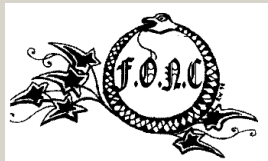


ISSN 1478-0631



FONC News

No 167 ~ Spring issue ~ March ~ May 2025

Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery



Recently restored memorials at the top of The Slope. *Photo: Jeff Hart* (see pages 12 -16)

INSIDE

Members Information *p.2*

East Lodge update *p.3*

Nunhead Cemetery News
No 57 *p.4*

Nunhead Cemetery Carol
Concert 2024 *p.8*

Revitalising the pond life
in Nunhead Cemetery *p.9*

Book Review *p.11*

More monument repairs
enhance the cemetery *p.12*

Remarkable Women No 9
Mrs Valentine Roberts
p.16

Open Day 2025:
Appeal for assistance *p.19*

Trip to Willesden Old and
New Cemeteries *p.19*

Obituary:
Malcolm Collins *p.20*

Subscription reminder *p.21*

New book proposed on the
architect Thomas Downes
Wilmot Dearn *p.22*

My Family at Rest in
Nunhead Cemetery *p.23*

Diary Dates *p.26*

FONC Trustees and
contacts *back page*

~ INFORMATION FOR FONC MEMBERS ~

Membership including your contact preferences: Membership of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) costs £2 UK (£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

FONC Membership: Please direct all membership enquiries to the Membership Secretary, Carol Stevenson. email: membership@fonc.org.uk

Further information about FONC and Nunhead Cemetery can be found on our excellent website managed by Simon Quill at www.fonc.org.uk

Cemetery Opening Times: 1st April to 30th September, 8.30am - 7.00pm; 1st October to 31st October, 8.30am - 5.00pm; 1st November to 28th February, 8.30am - 4.00pm; 1st March to 31st March, 8.30am - 5.00pm. *Times are subject to change.* See 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

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 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 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**

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

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

Editorial:

At the time of writing it is a cold, damp, and miserable day in late January. The journal takes a few weeks to prepare and by mid-February it should be ready for our printer. With the help of our volunteers, and if Royal Mail gets its act together, your copy should be posted through your letter box during the first week in March. Those of you who opt for a pdf copy by email should receive it somewhat earlier. Sadly, Malcom Collins, another former Trustee and longtime volunteer, passed away at the end of last year; his obituary is on page 20. In addition to the usual updates and latest news about the cemetery, there is much to read in this issue, and we trust that you will find something of interest.

RW



Nunhead's East Lodge: From Ruin To Revival

update by Jane Hart



Early in the new year, Southwark Council gave approval to let the tender for the initial part of the restoration work on the East Lodge itself - the shell and core repair of the building - so in the next few weeks we can expect to see work commencing on-site. This phase of the work is proposed to take at least a year which will then be followed by the fit-out stage so, although we are all so enthusiastic to see the East Lodge up and running as a community space with a café, realistically this will not happen for more than a couple of years.

However, there will be some tangible changes onsite with the demolition of the existing dilapidated FONC cabin due to take place in March,

continued on next page

with the delivery of the replacement cabin anticipated soon after. This will leave FONC 'homeless' for up to two months, but FONC will de-camp to a new freight container (to be positioned on the site of the existing rusted container) while the demolition and installation work proceeds. Although not ideal as a base, this will at least enable FONC to continue to have a presence on site from which we hope to continue to deliver our practical work sessions, monument inscription recording days and publications sales desk.

Following the interviews for the Outreach and Development Manager (ODM) an appointment has been made, and we look forward to welcoming the ODM to the cemetery in mid-February. Although FONC has run some new activities, such as the work with Froglife in regenerating the cemetery pond in November, the ODM is tasked with developing and delivering a wide range of new activities on site, aimed at attracting new visitors and volunteers to the cemetery.

The quarterly meeting with the National Lottery Heritage Fund was held in November where, although noting that some delays in the project timeline had occurred, they were very pleased with progress for a project of this complexity. The cemetery and FONC has also been visited by English Heritage, the Historic London Buildings Trust and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Trust to learn from our experiences with the project.

As part of FONC's commitment in our application to the Heritage Fund to improve the diversity of our Trustees, we are pleased to welcome Jamie Warner to the Trustee Board. Jamie is Head of Financial Operations at Goldsmiths, University of London and has previously worked in financial management for a number of not-for-profit organisations. He will help to broaden the skill set and age profile of the Trustee Board.

Nunhead Cemetery News No. 57

by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator



Annual services greatly appreciated

The All-Souls Service held in the ruined chapel on the 3rd of November was again led by Father Dele Ogunyemi and included candle lighting by those attending in memory of the departed. The service was graced by the singing of Nunhead's Lighthouse Cathedral choir, which attracted to

the chapel a number of casual visitors to the cemetery. Thanks to Ish Lennox for organising. The following week we held our annual Act of Remembrance, which was well-attended. Beginning at the Limesford Road war memorial, proceeding to the civilian war dead plaque and each of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission plots and culminating at the Anglican chapel, wreaths were placed at each stop and included wooden remembrances representing all faiths and those of none. A wreath was also laid on behalf of Southwark Council by local ward councillor, Cllr Reggie Popoola.

Management plans begin to make progress

The Nunhead Cemetery Woodland Management Forum, constituted towards the end of last year, has held a site meeting to agree work to be carried out on site by the end of this financial year. This includes bramble and scrub clearance to enhance butterfly conservation areas and tree works to maintain the protected view from the West Hill to St Paul's Cathedral. The group will be meeting again to decide on the work schedule for 2025/26 and allocate tasks to the various participants including, of course, FONC. We are also promised that a meeting will be held soon to discuss implementation of the Nunhead Cemetery Conservation Management Plan, which was adopted in November 2023. In FONC's view that is long overdue. Whilst some elements, such as woodland management and monument repairs are being taken forward, a strategic body to coordinate all cemetery works and identify sources of funding and resources is urgently needed.

Christmas Social fun

The FONC social at El Vermut wine bar on the 10th of December was our best attended yet and a great success, with FONC members and volunteers from all aspects of FONC's work meeting and mixing, sometimes for the first time. With excellent refreshments organised by Ann Coley, our Treasurer, and great hospitality from El Vermut staff, the enjoyment went on well into the evening. The Christmas raffle, with many desirable prizes donated by members, helped offset the costs of refreshments and was the usual entertaining diversion, with everyone a winner!

continued on next page

Dog controls under further review

As reported previously, the impact of the lapsing of the Borough-wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), which included dog-controls at Nunhead Cemetery, continues. FONC has continued to press Borough officers about its implications, particularly as it seems Councillors were unaware of the situation. A meeting was held in November with FONC to set out our concerns about the impact dogs off leads throughout the cemetery, was having both on the cemetery habitat and on other visitors. With the support of our local Councillors, it was agreed that officers would explore a range of options on future approaches towards managing dog-walkers and their pets when visiting Nunhead Cemetery.

The lack of the PSPO also has implications for Southwark's two other cemeteries, and these would form part of the consideration. 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, as a fragile heritage site and as a designated Local Nature Reserve. On the 21st of January, officers gave a presentation to representatives of the FONC Trustees outlining their preliminary analysis of issues and solutions and seeking our initial response. It did look as if there are potential ways forward that would be fair to all parties, and this would be discussed by the FONC Board of Trustees before responding formally. We are hopeful that this issue can be resolved during the early part of 2025.

National Federation re-constituted

The National Federation of Cemetery Friends, of which FONC was a founder member, has now been reconstituted as a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by guarantee and will operate as such from the 1st of January 2025. The principal reason for the change was to be able to limit the liability of individual officers acting on behalf of the Federation. As a member organisation that does not directly serve the general public, it could not register as a simple charity. The Federation's constitution will be replaced by a new document called the 'Articles of Association', which controls the way in which the company operates. The existing committee of the Federation will become the directors of the CIC, with the same roles. Although Friends' groups can be-

come Group Members, FONC was concerned about how this might limit individual groups' influence on the running of the Federation. We were also very unhappy about the way the change was presented and explained at last year's AGM. FONC Trustees will consider whether to continue membership of the Federation when subscriptions (£20) are requested before April. If membership is continued, we will be represented at the June AGM of the Federation to be held at UK City of Culture Bradford's Undercliffe Cemetery.

Nunhead Cemetery in the wider context

Whilst FONC's remit extends to conserving and enhancing the heritage, ecology and burial provision of Nunhead Cemetery, it is necessary to consider this in regard to how the much wider context might impinge on our local concerns. To this end, FONC Trustees have submitted extensive comments to the Law Commission's consultation on behalf of the Ministry of Justice on burial law. Although principally looking at the reform of burial and cremation legislation and practices, the consultation also sought views on future cemetery closures, memorial removal, record keeping and maintenance by owners of burial grounds. As such, changes of existing practice could impact on Nunhead Cemetery both for the good and for the worse. After studying the 366-page consultation document, we answered over 60 questions, a number with subsidiary points to comment on. We did not comment on others relating to such as the siting of crematoria.

Limesford Road wall railings arrive!

Just as *FONC News* is being prepared for the printers, the first set of new railings, cast to replicate those on the Linden Grove boundary, are being installed! This absolutely transforms the visual impact of the newly constructed boundary walls. A fuller report, with photographs, of the work due for completion by the end of April will appear in the next issue of *FONC News*.



Photo: Pete Trotman

Christmas Carol Concert

by Jane Hart

FONC held our second annual carol concert on the cold late afternoon of Saturday the 14th of December. Having learned from experience the previous year, the concert was held outside the floodlit Anglican chapel, which was open to visit before and after the concert, thus providing safe space for the hundreds of people who attended. An ad-hoc Nunhead Cemetery choir (made up of volunteers who had kindly volunteered to lead the audience in a group sing-along) sang from the chapel steps. Prior to the start of the singing, FONC offered attendees free festive refreshments - homemade mince pies, non-alcoholic mulled wine and hot chocolate, together with other refreshments donated by volunteers - which were well received.

Utilising the recently acquired FONC PA system enabled all attending to hear the backing music, whilst the words for the carols were made available from QR codes posted around the chapel. Songs, including the



Carol Concert and floodlit chapel. *Photo: Jane Hart*

traditional carols such as *O Come All Ye Faithful* and *Silent Night*, were finished off with rousing renditions of *Jingle Bells* and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. From the comments received, everyone enjoyed the event and again we have learned some valuable lessons

which we will take forward to our carol concert this December. Thank you particularly to the Nunhead Cemetery choir members for helping lead the singing and to everyone who made the effort to come out and join us in enjoying some Christmas cheer.

Revitalising Nunhead's Pond Life with Froglife

by Carol Stevenson

It is now thirty-two years since FONC volunteers first dug the pond, located towards the top of the West Hill at Nunhead Cemetery. Since then, it has become badly overgrown with flag iris and brambles, so when we contacted Froglife about reviving it with FONC as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project they are running, they said yes!

On the 17th of November twelve FONC volunteers and fifteen Froglife volunteers gathered and inspected the pond, which was thankfully dry. It was estimated that the work would take two days, with a second day scheduled for Spring. So armed with spades, pickaxes and secateurs, we got to work. While most people dug and pulled up the iris, brambles and young trees, another team cleared brambles and fallen branches from the area below the pond, to accommodate the dug-out mud. Soon this formed a small platform, and the plants made a barrier along the side. Originally, Froglife thought this would take all day, but such was the enthusiasm of all the workers that we had completed it by lunch. We had left Jeff Hart guarding the FONC cabin but once he saw what we had done, he got a dangerous gleam in his eye which meant a project proposal was coming!

After lunch thirty years' worth of mud and leaves were dug out of the bottom of the pond, greatly increasing the platform. At the same time some volunteers converted the extracted branches into dead hedging along the edge of the wildlife area above the pond, protecting it from wear and tear from loose dogs. Finally, down to pure London Clay, we were all invited to jump up and down to make sure the surface was properly compacted ('puddling' is the technical term), ready to hold water in the enlarged pond. We were joined by a couple of passing youngsters who clearly wanted to join in the fun.

With the whole project completed within one day, we gathered our tools and returned to the cabin for a well-earned cup of tea. However, by this time Jeff greeted us with further plans for the newly improved pond.

continued on next page



Photographs by Carol Stevenson

A number of FONC volunteers and the three Froglife organisers trekked back up the hill to hear Jeff's suggestion that we could further enhance the pond and wetland area funded by a grant application to Southwark Council's Biodiversity Fund scheme, open for applications by the 23rd of November! In addition to further enlarging the pond itself; a boardwalk around two-thirds of the pond, with a jetty towards its centre; new fencing around the area; selective removal of

small saplings; introducing reptile and amphibian friendly 'nests'; it would also be possible to transform the new mud platform and level an area beyond it to provide a site for an outdoor classroom, as envisaged in the ongoing East Lodge National Lottery Heritage Fund project. Jeff

made this all sound reasonably achievable, and all agreed that we should put the idea to the forthcoming Board of Trustees meeting. With helpful suggestions, this was approved and with some very quick drafting for the extensive application form, a draft was shown to South-



Pond in January 2025 gradually starting to fill with rain water. Photo: Jeff Hart

wark's Ecology Officer who was enthusiastic and suggested further improvements, including using professionals rather than volunteers to lay the proposed boardwalk - all of which has led to an application for some £45,000! A decision on the application is expected at the end of March 2025.

Thank you to Froglife for their magnificent effort. You can find out more about their work at www.froglife.org

Book Review by Cathy Mercer
***A Tomb with a View – the Stories and Glories of
Graveyards by Peter Ross***

I always like books that are recommended to me and this book came highly praised by a friend with no connection to cemeteries or cemetery groups, who described it as a 'riveting read'. I agree with her!

This book explores cemeteries and their residents across the British Isles, with especially good takes on a number of cemeteries in Scotland and Ireland. It also explores a wide range of cemetery aspects, from interesting residents to charismatic cemetery guides, with particularly good takes on the 'queerly departed', looking at Kensal Green and Brompton

continued on next page

Cemeteries. The chapter on cemeteries and funerals in Northern Ireland is deeply moving, exploring a number of cemeteries and a touching analysis of the funeral of journalist Lyra McKee who was shot dead in 2019.

The story of Phoebe Hessel, 1713-1821, the Stepney Amazon, makes for an especially good read - she followed her fiancé into the army disguised as a man and made it to the grand old age of 108, working as a fish seller in Brighton and honoured with a generous pension by King George IV.

It also explores more modern transformations of burial and death, examining 'green' undertakers and the transformation of shabby and neglected Victorian cemeteries with the case of Arnos Vale in Bristol, now a popular wedding venue.

The book is well written by a prize-winning journalist with an obvious love for cemeteries. It also has some good illustrations. I learned a lot and enjoyed reading this 'riveting read'.

Headline Publishing 2021 - paperback - 368 pages - ISBN: 9781472267788

More monument repairs enhance Nunhead Cemetery!

*Jeff Hart reports on the latest monument
reinstatements in the cemetery*

We are delighted to report that the further tranche of memorial repairs in the cemetery being funded by Southwark Council, which began in early October 2024, was completed just before Christmas. This has made a tremendous visual impact on four different parts of the cemetery previously in a dilapidated and potentially dangerous condition. Even better, in a few months' time, visitors to the cemetery will hardly be aware that such complex work has been carried out and that these memorials were not visible before. FONC is very grateful for Southwark Council's continued commitment to this work.

The work on two vaults to the immediate west of the front of the Anglican chapel may look unusual. These plots lost their memorials during the hiatus between the cemetery closing in 1969 and Southwark taking over in 1975. All that was visible until now were two large sunken areas, rapidly developing gaping holes to the vaults below. Without any record



Before and after: Two damaged vaults with gaping holes on the west side of the chapel now marked with low brick kerbing and filled with gravel. *Photos: Jeff Hart*

of what was once there and no identifiable masonry to reclaim, it was decided to mark the perimeter of the plots with low brick kerbing, infilled with gravel. This at least restores some dignity to these plots and makes them respectable, as well as making the area safe.



Restored monuments at the southern end of the West Crescent - note the winter heliotrope. *Photo: Jeff Hart*

The second work area continues the monument repairs at the southern end of the West Crescent which were carried out at the end of 2023. Some nine memorials in various stages of collapse, some disappearing into the surrounding mud or with gaping holes as the supporting brick vaults had collapsed, have been reinstated.

This includes a fine obelisk memorial with a, sadly, now almost indecipherable inscription. Again, this work adds to the visual impact of the historic core of the cemetery near to the chapel. As the new growing season goes on this year, the surrounding muddy area will be softened by regenerating winter heli-

continued on next page

otrope. This flowers with lovely pinkish white flowers that give off the strong odour of almonds. Further down the path, the imposing red granite memorial to John Beach has also been re-built.

To the east of the chapel, at the junction of The Slope and the East Crescent, some spectacular work has been completed. Several years ago, four vaults were reinstated, including that of Rueben Henry Williams, whose memorial tells us that he 'was thrown from a dog-cart and killed'! From here, that line of memorials going around the corner of The Slope path have now been raised up almost to their formal glory. This includes the spectacular Joyce/Bond memorial (see the photo on

the front cover). In order to carry out the extensive work to the vaults below, several sycamores had to be removed, but a discreet screen of smaller trees in front of the memorials have been retained to soften the view of this area.

An area of the cemetery where the memorials have suffered extensively at the hands of nature and falling trees over the years is at the northern end of the East Crescent, behind our one remaining catacomb. Here, a line of eleven memorials and headstones at the path edge have been re-erected to transform the path entrance. Whilst looking rather muddy after the extensive work needed, this area, too, will mellow and be tidied by FONC volunteers on our practical work days. Finally, the rather incongruous figure at the base of the massive Proom column on the Main Avenue has been moved to a new base over an adjacent vacant plot. Controversy still rages as to whether the figure was an original part of the memorial or was a later informal addition when health and safety works were being undertaken in 1975/6.



Memorial to John Beach over brick grave.

Photo: Jeff Hart



Restored memorials towards the top end of the East Crescent. The cantilevered ledger on the left marks the grave of Parmenas Martin Burgess, hosier, of Peckham and Cheapside, London. *Photo: Jeff Hart*

As reported previously, FONC has contributed £14,400 this financial year towards monument repairs to vaults and headstones agreed with Southwark Council within the East Lodge compound. This will make safe and enhance the landscaping plans for the area planned as part of the East Lodge restoration project. The work to two completely collapsed vaults is planned to be carried out at the end of January. To give FONC members some idea of the costs of such work, the estimate for just these two vaults is £19,400! This reflects the complexity of carefully removing the memorials, removing tree-stumps, rebuilding and filling the vaults below, then introducing a concrete pad on which to safely re-erect the memorials as close to the original as possible. This time-consuming task requires heavy lifting equipment and specialist masonry skills - none of which is cheap! We hope to see another nine memorials in this area restored in the next tranche of repairs expected later in 2025.

It is not so much the importance or interest of those interred beneath the memorials that are being reinstated but the visual amenity, and safety to visitors, that has guided our choice of memorials to work on. In future years, we hope to be able to widen these criteria and transform further parts of the cemetery.

continued on next page



Memorials at the north end of the East Crescent nearing completion. The Biggs (far left) and Norton headstones can be seen with the splendid memorial to Sarah Elizabeth Horten and her husband Joseph William. *Photo: Jeff Hart*

Remarkable Women buried at Nunhead Cemetery No 9
by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford

Mrs Valentine Roberts *aka* Sara Lacy (c.1822-1881)
Actress, Soprano, Poet and Lyricist

Mrs Roberts was born Sarah Jane Liddon at Lambeth, Surrey in about 1822, the daughter of Samuel Liddon (d.1833), an accoutrement maker. It is not known when Sarah first ‘trod the boards’ but by 1840 she was playing a principal part at Covent Garden Theatre in ‘The Vespas of Palermo’ billed as Miss Lacy. In October 1844, at Bradford in Yorkshire, she played Mary Cobb in ‘King Charles the Second’ billed as Miss Sara Lacy of the London Theatres.

Whilst in Bradford, at St Peter’s Church on the 23rd of December 1844, she married Valentine Roberts, the son of William Walpole Rob-

erts and his wife Sarah *née* Presbury, a former child actress. It is more than likely that she first met her husband on the stage as he was a vocalist and actor. The couple had four children together between 1846 and 1855, Leonora Blanche, Amie Nina, Vincent Raby, and Myra Eugenie Rosalind (known as Rosie). All three daughters followed in their parents' footsteps and became entertainers.

The Actress and Singer

Using the stage name of Sara Lacy, from 1844 to 1849, Mrs Roberts performed at the Grecian Theatre in the City Road, London, playing *soubrette* (a coquettish female) and other character parts.

At the New Harmonic Concert Room in Glasgow in January 1851, Sara Lacy was billed as from the Theatre Royal, Manchester, and her husband, Valentine Roberts, as from the Royal Gardens at Vauxhall. They were the principal singers on that occasion.

In August 1856, at the Royal Portobello Gardens in Dublin, when Henry Smith, pianist and vocalist, took his benefit and farewell, he was supported by 'Miss Sara Lacy, the celebrated comic actress' and the Roberts' eldest daughter, 'little Leonora Blanche'. Other attractions that day included a cornet player, a military band, and firework display!

A concert of a 'very superior character' was given under the direction of Sarah's husband, Valentine Roberts, at the Albion Hall, London Wall, on the evening of the 28th of January 1857. The singers included Valentine Roberts himself, and his daughters, the 'celebrated soprano', Leonora Blanche Reeves (who later changed her name to Reives), and Amie Nina Roberts. Sarah, who was billed under her married name of Mrs Valentine Roberts, rather than Sara Lacy her stage name, performed a comic sketch which she herself had written, describing parts of Victorian theatre dramas and 'depicting the trials of a domestic servant in rather an unusual way, yet sufficiently like the real thing to cause much amusement'. Richard J Wilmot, the future husband of the Roberts' daughter Leonora *aka* Blanche Reeves, played several pieces on the piano.

The Poet and Lyricist

Sarah wrote and published poems and lyrics under the name of Mrs Valentine Roberts. Her many lyrics include, among others, *On the broad*
continued on next page

bosom of the deep (1854); *As I moved through the meadows in May* (1855); *A stalwart lad is the blacksmith's son* (1860), set to music by John Liptrott Hatton (1809-86) 'in which the skill of the musician and the good feeling of the poet are happily combined, producing an admirable song'; *Come sit old friend beneath the porch* (1862); *O give me back my happy home* (1863); *In England I was born* (1873); *The tale of Polly Potter and her pig* (1877); and *I heard a small bird singing*, set to music by Jesse Williams, and *Forget not your Kathleen* (an Irish ballad with music by S W New) plus many more lyrics and poems.

She also wrote two operettas, 'The Young Recruit' in two acts (verse and prose) with music by John Fulcher (1830-1893), first performed in 1860 at the Pavilion Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, and a one-act operetta entitled 'Mark, The Blacksmith' (in verse), which was privately printed for her friends in 1862, but does not appear to have been produced at any theatre.

The Roberts' youngest daughter, Myra Eugenie Rosalind Roberts, passed away on the 19th of March 1881, aged 26, after living with epilepsy for several years culminating in consumption. She was buried in the family grave at Nunhead Cemetery on the 23rd of March 1881. Her grief-stricken mother, Sarah Roberts, *aka* Sara Lacy, died shortly afterwards at 4 Bishopsgate Street, London, on the 5th of April 1881, aged 59 years, and was buried at Nunhead Cemetery on Saturday the 9th of April under the name of Sara Roberts.

Grave No 782, Square 94. Sources: *Private grave not yet located on site.* Burial records; Marriage registers of St Peter's Church, Bradford, Yorks, 1844; Census returns 1861 and 1881; *The Era*, 27 September 1840, 9 April 1881, 23 April 1881; *Bradford Observer*, 10 October 1844; D Baptie, *Musical Scotland*, 1894, p.58; Frederic Boase, *Modern English Biography*, Vol II, 1897; Ron Woollacott and Michèle L Burford, *Nunhead Notables*, vol 4, 2018, pp.100-101; Ron Woollacott and Michèle L Burford, *Nunhead Cemetery 'The Entertainers'*, pp.102-103, and 153-155; British Library Catalogue; Illustration: © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution. Non-Commercial Share Alike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) Licence.



FONC's Annual Open Day Saturday 17th May 2025

~ An appeal for assistance ~

The ever-popular Nunhead Cemetery Open Day on Saturday the 17th May will be open to the public between 11.00am and 5.00pm. We shall need many helpers to assist on the day, and it would be of great help if you could spare an hour or two of your time. We begin setting up, erecting gazebos and controlling vehicles from 8.30am and 9.30am, and between 9.30am and 10.30am we put up tables and chairs, control vehicles, and set up FONC stalls. During the day we need help on FONC's own 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 gazebos, tables and chairs and put them away, and take 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, please email: volunteering@fonc.org.uk

FONC trip to Willesden Old and New Cemeteries, Saturday 26th April 2025 - *Invitation by Cathy Mercer*

Please join us for a trip to Willesden Old and New Cemeteries, the Old a large churchyard and the New a pretty Victorian cemetery. We'll start with Willesden New Cemetery, next to Willesden's two Jewish Cemeteries and lovely Roundwood Park, creating a green heart for Willesden.

Willesden New Cemetery was opened in 1891 and has attractive landscaping, interesting new burial grounds, lots of Commonwealth War Graves and a very moving memorial to the civilian dead from Second World War. There are good facilities at the cemetery.

We will then visit next door Roundwood Park. Opened in 1895, it has fantastic views, pretty flower displays and a good café.

Willesden New Cemetery is the successor to Willesden Old Cemetery,

continued on next page

a much older churchyard next to the Norman church of St Mary's, with some interesting graves. We will visit this on the way back to Neasden Station, one stop from Dollis Hill, making a nice round trip.

Meet at the ticket barriers at Dollis Hill Station on the Jubilee Line. Willesden New Cemetery is about 10 minutes' walk away.

To sign up for this trip and to learn the meeting time, please email cathymercer@myyahoo.com or text to 07943 925 224, or telephone 020 8452 5239. These trips are always popular, so book early. We do hope you'll be able to join us.

Obituary

Malcolm Collins (1947-2024) Member No 3939

by Ann Coley et al

FONC was sad to hear of the death of Malcolm Collins at the end of 2024. Malcolm joined FONC in 2008 and was a FONC regular in several capacities - on the first Sunday of the month regular workday, at Open Day directing traffic and keeping the Main Avenue clear, guiding tours to the Crypt, and as a Trustee (2011-2021).

Malcolm was always coming up with suggestions for new FONC activities and one of these led to our first Waterloo tour of veterans' graves at Nunhead Cemetery for the 200th anniversary of the battle. The research for this was followed

up by our publication *Nunhead Cemetery and the Battle of Waterloo*. In addition, until he discovered the heated hut at Crystal Palace Park, where he also volunteered, he could often be found around the FONC cabin chatting to/helping visitors and researching grave locations and at times per-



Photograph courtesy of Anita Collins.

haps distracting the cemetery staff from their duties.

He was Peckham born and bred and had family members buried at Nunhead Cemetery. This, together with his interest in local history gave him a strong and enduring tie to the cemetery, and even when he was very ill, he still wanted to visit Nunhead Cemetery one more time for the carol singing in mid-December - sadly it wasn't possible.

He didn't necessarily share a great deal of his life outside of FONC with us, but he had a variety of jobs over the years, mostly connected with driving I think, and he was particularly proud to have been a member of the Territorial Army. It was always very clear that he was devoted to his daughter, Anita, and felt a very strong sense of family generally as he researched his family tree.

He liked to share his knowledge, to build connections with people but was always interested in learning new things. He also had a mischievous side and wasn't above winding up various regulars in the cemetery just to get a reaction.

As time took its toll over the last couple of years Malcolm was less able to volunteer with us actively on site but was always interested to hear what was happening in the cemetery and, when he could, he would come and visit and catch up with the news.

Six FONC Trustees led by Chairman Jeremy Partington and two other FONC members attended the funeral at Honor Oak Crematorium.

The photograph of Malcolm is from one of the FONC Open Days where Anita described him as being in his element. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

*** Subscription Reminder ***

Please note that all subscriptions are due to be paid on or by the 1st of April 2025. Donations are most welcome. The annual subscription is still £2 (£10 overseas if a paper copy of *FONC News* is required). 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.

~~~~~

**An opportunity to subscribe for a limited, numbered and signed copy of:**

**The Life and Work of Thomas Downes Wilmot Dearn  
(1777-1853) Architect to HRH The Duke of Clarence**

*Proposed new book by James Stevens Curl*

**D**earn was apprenticed in 1793 to the architect William Thomas (d.1800), after whose death he settled in Cranbrook, Kent. He published several books of original designs, including *Sketches in Architecture* (1806 and 1807) and *Designs for Lodges and Entrances* (1811 and 1823), which are much sought-after today and difficult to find. From 1798 to 1828 he exhibited at the Royal Academy, and with engravers such as Charles Rosenberg and Matthew Dubourg he published numerous views of churches and other buildings. Apart from his architectural books he brought out *The Bricklayer's Guide to the Mensuration of All Sorts of Brick-Work* in 1809, dedicated to the great Sir John Soane (1753-1837), and *An Historical Topographical and Descriptive Account of The Weald of Kent*, with eight engravings and a map, financed by subscription, and published in Cranbrook in 1814. His invention of a type of brick construction is known as Dearn's Bond, and was described at length by John Claudius Loudon (1782-1843) in his *An Encyclopædia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (1833 with several later editions). This new book will deal sensitively with Dearn's connections with the Royal Family and with his life and work spent in and around Cranbrook during the first five decades of the 19th century. **The designs in the book will contain mausolea, cemetery chapels and monuments as well as other building types.** Following the success of the handsome facsimile edition of J.C. Loudon's great book on Cemeteries (1843), published in a limited edition in 2019, and another on St Michael's Kirkyard, Dumfries, in 2021, I propose to bring out a limited, numbered, signed edition on the Life and Work of T D W Dearn. It will be casebound, profusely illustrated with drawings, engravings, and photographs, and produced to the same high standard as those volumes. Subscriptions are therefore invited to raise funds to get this important project off the ground. Names of Subscribers will be printed within the book if desired.

Subscriptions are invited, to be received no later than the 30th of June 2025. The cost per copy will be £50.00 to include postage and packing within the United Kingdom only. For postage outside the UK please add £10.00, and for postage outside Europe please add £20.00. Copies will be sent out to subscribers as soon as the book is available, estimated as Autumn 2025. After publication the price per copy will be £75.00, so subscribers will get a fine copy at less than cost.

**For further information and to subscribe please request an application/order form from Professor Curl - email: [jscurl@btinternet.com](mailto:jscurl@btinternet.com)**

## My Family at Rest in Nunhead Cemetery (Part 1)

by Michèle Louise Burford

The remains of at least fifteen or more members of my family are interred at Nunhead Cemetery, and were buried there between the years 1898 and 2012. For reasons of space, I have kept the information relating to each family member as short as possible.

**Agnes Smith**, an infant, aged 18 months, was the first of the family to be interred at Nunhead Cemetery. My great-grandaunt, she was the ninth and youngest child of William Charles and Catherine Smith of 68 Daniel's Road, Nunhead, and was buried on 17th December 1898. *Common grave No 24294 Square 149 in the Dissenters' section.*

**Lewis Walter Gerald Saunders**, another child, who would have been my half great-granduncle, was born at 115 Linden Grove, Nunhead, in August 1904 and died in November 1904. He was the first born child of Marianne Susan Woodhouse, my great-great-grandmother and her partner Alfred Saunders. *Common grave No 27418 Square 116 in the Dissenters' section.*

**Catherine Maria Smith**, my great-great-grandmother, was interred at Nunhead Cemetery in May 1924. She said she was born at either Clerkenwell or Stepney in 1854 (unable to confirm), the second daughter of William Garrad, a greengrocer, and his wife Elizabeth *nee* Hodgson. She married William Charles Smith, a house decorator, at St John's Church, Stratford in 1875, and they set up home at 10 Pleasant Row, Stratford. They had nine children between 1876 and 1897, all but the first two were born at Nunhead where they settled about 1880. Catherine died of emphysema and



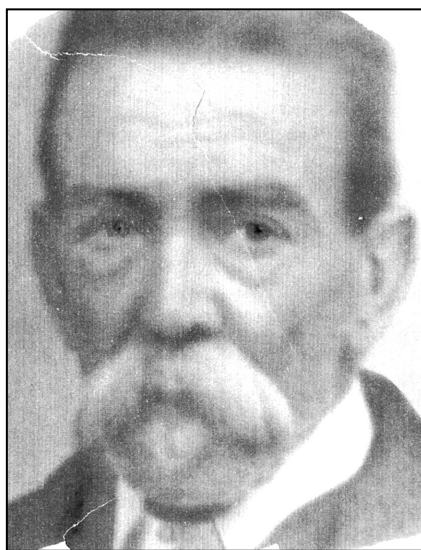
Catherine Maria Smith *nee* Garrad.

*continued on next page*

cardiac failure at 64 Daniel's Road, Nunhead in April 1924, aged 69. *Common grave No 507 Square 149 in the Dissenters' section.*

**Marianne Susan Woodhouse**, another great-great-grandmother, was born at Clifton, Bristol in 1864, the daughter of James Cossins, compositor. In 1888 she married James Thomas Southwood, a cook, at Hatcham (New Cross), and they had four children, one of whom, Charles William Southwood, was my great-grandfather. When James died in 1902, Marianne went to live with Alfred Saunders with whom she had another three children. She later left Saunders to marry in 1915, a widower, William Thomas Woodhouse, a metal worker, at the Congregational Church, Linden Grove, Nunhead. She died of cancer of the liver at 39 Hollydale Road, Nunhead in November 1926, aged 63. *Private grave No 28083 Square 166 in the Dissenters' section.*

In the censuses, **William Charles Smith**, also known as Charles William Smith, my great-great-grandfather, said he was born at Highgate (unable to confirm). A house decorator, he married Catherine Maria Garrad at Stratford in 1875. By 1879 they were living in Walworth, and in 1881 their address was 57 Howbury Road, Nunhead. By 1887, however, they were living at 77 Linden Grove, Nunhead. Their next move was to 68 Daniel's Road, Nunhead, where William set up in business as a self-employed chimney sweep. He is listed in the 1902 Post Office Directory as a 'chimney cleaner'. He died of cerebral thrombosis and senile decay at the home of his married daughter, Edith May Davies, 19 Ruby Street, Old Kent Road, Peckham in April 1938, aged 84. *Common grave No 39642 Square 100 in the Dissenters' section.*



William Charles Smith  
*aka Charles William Smith.*

**Alfred Henry Lelliott**, the husband of my great-grandaunt Florence Rose Lelliott *nee* Smith, was employed by the London Cemetery

Company as a gravedigger at Nunhead Cemetery. He took his own life aged 65 on the 24th of March 1944. An inquest was held by R B Henry Wyatt, coroner for the County of London, on the 28th of March 1944. The jury returned a verdict of 'death by carbon monoxide poisoning self-administered at his home on the 24th of March 1944 whilst the balance of his mind was disturbed'. His wife was a patient in a mental institution at the time. He was found dead by his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Southwood, at 30 Daniel's Road, Nunhead, lying on the kitchen floor with his head resting on a cushion in the gas oven. *Private grave No 41297 Square 55.*

My great-uncle **Ronald Victor Southwood**, known as **Ronnie**, was born in January 1925 at 24 Daniel's Road Nunhead, the fifth and youngest child of Charles William and Elizabeth Southwood *nee* Smith. He was employed as a power press operator at Peek Frean's biscuit factory in Bermondsey, when in 1943 he was called up for military service. As Private 14549013, Gordon Highlanders, he was tragically killed on Denton



Ronald Victor Southwood as a schoolboy, aged 12,  
and as Private 14549013 Gordon Highlanders, aged 18.

*continued on next page*

Moor, Ilkley, West Yorkshire, on the 6th of April 1944, aged 19, whilst engaged on a field exercise. A certain amount of mystery surrounds the circumstances of his death, but the coroner's verdict was that he was accidentally shot in the head during a field exercise and died immediately from laceration of the brain. He was buried at Nunhead with full military honours. He is commemorated on the CWGC Second World War screen wall, panel 16. *Grave No 41286 Square 5.*

*to be continued*

## **\* International Women's Day Tour\***

**Sunday 9th March at 2.00pm**

**An opportunity to visit the final resting places of some of the interesting, influential and notable women who lie buried at Nunhead Cemetery. Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.**

## **~~~ 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.

**In addition to the monthly General Guided tours of the cemetery the following specialist tours and events will also take place:**

**Sunday 9th March › International Women's Day tour at 2.00pm.** For details see above panel.

**Saturday 15th March › Crypt and Chapel visits at 2.15pm, 3.00pm and 3.45pm.** Meet your guide outside the Anglican chapel at the head of the Main Avenue.

**Sunday 16th March › Cemetery Symbols tour at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Thursday 20th March › Bat Sighting Walk at 6.10pm.** Assemble outside the main entrance to the cemetery in Linden Grove.

**Saturday 5th April › Spring Bird Watch at 6.00am.** Meet your early morning guide at the cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Sunday 13th April › Woodland Trail tour at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Sunday 11th May › Second World War tour at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide for the afternoon at the flint circle just inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Saturday 17th May › Annual Open Day from 11.00am to 5.00pm.** General tours, crypt/chapel visits, participating groups stalls, choirs, etc.

**Saturday 24th May › Crypt and Chapel visits at 2.15pm, 3.00pm and 3.45pm.** Meet your guide/s outside the Anglican chapel at the top of the Main Avenue.

**Sunday 8th June › Cemetery Symbols tour at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide 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 10.00am 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, 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.*

## FONC TRUSTEES

*Chairman:* **Jeremy Partington** - 07909 561654

*Vice-Chairman:* **Carol Stevenson** - email: [practicalwork@fonc.org.uk](mailto:practicalwork@fonc.org.uk)

*FONC Co-ordinator:* **Jeff Hart OBE** - 020 8694 6079 email: [fonc@btconnect.com](mailto:fonc@btconnect.com)

*Minutes Secretary and Volunteering Co-ordinator:*

**Jane Hart** - email: [volunteering@fonc.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@fonc.org.uk)

*Hon Treasurer:* **Ann Coley** - email: [treasurer@fonc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@fonc.org.uk)

*Hon Membership Secretary:* **Carol Stevenson** - email: [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto:membership@fonc.org.uk)

*Monument Inscription Recording Co-ordinator:*

**Garry Wiles** - email: [foncinscriptions@gmail.com](mailto:foncinscriptions@gmail.com)

*FONC News Editor:* **Ron Woollacott MBE, FRSA** -

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

*Other Trustees:* **Oliver Lomer, Charles Newman,  
Keith Turpin, Jamie Warner**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Voluntary Practical Work Co-ordinator:* **Tim Stevenson** -

email: [practicalwork@fonc.org.uk](mailto:practicalwork@fonc.org.uk)

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

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

*Webmaster:* **Simon Quill**

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

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

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

*The deadline for letters and articles for the next issue is 20th April 2025*

---

## 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)**

Printed by Catford Print Centre, [www.catfordprint.co.uk](http://www.catfordprint.co.uk)  
and published by the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, LONDON, SE15 3RT

*Copyright © FONC and Contributors 2025*