fonc.org.uk)

**FONC Membership:** Please direct all membership enquiries to the Membership Secretary, Carol Stevenson. email: [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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 notices 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 cabin from 10.00am to 4.00pm on Sundays when cemetery workdays take place and from 2.00pm to 4.00pm on tour days. If you would like to help on an occasional Sunday please contact Jane Hart on mobile phone 07764 600693 or by e-mail: [jane.c.hart@btconnect.com](mailto: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 email [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com) for the Zoom website link. Other events are announced in *FONC News* and on the FONC website [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)

**Nunhead Cemetery Staff:** The cemetery staff can be contacted by telephoning **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**

## ~ The seasons greetings to all our readers ~

**Editor:** Ron Woollacott - email: [editorfonc@hotmail.com](mailto:editorfonc@hotmail.com)

**Contributors to this issue:** Michèle Louise Burford; Ann Coley; Leslie Grout; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Cathy Mercer. *The editor and FONC Trustees do not necessarily agree with the views expressed by the contributors.*

### **Editorial:**

In this issue we have all the regular updates and news about the cemetery; Cathy Mercer writes a moving tribute to her late husband Simon who was for many years our membership secretary; Ann Coley invites us to take a winter walk in the cemetery; there is a piece about the monumental masons H Daniel and Co from 1892, and the story of a Dissenting minister, one of many buried at Nunhead. It is with much sadness that we report the death of John Collings, a founder member of FONC whose obituary will be found on page 15. To conclude on a happier note please see the announcements about the forthcoming carol concert and FONC's Christmas Social.

*RW*



## **Nunhead East Lodge:**

### **From Ruin To Revival**

*update by Jane Hart*

**I**t will be frustrating for many FONC members and cemetery visitors that there appears to be no progress in the start of the East Lodge restoration project. However, although nothing is yet visible on site, there has been a lot of work going on in the background. The tender for the work to repair the structure of the building (the shell and core tender) will be let by the end of the year with work starting on site in the new year - which unfortunately is not the best time for building work to commence.

*continued on next page*

The replacement cabin for practical volunteering activities is currently being constructed off-site and will be delivered in the new year by which time the current cabin will have been demolished (in early January) to make way for the new cabin. We hope to be able to move into the new building in early March. FONC will have to work out of a temporary freight container in between cabins.

The advertisement for the Outreach and Development Manager (ODM) - the new post being created to take forward the delivery of new activities on site - attracted a lot of interest with over 70 people applying for the post. Interviews taking place at the end of October will hopefully mean that the ODM will be in position before too long.

In late August the quarterly review meeting with the National Lottery Heritage Fund was held, where they reviewed the current status of the delivery phase of the East Lodge project and were very positive about our progress.

New activities put on by FONC, as part of the project to attract new visitors to the cemetery, have included a series of arts events in the chapel during summer and autumn. FONC also welcomed a group of Beavers from the 1st New Cross Scout group to the cemetery to both learn more about the Scouts memorial and the Commonwealth war graves - in the run up to Remembrance Sunday - and returning the following day to undertake practical tracking within the cemetery.

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## **Celebrating Art in the Chapel**

*by Jane Hart*

Throughout August and September 2024, FONC was pleased to collaborate with the Feminist Lecture Program (FLP) in hosting a series of art events in the Anglican Chapel. Five emerging artists were picked to take part in the curatorial program with each artist using their unique practices to explore the themes of feminism, community, ecology and environmentalism in their individual solo exhibitions. Each utilised the wonderful outdoor space of the chapel in very different ways with the exhibitions all responding to the exposed nature of the exhibition space. The series of exhibitions was completed with FLP founder and director Luisa-Maria MacCormack's own exhibition installation of a standing



*Standing stone circle by Luisa-Maria MacCormack Photo: Jane Hart*

stone circle supported by a series of live events throughout her exhibition.

Supporting the Nunhead Art Trail over the last weekend in September, Art Space Octagon curated 'Sitting in Silence' an exhibition which included public reading sessions and printing workshops, where excited children were involved in hands-on block printing of bags and T-shirts.

The second Art Space Octagon exhibition over a weekend in mid-October brought together a group of artists undertaking live performances, sound and art. Visitors all appreciated being able to access the beautiful Anglican chapel and seeing it being used in such an imaginative way.

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## **Nunhead Cemetery News No.56**

*by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator*

### ***'The Wicker Man' is a big hit***

The Peckham and Nunhead Free Film Festival showing of the 1970s film 'The Wicker Man' on the 7th of September drew a large audience to Nunhead Cemetery. Once again, many more people than the permitted 300 places available arrived but good naturedly accepted the disappointment when politely turned away. Although the gates were not due to be opened until 7.30 pm, enthusiasts began queuing at 6.00pm!

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Despite concerning forecasts, the weather was dry and mild all evening and a healthy donations total for the Festival organisers was collected from very satisfied filmgoers. You will have the opportunity to vote for next years' film choice at the 2025 Open Day.

### ***Frog Came A' Courtin' !***

An amphibian/reptile identification training session was held outside the FONC cabin on the 22nd of September. Delivered by the charity Froglife, fourteen FONC members and friends attended, and several passers-by stopped to hear an excellent illustrated presentation by Harry Forshaw and Rose Williams. A short identification quiz was held at the beginning of the session - suffice to say the results were much better when this was repeated at the end of the session! This was followed by a visit to the pond area to further discuss plans for the practical improvement works to be carried out on the 17th of November (*see FONC News No 165*) on which we will report further in the next issue.

### ***Dog controls still under review***

As reported in the last issue, the impact of the lapsing of the Borough-wide Public Space Protection Order, which included dog-controls at Nunhead cemetery, is still being assessed. FONC has continued to press Southwark Borough officers about its implications, particularly as it seems Councillors were unaware of the situation. A meeting with FONC has been offered and we expect this to be held sometime in November. It must be emphasised that FONC does not wish to see dogs banned from the cemetery, but that adequate controls need to be in place to respect the cemetery as a place of bereavement and as a designated Local Nature Reserve.

### ***Visitors go bats for evening walk!***

The evening bat sighting walk in the cemetery on the 5th of September attracted some 70 attendees! Yet another event, threatened by the persistent rain over the last few months, was actually blessed with dry and mild conditions, perfect for bat spotting. We perhaps foolishly promise that we always spot bats on these walks but, again, visitors were not to be disappointed. Dr Iain Boulton provided ample bat detecting devices and gave a hugely entertaining and informative introduction to British bats before heading off into the gathering dusk. Judging by the excited comments from visitors when leaving the cemetery in the dark plenty of bats were seen and heard on the night. Generous donations received were split

equally between FONC and the London Bat Group.

### ***Limesford Road walls progress***

The rebuilding of the Limesford Road walls is progressing at a rapid rate. Although we thought that the work would be split into two tranches (see *FONC News* No 165), in fact the whole length of the walls is being worked on simultaneously. Inevitably, some materials have had to be stored inside the cemetery but the contractors, Conways, have managed to keep this confined in such a way that it does not impact on visitor's enjoyment of the cemetery. This is a very substantial project and the depth and strength of the foundations for the new walls should ensure their stability for a very long time to come. We are really looking forward to the installation of the new railings towards the end of the project, due in April 2025.



*The two top images show the new retaining wall west of the gates and the new pillars before they are brick faced. The bottom two are on the east side of the gates and show how the original wall has been lowered prior to the new wall being built in front of it.*

Photos: Jeff Hart

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## **Nunhead Cemetery News No.56 continued:**

### ***Yet more successful events this autumn***

The Open House/Heritage Weekend events in the cemetery on the 14th and 15th of September went well with the cemetery tours fully subscribed and the ever-popular crypt visits much enjoyed. Visitors could also see the art exhibition in the chapel (*see Jane Hart's article*) and enjoy our excellent home-made refreshments. A much more low-key and relaxed event than the Open Day, nevertheless it attracts many new visitors and raised over £500 for FONC funds. Many thanks to all our volunteers who help to make the event a success.

The two 'Month of the Dead' tours on the 12th of October were fully booked and also helped to raise money for FONC funds. It was a busy weekend for tour guide Keith Turpin who also led the cemetery symbols tour the following day and our third ever 'Black History Month' tour the following weekend.

### ***More memorial repairs and woodland management on the way***

The next tranche of memorial repairs in the cemetery being funded by Southwark Council will, hopefully, be underway by the time you read this article. Some thirty memorials in various stages of potentially dangerous or unsightly disrepair will be tackled. In addition, it has been agreed with the Council that FONC will contribute £14,400 towards monument repairs to vaults and headstones in the East Lodge compound. This will enhance the landscaping plans for the area planned as part of the East Lodge restoration project. An initial meeting of the Nunhead Cemetery Woodland Management Forum has also been held. This group, which consists of FONC and Southwark Borough officers, will look at how best to implement the East Lodge Woodland Management Plan and aspects of the recently adopted Nunhead Cemetery Conservation Management Plan. More details in the next issue!

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## **The Perpignan Air Disaster**

*Mr Leslie Grout of Old Windsor writes:*

The article on the Perpignan air disaster in the last *FONC News* reminded me that I have seen some burials from that disaster at Brookwood. This is mentioned in John Clarke's *London Necropolis* where he gives an account of the disaster and says that five casualties are buried



at Brookwood: they came from Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, and Middlesex. Kenyon's handled the burials.

Four years later there was another disaster at Perpignan on the 3rd of June, ironically also part of a holiday arranged by Lyons Tours. The plane was a DC4 belonging to Air Ferry. All eighty-eight on board the plane were killed, twenty-two of them being buried at Brookwood. This time the weather was good, but the plane was way off course, and it was thought that the crew had been overcome by fumes from a faulty heater, but this could not be proved.

As if this was not enough an Argonaut airliner crashed at Stockport the very next day with the loss of seventy-two of the eighty-four on board. The Pope sent a message of sympathy to the Queen.

There are four mass graves from such disasters at Brookwood; Let us hope there will not be any more.

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## **Simon Mercer Remembered**

*by Cathy Mercer*

**M**any thanks for the lovely piece in the last *FONC News* about Simon. He was a lovely man, and it was good to read it and also to get inspiring wishes and cards from FONC people. Many thanks for these.

Simon was committed to making the world a more environmentally friendly place and I often wondered how he managed to fit all his work in! As well as being FONC membership secretary and doing lots of other things for FONC, he actively supported local organisations in the Dollis Hill area where we lived.

Every Sunday he would go off for a morning's trimming of trees, mowing of grass and clearing of ponds at Fryent Country Park in Wembley. He also organised Sunday project tools, drew up volunteer rotas, made teas and set up and ran the volunteers' website. On top of this, he did regular grass and butterfly surveys as part of a London-wide project and input the data for all the butterfly surveys from all London districts.

He also had an allotment, where he grew lots of raspberries, currants

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*Cathy and Simon Mercer* Photo courtesy Cathy Mercer

and blackberries. Here too he was active behind the scenes, setting up and running a website for the allotment group and doing all the calculations for the annual show, to make sure the right people won the right prizes - sadly not often me! He refused to use slug pellets and used flowers, compost and mulching to try to attract the right sort of insects.

And of course he kept our garden to high organic standards, with long grassy borders full of flowers and bees, blackberry bushes, tomatoes grown from seed, strawberries free of slug pellets, though not always slug free, and apple trees for blossom and fruit. It's proving hard work to keep it up to his high standards!

He even helped organisations he was not involved in, running the website and doing sound and lights for our local drama group which I was active in. And he ran the website for Brent U3A.

Heaven only knows how he managed all this while he was working full time, but fortunately he took early retirement at 58, which gave him time to do what he really wanted.

He was a kind, gentle, thoughtful man and I'm fortunate to have had 46 happy years with him. He is greatly missed by a lot of people, but especially by me.

(For Simon's obituary please see *FONC News* No 165)

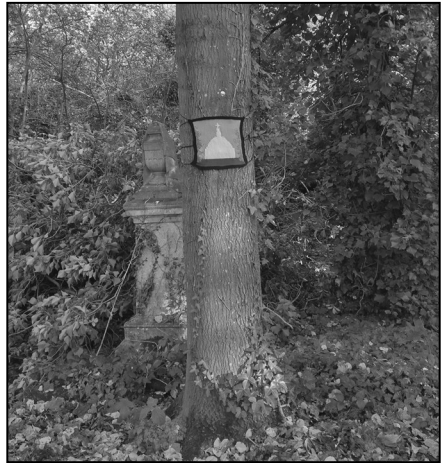
## ~ A Winter Walk ~

*by Ann Coley*

I want to tell you a story ...

Back in the Autumn of 2021 when Covid was still lurking and there was a bit of a threat of another lockdown, my best beloved suggested that I knit a 'Christmas jumper' for the tree outside our house. The tree is on the large side so the outcome was a set of nine knitted panels with a Christmas theme (baubles, Christmas trees and stars) that got wrapped around the trunk. This was appreciated by the street so ... for Christmas 2022 I made an advent calendar and put up a new item every day in random places up and down the street. This ranged from a crocheted paper-chain in one of the crab apple trees to a set of Christmas stockings sewn onto one of the tree cages and knitted pictures of a snowman, a cracker and a paper hat. None were more than about 15cm square, but all were brightly coloured.

After that I wondered what to do with these items, which I had made mostly for my own amusement but did represent hours of effort so last year they went up in Nunhead Cemetery as a winter walk.



*Winter walk exhibits in Nunhead Cemetery 2023* Photos: Ann Coley

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As those of us who love the cemetery know, there is always something to see, even on cold, gloomy December days but I also appreciate that sometimes people are just out to stretch their legs and get some fresh air. My objective for the winter walk was to give anyone taking a child, or a visitor into the cemetery through December something to look out for, and perhaps to encourage wandering off their regular routes. To make it a bit more relevant I made a couple of new items to represent something of the cemetery - so a representation of the St Paul's view, and something for the Anglican chapel and a couple of butterflies to represent our efforts to make the cemetery more butterfly friendly.

A selection of items will be going up again this year, with the plan being that all will be in place a week or so before FONC Carol singing on the 14th of December and coming down after the 1st of January 2025. I am planning a new item or two for this year, so if you saw them last year then come and have a look and see if you can spot the new ones, and if you missed them last year, well come and see how many you can spot. Once all the items are up, we will put a map in the notice boards by the gates, and also on the FONC website, showing their location.

I do hope you enjoy your winter walks.

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The following article is from  
*Peckham and Camberwell - Illustrated*, 1892, page 48

**Messrs H Daniel and Co, Monumental Masons, etc,  
opposite the Cemetery Gates, Nunhead**

Probably no name is better known in the Metropolis, or, for that matter, in any part of the country in connection with the craft of monumental masonry, than Messrs Daniel and Co, whose works form a prominent feature opposite the gates of Nunhead Cemetery.

The business was established in 1839, and for more than half a century has sustained a high reputation and secured the support of most influential connections. As proof of the extent of their business, we may say that they have erected upwards of twenty thousand memorials in the various metropolitan cemeteries alone, besides large numbers in all parts of the kingdom, while they have also made very large shipments to Africa,

America, Australia, India, China, and other parts of the world. With their long experience in the selecting and preparation of the materials suitable for monumental purposes, they may certainly claim to be thoroughly acquainted with the best beds of stone, marble and granite in all of which they keep large stocks and are in a position to guarantee perfectly durable qualities.

The firm's premises comprise a noble looking double-fronted building of three storeys, with spacious yards around it. The various workshops are equipped with the latest and most improved stone-working appliances, and a very large number of expert hands are employed, many of whom possess considerable artistic qualifications. There are roomy and well-lighted show rooms, where may be seen a large stock of beautifully designed memorials in stone, marble, and granite, ready for immediate use. Illustrated catalogues are also sent free by post, containing over a hundred special designs from which customers may select, or the firm are prepared to work out their clients' own conceptions in this direction.

A very important feature is that Messrs Daniel and Co undertake at their own expense to keep in permanent good order all memorials erected by them. They also undertake and receive orders on behalf of the London Cemetery Company [owners of the Nunhead and Highgate cemeteries] for turfing graves and maintaining them with flowers and shrubs, according to season, all year round. Messrs Daniel and Co publish free of charge, a ground plan of Nunhead Cemetery so arranged that any particular grave may be readily found by reference to the guide. The business is in every way admirably managed, and there can be no doubt that it's conspicuous success will be long sustained.

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## Henry Daniel (1805-1867)

Henry Daniel was the first monumental mason to set up his stone works near Nunhead Cemetery in about 1839/40. He built a magnificent house in the Gothic style, directly opposite the main cemetery gates and called it Church House. He founded a very successful and thriving monumental masonry business as recorded in the above article, although he had been dead for 25 years when that article was written.

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*The Daniel monument is the one with the figure in the centre of the group*

FONC postcard 1992. Photo by D & C Hurford

The firm had another stone works next to Highgate Cemetery. Henry Daniel was laid to rest in the family vault at Nunhead Cemetery.

The company, based at Nunhead, continued to be known as H Daniel and Co, and remained in business until the abandonment and closure of Nunhead Cemetery by its then owners, United Cemeteries Ltd, in the spring of 1969, but by then the firm had changed hands and no longer had any connection with the Daniel family.

The Daniel monument may be found at the top of the west side of the Main Avenue almost opposite the Anglican chapel. It was fully restored in 2000 as one of 55 principal monuments restored as part of the work carried out following a £1.25 million award from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The monument is listed Grade II and is described as follows: Portland stone funerary monument. A heavily swathed vestal figure stands upon a garlanded base with cherubs heads set at the corners. This collection of motifs is in turn supported by a plinth with inverted torches at the angles. At the base of the plinth is a serpent entwined round an anchor. The vault plot is delineated with Grecian scrolled borders and honeysuckle ornament.

*RW*

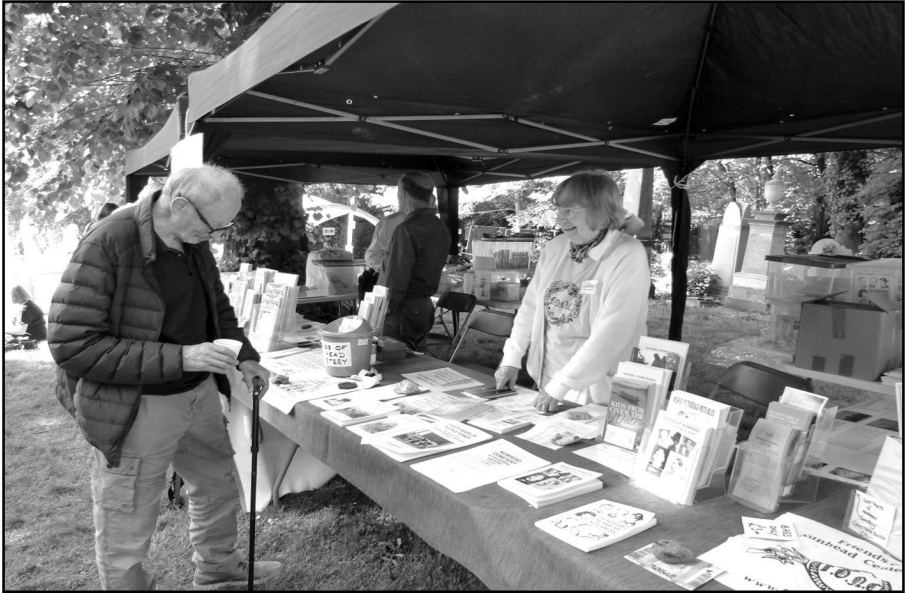


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## OBITUARY



**Dr JOHN COLLINGS PhD, MA, DipArch (1936-2024)**  
**FONC Member No 0017**



*John Collings speaking with Gwyneth Stokes at FONC Open Day 2018*  
Photo: Ron Woollacott

**J**ohn Collings of Commercial Way, Peckham was a founder member of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery. An enthusiastic volunteer, he was elected to the committee at the very first AGM held on the 9th of May 1983. When in 1984 the committee voted to carry out voluntary workdays, John was appointed Director of Voluntary Work (later changed to Voluntary Work Co-ordinator), and his task was to organise volunteers who would turn up at the cemetery on workdays to take on various jobs. A task which he ably carried out until 2002, when Tim Stevenson took over the responsibility.

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Also in 1984, John's brief for his 3rd year architectural course at South Bank Polytechnic was to design a crematorium at a cemetery. He, of course, chose Nunhead. The design of which was featured in the *FONC Newsletter* No 10, Autumn 1984.

He was the author of 'The Buildings of Nunhead Cemetery - Past and Present' as featured in *Nunhead Cemetery - An Illustrated Guide* which was first published by FONC in 1988, revised and reprinted in 1995, but has long since been out of print.

John was particularly keen to see the ruined East Lodge restored, a project for which he studied in depth and drew up elaborate plans on behalf of FONC, for its possible future restoration. He also drew up a grid plan identifying the graves within the enclosure behind the ruined lodge.

He attended a two-year part-time course at East London University, and in 1999 he gained an MA in Art and Architecture (with a distinction for his written dissertation). His final project was based on Nunhead Cemetery for which he constructed a handsome 1:50 scale model, (still in FONC's possession) of the entrance to Nunhead Cemetery, which included the gate piers and two gate lodges. In 2012 he gained his PhD.

John had a number of health issues. In 2016 he wrote to the then chairman (Ron Woollacott) as follows: 'I haven't attended any voluntary workdays for a while as I don't have the energy anymore to do physical work and find the supervising role too long a day. I also dropped out of the East Lodge meetings with Southwark Council as I wasn't contributing much to the debate, and also have hearing problems. My deafness was the reason that I retired from the committee, also having to cycle home afterwards late at night on very cold evenings [John used to cycle everywhere, but a knee operation in 2011 often prevented him from doing so as it could be very painful.] I am still on the Publications and Enquiry Desk roster for tour days, although I avoid December, January & February tours because of the cold weather.'

In 2018 he wrote to say that since completing his PhD he had planned to attempt to produce a book from his thesis, which dealt with historic murals painted in Greater Los Angeles between the years 1900 to 1950, relating them to local and national politics at that time, which included the Great Depression. There were many Marxist political murals painted and several in Los Angeles and San Francisco still remain in place. He did a lot of archival research in libraries at the University of California in



Los Angeles and at UC Santa Barbara. Both universities have a copy of his thesis. He added: 'Maybe I should make a start before I get too old; it may keep my brain active as well I think.' Sadly, he never got around to starting the book project.

In February 2019 he wrote: 'It's good news to know that Southwark Council is at last persuaded to fund the restoration of the East Lodge. It must be well over forty years since I first photographed and drew up a set of plans of the building. Back then, all I could see of the Lodge through the railings that surround the building, was the top of the chimney above the dense mass of trees and bushes within the fence surrounding the building. To enable me to gain the first sight of the Lodge I had to climb the fence, carrying a measuring tape, notebook and my camera, it was only then that I saw that the roof was completely missing.'

John, a former Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, was an amiable and modest gentleman, he sadly passed away on Friday the 9th of August 2024. He had been in a care home near to one of his nieces for the last four months and had been living with dementia for a few years. He died in Eastbourne Hospital, a month short of his 88th birthday. Apparently, until entering the care home, John was still living at his home in Peckham.

A celebration of his life was held at the Partridge Public House in Bromley on the 2nd of October 2024, and was attended by six members of FONC who shared photographs and memories of John.

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## **FONC's Christmas Social**

**will be held at El Vermut wine bar  
28 Nunhead Green, London SE15 on**

**\*\*\* Tuesday 10th December 2024 from 7.00pm \*\*\***

***Refreshments will be provided but alcoholic drinks  
are on a buy-your-own basis***

**There will be no business meeting, but our ever-popular eclectic  
Christmas raffle will run (some say endlessly!)**

**Friends and family are welcome, so please do come and join us to meet  
other members and fellow volunteers, as well as the Trustees**

## **Nunhead Cemetery Christmas Carol Concert** **is now an Annual Event** *by Jeff Hart*

Such was the success of last December's carol concert in the Anglican chapel that popular demand has now made the event a fixture in FONC's calendar. This year, the event will be held on Saturday the 14th of December, so please do come and join us! Refreshments will be available from 3.00pm and the singing will start at 4.00pm, finishing about 5.00pm.

The unexpectedly large turn-out has taught us some valuable lessons which we aim to put into practice this year. Thanks to a grant from Southwark's Cultural Celebrations Fund, FONC has invested in a new public address system which will mean that everyone will be able to clearly hear the backing music to sing to and the announcements of the next carol. We will also be adding to the free refreshments by providing hot chocolate for the children as well as the non-alcoholic mulled wine (no-one seemed to notice the lack of alcohol last year!). Although the chapel will be open to visitors, the biggest change will be to hold the concert in front of the chapel to avoid potentially dangerous over-crowding.

Unfortunately, we have yet to find an available local choir to help provide a little expertise to the singing - but if there is one out there who could help us out, please contact the FONC Co-ordinator as soon as possible.

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## **A Big Thank You to all FONC Volunteers and Members!** *by Jeff Hart*

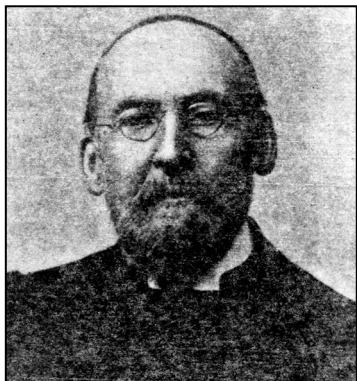
Last year we tried to change the nature of the usual December FONC social to make it both a thank you and a celebration of all our members and volunteers who contribute so much to making FONC a welcoming and successful charity. As a result, we had a bigger turn-out and we want to build on that success. This year we will be holding the FONC social at El Vermut wine bar, located at 28 Nunhead Green, SE15 3QF, on Tuesday the 10th of December from 7.00pm. We will be providing refreshments (thank you to our regular bakers but do bring something along if you are able!) but alcoholic drinks are on a buy-your-own basis. There will be no business meeting, but our ever-popular eclectic Christmas raffle will run (some say endlessly!). Friends and family are also welcome. Do please join us to meet other members and fellow volunteers, as well as the Trustees. *See also page 17.*

## Notable Nonconformist Ministers buried at Nunhead (2)

**Revd Dr FREDERICK ATKINS BILLING, DD, LL.D, FRSL,  
FRHS, FGS, AKC (1829-1910) *Congregational Minister***

*by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford*

**F**rederick Atkins Billing was born in 1829 at East Haddon in Northants and received his early education at Guilsboro' College in North-



ants, under the presidency of Dr Bateman. He subsequently matriculated at King's College, London, taking prizes in numerous subjects. On gaining the medal for the highest aggregate number of marks, he received the Diploma Associate of King's College. A most diligent student he was rewarded by the honours conferred upon him by various societies.

His intended vocation was to become an Anglican minister, but having married at the Strand in 1847, Mary Davies, the daughter of the Revd W Davies, Congregational minister of Llandoverly, South Wales, he became very much interested in Sunday schools and the work of the Congregational Church.

The couple's first child Rosa was born at Holborn in 1848. In the 1851 census the family's address was King Street, Greenwich and Billing was employed as a salesman at a carpet warehouse. Their second child, Amelia, was born about 1853. Tragedy struck the family in 1859 when 10-year-old Rosa died. She was laid to rest at Nunhead Cemetery.

In the 1861 census, Billing was employed as an upholsterer's foreman and was living with his wife Mary and their daughter Amelia, aged eight, and their third and last child, Mary Frederica, aged one, at 1 Deptford Bridge, Greenwich. In the 1871 census, Billing, still employed as an upholsterer's foreman, was residing at Deptford Bridge with his two daughters, but his wife was absent.

Frederick Billing's ambition for many years was to be an Independent minister. In 1872, at the age of 42, his wish was granted when he under-

*continued on next page*

took the supervision of the almost extinct Commercial Dock Chapel in Lower Road, Rotherhithe. Having laboured at the little church for several months, and with such success, he remained as honorary pastor. Within a year the congregation had increased to such an extent that a much larger building was required. The old building was sold, and a former Baptist chapel in Rotherhithe Lower Road was acquired, which opened as Southwark Park Congregational Church in January 1874. Dr Billing was appointed pastor and ministered there for over 30 years without stipend or payment of any kind. In 1883, at his own expense, the chapel was enlarged, and a new school building was erected on a vacant site adjoining the chapel.

It is not known when Mary, Dr Billing's first wife passed away. In 1892, Dr Billing married secondly, Harriett Jacob, the 42-year-old daughter of Benjamin Jacob, barge owner, of Deptford Bridge. Harriett's brother Benjamin was destined to become the first mayor of the Borough of Deptford. Harriett died on the 3rd of October 1906, aged 56.

The Revd Dr Frederick Atkins Billing was a Fellow of several learned societies, including the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Society of Literature, and an Associate of the Philosophical Society. He received the degree of LL.D (Doctor of Laws) from Maryville University, St Louis, USA.

Poor health compelled him to retire from the ministry in 1906, and he died at his residence, 7 St Donatt's Road, New Cross, London,



*The Billing monument comprises a cross on a three-stepped base and landing over a vault*

Photo: Ron Woollacott

on the 7th of June 1910, aged 79. He was laid to rest in the family vault at Nunhead Cemetery on Dissenters' Road. His wealth at death was £4,953, worth around £630,000 in today's money.

According to his obituary published in a local paper, Dr Billing was 'a true gentleman, a scholar and a thinker,' and despite his sermons being marked by deep thought, he never proved to be a popular preacher, but, because he was not dependent on the church for a salary, he was able to continue his ministrations to those who appreciated them.

*Large cross and monument over vault. Grave 26797 Square 145 (unconsecrated).*

*Sources:* Monumental inscription; Burial records; Census returns, 1851-1881, 1901; *Congregational Yearbook*, 1911, p.161; Edward E Cleal, *The Story of Congregationalism in Surrey*, 1908, pp.127-8; *Southwark and Bermondsey Recorder*, 17th June 1910; Ron Woollacott, *Nunhead Notables*, 1984, revised edition 2002, p.23.

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## **FONC's Cemetery Tour Programme for 2025**

**All tours start promptly on Sunday at 2.00 pm  
(except Open Day and Heritage Open Day or as indicated below)**

January 19th - Woodland Trail tour

January 26th - General tour

February 16th - Music Hall tour

February 23rd - General tour

March 9th - International Women's Day tour

March Saturday, 15th at 2.15 pm, 3.00 pm and 3.45 pm - Crypt and chapel visits

March 16th - Cemetery Symbols tour

March Thursday, 20th at 6.10 pm - Bat sighting walk

March 30th - General tour

April Saturday, 5th at 6.00 am - Spring bird watch

April 13th - Woodland Trail tour

April 27th - General tour

May 11th - Second World War tour

May Saturday, 17th between 11.00 am and 5.00 pm -Annual Open Day: general tours; crypt/chapel visits

*continued on next page*

### ***2025 Tour Programme continued***

May Saturday, 24th at 2.15 pm 3.00 pm and 3.45 pm - Crypt, chapel visits  
May 25th - General tour  
June 8th - Cemetery symbols tour  
June 15th - Waterloo anniversary event  
June 29th - General tour  
July 20th - Woodland Trail tour  
July 20th at 2.15 pm, 3.00 pm and 3.45 pm - Crypt and chapel visits  
July 27th - General tour  
August 10th - Cemetery symbols tour  
August 24th - Music Hall tour  
August 31st - General tour  
September, Thursday, 4th at 7.30 pm - Bat sighting walk  
September, Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th from 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm on both days - Open House and Heritage Open Days: general tours, crypt, chapel visits  
September 21st - Woodland Trail tour  
September 28th - General tour  
***October Saturday, 11th (tbc) Two Month of the Dead tours (pre-bookings only)***  
October 12th - Cemetery symbols tour  
October 19th - Black History Month tour  
October 26th - General tour  
November 9th - First World War walk  
November 30th - General tour  
December 14th - Military Connections tour  
December 28th - General tour

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### **~~~ DIARY DATES ~~~**

#### **GENERAL GUIDED TOURS OF THE CEMETERY**

***These take place on the last Sunday in every month starting at 2.00pm.*** We meet near the flint circle just inside the cemetery's main gates in Linden Grove, Nunhead, London SE15 3LP. Tours take between one and a half to two hours. The Publications and Enquiries Desk will be present, weather and volunteers permitting.

**Sunday afternoon 8th December 2024 at 2.00 pm Woodland Trail tour.** Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Tuesday evening 10th December 2024 from 7.00 pm FONC's Christmas Social** at El Vermut wine bar, 28 Nunhead Green, SE15 3QF. *See pages 17 and 18.*

**Saturday afternoon 14th December 2024 Christmas Carols at the chapel at Nunhead Cemetery.** Please do come and join us! Refreshments will be available from 3.00 pm and the singing will start at 4.00 pm finishing about 5.00 pm. *See page 18.*

**Sunday afternoon 19th January 2025 Woodland Trail tour at 2.00 pm.** Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Sunday afternoon 16th February 2025 Music Hall tour at 2.00 pm.** Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

### **PRACTICAL WORKDAYS IN THE CEMETERY**

*These take place on the first Sunday in the month from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm.* 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, MI Co-ordinator at [foncinscriptions@gmail.com](mailto:foncinscriptions@gmail.com) or by mobile phone 07799 971597. *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](http://www.fonc.org.uk) and notice boards in Nunhead Cemetery.*

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**Cover photograph.** The Scottish Martyrs Monument erected 1851, granite, 10 metres high, listed grade II, commemorates five brave men who advocated universal suffrage and were tried in Scotland for sedition, found guilty and transported to Australia. Cenotaph only, they are not buried at Nunhead. See the late Wally Macfarlane's booklet *The Scottish Martyrs*, a FONC publication now re-printed and available from the publications and information desk when open or by post £1.50 plus £1.50 p&p. Members £1.25 + £1.50 p&p. [www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)

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

or email: [editorfonc@hotmail.com](mailto:editorfonc@hotmail.com)

*The deadline for letters and articles for the next issue is 21st January 2025*

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## Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC)



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

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

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

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

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

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

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