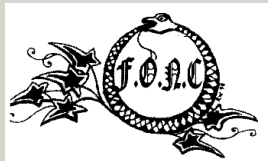


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# FONC News

No 168 ~ Summer issue ~ June ~ Aug 2025

*Journal of the Friends of Nunhead Cemetery*



*New wall and railings west of Limesford Road gates. Photo: Jeff Hart see page 17*

## INSIDE

**Information for FONC Members** *p.2*

**Nunhead's East Lodge:  
From Ruin to Revival** *p.3*

**Nunhead Cemetery News  
No 58** *p.5*

**Please Support the FONC  
AGM** *p.8*

**The Road from New Zealand  
back to Nunhead** *p.9*

**Report: Birdwalk in  
Nunhead Cemetery on  
5th April 2025** *p.14*

**Ann Elizabeth Epitau:  
A Stitch in Time** *p.14*

**Limesford Road Wall  
Repairs Completed** *p.17*

**Report: Visit to Willesden  
New Cemetery on 26th  
April 2025** *p.19*

**My Family at Rest in  
Nunhead Cemetery part 2**  
*p.20*

**Look Beyond - A Poem by  
Mrs Valentine Roberts**  
*p.25*

**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](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 or by post through the FONC website ([www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)). 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**

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

**Contributors to this issue:** Michèle Louise Burford; Malcolm Harris; Jane Hart; Jeff Hart; Charles Newman; Carol Taylor. *The editor and FONC Trustees do not necessarily agree with the views expressed by the contributors.*

### **Editorial:**

We trust that the annual Open Day at Nunhead Cemetery was as popular as ever of which there will be a full report in the next issue of *FONC News*. On the following pages of this issue you will find all the latest news about the restoration of the East Lodge and everything else that has been happening at and within the cemetery walls, including the restoration of the wall and railings on the south side of the cemetery, together with some interesting stories about the graves at Nunhead and their occupants, including one from down under. Enjoy the summer months in the cemetery and please try to attend the AGM on the 28th June. The next issue of *FONC News* will be published in September.



## **Nunhead's East Lodge: From Ruin To Revival**

*update by Jane Hart*



**A**lthough it had been hoped that work would have started on site for the shell and core repair to the East Lodge by now, for various reasons, this has not happened. As so often with projects of this size and complexity, unforeseen issues arise which take time to resolve. The contractor, that was originally selected to carry out the repairs, was unfortunately unable to proceed with the work. Fortunately, negotiations with a second contractor have proved fruitful and it is anticipated, all going well, that work might start on site towards the end of June. We know that members, and the general public, will find this news frustrating but FONC representatives are doing all they can to push the project forward.

The Nunhead Open Day which is held on the third Saturday in May (this year Saturday the 17th of May) is the largest event in the cemetery calendar and requires both a base from which FONC can co-ordinate the

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event as well as the provision of power, water supplies and toilet facilities. The planned demolition of the existing FONC cabin and erection of a new modular building will take two months to complete. As there was a slight delay to the intended start date of the end March, in recognition of the tight window of opportunity to carry out the demolition of the old and erection of the new cabin, it was agreed to wait until after the Open Day to start this major upheaval. A new freight container has now been installed on site and FONC has been decamping our tools etc to this container in anticipation of the demolition of the cabin on the Monday after the Open Day. This hopefully, led to the smooth running of the Open Day and enabled refreshments to be delivered as usual from the existing cabin.

\*\*\*\*\*

Catrin Podgorski, the recently appointed Outreach and Development Manager (ODM), has started work and is currently reviewing the Activity Plan, developed for the East Lodge Project Heritage Fund grant, by meeting with potential partner organisations to identify appropriate activities to progress. The Activity Plan, initially spanning a four-year period, will result in a range of new activities being delivered on site, and we look forward to helping Catrin, partner organisations and volunteers in facilitating these activities.

\*\*\*\*\*

One of the elements of the Activity Plan was for students, as part of their course work, to be given the opportunity of working alongside the architects on the East Lodge Project, to come up with suggestions about how to incorporate issues such as sustainability and energy efficiency into the restoration of a listed Victorian building. Forty-five students from London South Bank University attended the site to learn more about the restoration project as part of their Architecture and Product Design courses. They presented their suggestions for enhancing the restoration work in mid-April to the project architects Roger Mears Associates, Catrin Podgorski, the ODM, and representatives from FONC who gave feedback so that the students could finalise their proposals prior to submission as part of their course work. The architects will then give further consideration to the imaginative and original ideas proposed in taking forward the restoration project.

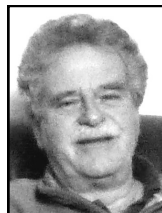
\*\*\*\*\*

FONC is pleased to announce a further new Trustee, Petra Handoca, has been appointed to the FONC Trustee Board. Petra who will bring new skills to the Trustee Board, has extensive project management experience, lives locally, and has a passion for heritage and preservation, with a particular interest in cemeteries.

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## **Nunhead Cemetery News No.58**

*by Jeff Hart, FONC Co-ordinator*



### ***Biodiversity success!***

In the last issue of *FONC News*, Vice-Chairman Carol Stevenson reported that FONC had applied for funding from Southwark Council's Biodiversity Fund to enhance the pond and wetland area of the cemetery. We have just heard that our application has been successful! We are now awaiting the formal offer which will detail exactly what has been funded, together with any conditions applied. We hope to enlarge the pond itself; provide a boardwalk around two-thirds of the pond, with a jetty towards its centre; add new fencing around the area; selectively remove small saplings; and introduce reptile and amphibian friendly 'nests'. We hope to be able to start work later this year.

### ***Next phase of monument repairs begins***

No sooner than the last round of monument repairs carried out by Southwark Council, with a financial contribution from FONC, were completed (*see FONC News No 167*), the next round funded in 2025/6 has begun! The selection of memorials to be revitalised were agreed between the Borough Engineers and FONC representatives and FONC is making a further financial contribution of £10,000. Criteria for qualifying monuments include proximity to path edges, clear threat of possible dangerous states, accessibility to heavy plant and immediate visual impact. The work envisaged include nine memorials in the East Lodge compound, further memorials on the West Crescent, three large memorials in a parlous state on The Slope, and the Burton Ravenscroft memorial on the East Path. Work started after the Easter break on the first group of headstones adjacent to the grave of Jenny Hill, the 'Vital Spark', that had

*continued on next page*

been recently broken by falling trees over this spring. Look out for a further report and photographs in the next issue.



*Work being carried out to monuments adjacent to the grave of Jenny Hill (1849-96)  
the famous music hall entertainer in square 143. Photos: Jeff Hart.*

### ***Nunhead Notables Vol 6 is now available***

FONC has now published the latest set of biographies of interesting people buried at Nunhead Cemetery written by Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford. Veterans of the Zulu Wars, Burlesque singers, authors, artists, sports stars, politicians and religious ministers are included with stories ranging from the bizarre to the tragic. Even a beanfeast caterer is included! The book, priced very reasonably at £5 or £4.50 to FONC members, was available for the first time at our annual Open Day on the 17th of May. It can be purchased from our Publications and Enquiries Desk when it is on site or by post through the FONC website ([www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)).

### ***In memoriam***

Over the years since our formation in 1981, a number of significant contributors to FONC's work have, sadly, passed away. We have now added a section to the FONC website that records their names and briefly describes their contribution, so that their efforts on our behalf are not forgotten. The page can be accessed at [www.fonc.org.uk/inmemoriam](http://www.fonc.org.uk/inmemoriam)

### ***Popular bat walks continue***

Dr Iain Boulton again led a FONC bat walk in the cemetery, with over 40 people hearing and seeing numerous bats during the evening of the 20th of March. Donations received on the night were split equally between FONC and the London Bat Group. These walks are always very popular and the next will be held on the 4th of September at 7.30pm. No booking required, just turn up and tune in to a bat detector!

### ***Ivydale Road Primary School and Camberwell Scouts visit the cemetery***

On the 31st of March nearly 50 children, teachers and helpers walked around the cemetery as part of their Southwark and the Victorians studies. Blessed with lovely weather and with great enthusiasm from the children, FONC volunteers related various aspects of the cemetery, its bereaved, symbols, occupations and history to the Victo-

*continued on next page*

rian period. Some penetrating questions were asked by the children and they greatly enjoyed their excursion, enthusiastic to visit again with their families. The new Outreach and Development Manager (ODM), Catrin Podgorski, accompanied us on the walk, using the event to test out evaluation methods for such activities as part of the Heritage Fund funded project. We were also joined on our March practical work day in the cemetery by a group from the 7th Camberwell Scouts who did sterling work on bashing brambles in the Thirties Path glade area.

### ***Look out for our summer Arts Events programme***

FONC is currently working with a range of artists to provide a summer programme of arts events, based on the Anglican chapel, between the end of June to the end of September. Jane Hart, supported by the Nunhead Cemetery ODM, is working on the details of the programme which should be available on the FONC website by mid-June. All events will be free of charge and will be an exciting opportunity for local artists and sculptors to display their work. We also hope that there will be some inter-active events for visitors to participate in.

### ***Popular film night returns***

The ever-popular Peckham and Nunhead Free Film programme will return to the cemetery on the evening of Saturday, 6th of September. Those attending our Open Day will have had the opportunity to vote for the film they would like to be shown, although the FONC Co-ordinator's suggestion of 'Fantasia' is unlikely to have been on the voting list! Places are limited and are always over-subscribed. Details from the Film Festival's website.

## **Please Support the FONC AGM!**

**F**ONC Trustees continue to be concerned about the lack of participation by members in our Annual General Meeting. We need to reach a quorum as required by our Constitution, approved by the Charity Commission. We really want to give FONC members the opportunity to question and comment on the various reports that are presented and to have the opportunity to influence what we do as well as approving the appointment of Trustees.



Following a new approach for the AGM last year, the 2025 event will again be held in the roofless Anglican Chapel in the centre of the cemetery on a Saturday afternoon. We will make provision for inclement weather by erecting our large marquees inside the chapel. As an added attraction to members, as well as refreshments including home-made food being provided (*donations welcome to off-set costs*), we will also be conducting visits to the crypt under the chapel.

The AGM will be held at **2.00pm on Saturday 28th June 2025**. Details of the AGM agenda and written reports will be placed on the website in due course but, at present, the Trustees have no motions to put to the meeting. If any member wishes to propose a motion to the meeting, this should be submitted in writing to the Vice-Chairman (email: [membership@fonc.org.uk](mailto:membership@fonc.org.uk)) no later than the 7th of June (*if you receive your FONC News after this date, late proposals will be considered*).

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## **The Road from New Zealand back to Nunhead**

*by Carol Turner of NZ*

About 30 years ago, my parents visited Nunhead Cemetery in search of the grave of Thomas Chandler, Mum's great-great-grandfather. Overwhelmed by what they found, they noted down the contact details for FONC. My mother, Glenys Eileen Taylor (née Chandler), began correspondence with Ron Woollacott and thereby established a friendship between the Taylors and the Woollacotts that sees us exchange Christmas cards to this day. My parents visited again in 1997 and even Dad/Will, who endured many genealogical excursions with great patience, was impressed by the cemetery tour and even more impressed by the hospitality of the Woollacotts. Mum and I visited again on the 7th of July 1998. After a return visit in 2003, my parents featured on the cover page of *FONC News* (Autumn 2003, Series 5, Issue No 81, p.1). Stalwarts of FONC may recognize the name Glenys Taylor. She contributed many articles to this publication, with 20 plus in a series called 'Churchyards & Cemeteries of New Zealand' from about 2000-2007. Sadly, she died on the 26th of May 2008, aged only 65 years old, after a brave battle with cancer.

*continued on next page*



*Ron Woollacott shows Glenys Taylor an old cemetery ledger (1998).*

The investigations in the mid-1990s revealed two nearby Chandler family graves in Square 88 of the cemetery that were purchased by Thomas Chandler and his son, Frederick Chandler (see Family Tree diagram). Those buried are listed in the table on page 12.

The Chandlers were publicans, perhaps best known for 'The Ship' (Millbank Row, Westminster, Thomas Chandler, from about 1830-1850) and 'The Red Lion' (Blackman/Borough High Street, Southwark, Fred Chandler, from about 1855-1875). More of their story was included in an article I wrote for *FONC News* a few years back (February 1998, No 49, p.6).

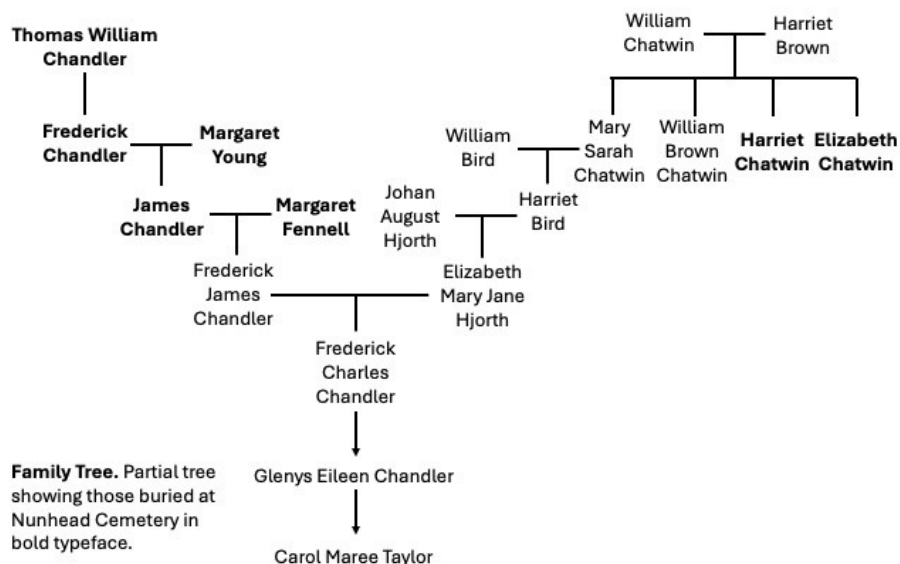
Young James Chandler ventured to Australia where he married Margaret Fennell (born in County Tipperary, Ireland). He worked as a barman and tobacconist in Melbourne and Sydney. When his father died in 1876, Fred's executors were urged to 'make every effort to discover the whereabouts of the said James Chandler.' James, Margaret and their five children returned to London on board the *Somerset* in

The Chandlers



*A youthful Carol Taylor at the grave of her great-great-grandfather, Frederick Chandler.*

1876. Tragically, both James and Margaret died in April 1878, aged 40 and 42 respectively. Legend has it that there was an accident with a newly acquired Arabian stallion, and they died from the injuries sustained. The children, ranging in age from two to 15, were raised by a guardian in Brighton. Despite ample resources, that guardian buried James and Margaret in a communal (common) grave at Nunhead.



Frederick James Chandler ran away and travelled extensively. He returned to London on his 21st birthday, when he became entitled to his inheritance, and was there for the auction of property in January 1892. Described by his children as ‘a restless soul,’ Fred ultimately settled in Auckland, New Zealand. He married Elizabeth Paten (née Hjorth), a woman ahead of her time, who ran her own drapery and millinery business. Fred adopted Elizabeth’s two daughters from her first marriage, and they had three children of their own: Charlie, Nell and Phil. Fred was killed in the First World War and is buried in the Y-Farm Military Cemetery in Armentieres, France.

Elizabeth, in turn, was the daughter of a strong and unconventional woman, Harriet Hjorth, née Bird. Harriet was the illegitimate daughter of William Bird, a wealthy man, and Mary Sarah Chatwin, from the other

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side of the tracks. Harriet's parents appear to have had some kind of relationship from about 1830 until Mary Sarah died in 1846. Harriet was born in early 1832, went by her father's surname and told her children that she went to a boarding school and travelled with her father. She also maintained contact with her maternal aunts following her mother's death. According to the 1851 Census, when she was 19, Harriet was living with her aunt and uncle, Charles and Elizabeth Le Coutre, in Rotherhithe. At the time of her marriage, in 1853, she gave her address as 4 Rutland Street in Stepney, the home of her aunt Harriet Travis. These were sea-faring families. Harriet's grandfather, William Chatwin, was a master mariner, as was Uncle John Williams Travis who died off the coast of Mexico in 1865, Uncle Charles Le Coutre was a ship chandler. Harriet

**Table.** Family Buried at Nunhead Cemetery

Name	Notes	Square	Grave	Year of Burial
James Chandler		13	14810	1878
Margaret Chandler	née Fennell	13	14810	1878
Charles Le Coutre	husband of Elizabeth	79	3758	1855
Elizabeth Le Coutre	née Chatwin	79	3758	1866
Harriet Travis	née Chatwin	79	3758	1882
Margaret Chandler	1st wife of Frederick	88	2132	1852
Anne Chandler	3rd wife of Frederick	88	2132	1872
Henry Chandler	son of Frederick	88	2132	1874
George Hughes	stepson of Frederick	88	2132	1874
Frederick Chandler		88	2132	1875
Philip Chandler	son of Frederick	88	2132	1876
Emily Chandler	3rd wife of Thomas	88	4491	1857
Emily Kibble	daughter of Emily	88	4491	1857
George Chandler	aka George Chandler Mann son of Emily	88	4491	1869
Thomas William Chandler		88	4491	1870
Sarah Chandler	daughter-in-law of Thomas	88	4491	1877
Joseph Frederick Chandler	son of Thomas	88	4491	1878

Bird married John August Hjorth, a Swedish master mariner and they came to New Zealand in the mid-1860s. Elizabeth was the fifth of their eleven children and the first to be born in New Zealand.



Chandler Family, New Zealand, 1906.

*From left to right: Glendenine Paten/Chandler, Philip Chandler (on his mother's knee), Elizabeth Chandler, Frederick Charles (Charlie) Chandler (standing), Nell Chandler (on her father's knee) and Nita Paten/Chandler.*

What a surprise it was to learn recently that two of Harriet's aunts were buried in Southwark, London. Surely it couldn't be ... Yes, they are at Nunhead Cemetery! These days we have help from online databases like *Deceased Online* where I obtained the grave number. Ron has been able to confirm that Square 69 is in a central, overgrown part of the cemetery but there may still be a headstone under there. While a vast cemetery, it's amazing to think of the unwitting family connections entwined there with their kin spread far and wide and reunited by marriage. This is a story Mum would love!

## **Birdwalk in Nunhead Cemetery Saturday 5th April 2025**

*by Charles Newman*

**W**e decided to meet a bit earlier for our Spring birdwalk this year, at 6.00am, to make the most of the dawn chorus. Despite this rather brutal early start, we had a good turnout of about 15, and those who had set their alarms were rewarded with the birds in good voice on a beautiful sunny morning.

Once we had moved away from the rather raucous Carrion Crows by the main gate, we had Blackbird, Wren, Song Thrush and Nuthatch singing and calling beautifully. A sure sign that Spring was well and truly on its way was the fact that whatever path we went down there was a Chiffchaff loudly accompanying us.

It was lovely to be in the cemetery when the first shafts of morning sunlight burst through the trees and lit up some of the monuments. Perhaps the highlight of the morning was two Song Thrushes posing in the early morning sunshine, singing heartily from their posts long enough for us all to get a good look at them even without binoculars. This is a bird we used to take somewhat for granted in our gardens 15 or 20 years ago, but they are seldom seen in gardens these days. It is reassuring to see them thriving in the cemetery.

The woodpeckers eluded us by sight, but we heard both the drumming of the Great Spotted and the 'yaffle' call of the Green. Many of us had our Merlin apps to hand, which proved reliable on the whole save for one rogue identification of a Great Crested Grebe!

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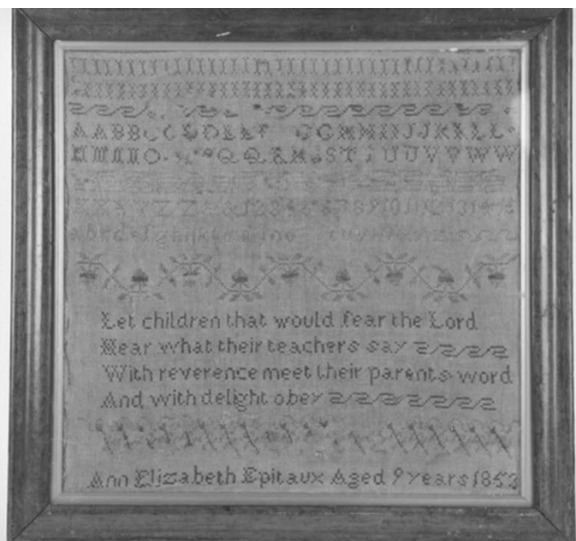
## **Ann Elizabeth Epitau - A Stitch in Time**

*by Malcolm Harris*

**F**ONC receives many requests from far and wide about the graves at Nunhead Cemetery. Some requests are about quite interesting people whose last resting place is Nunhead and not all requests are from the relatives of those buried there.

One such request was from a genealogy group that was researching a 'sampler'. The lead researcher, Sally Gardiner, was part of the Woking

area 'u3a' Genealogy group. In days gone by, girls often made samplers of their embroidery to display their skills. Their summer project for 2024, was to research the story of Ann Elizabeth Epitau. An exhibition was to be held in November/December at the Surrey History Centre about Ann, and some living relatives attended. My thanks to Sally for much of the information contained below.



*The sampler made by Ann Elizabeth Epitau in 1853 when she was aged nine.*

Ann made her 'sampler' in 1853 aged nine. She was born in 1844 in Soho, Westminster. Her parents were George Samuel Epitau and Elizabeth nee Jones. George was born in Switzerland in 1812 and arrived in London on the 25th of May 1837. He died on the 30th of April 1862 and was buried at Old Brompton on the 5th of May. He had set up a restaurant in London thought to be at 3 Pall Mall and he invented the first ice cream making

machine. The unusual name helped a lot with my research and it is said that there are only 50 people in the world with the name Epitau.

Ann was thought by Sally to be on a sad trajectory downward in life, but I uncovered some interesting relatives. I found that Ann married John Bolingbroke in 1873, registered at the Strand, London. She had a daughter Louise Charlotte Elizabeth. John died in 1878, aged 35, and Ann married a second time in 1881 to Samuel Foreman.

Ann's siblings included a brother Frederick who acted with Sir Henry Irving, the first actor to be knighted; Emma Louisa, born in 1850 who married Augustus H Collet, an eminent surgeon in Worthing; and Hannah Sarah, born 1848, married Charles Lloyd Lancaster, a draper, in

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1874. The Lancaster family grave being the connection of this story to Nunhead Cemetery.

There was also a nephew, Richard Awdry W Collet (1883-1946), who became a Director of the D'Oyly Carte Opera, recorded as 'Business Manager' in 1919 until his death in Surrey. He was born at East Preston, Sussex, and married Daisy M Walter in 1912.

*To sum up, those buried at Nunhead are:*

Hannah Sarah Lancaster *née* Epitaux (sister of Ann Elizabeth Epitaux) - buried 20th of February 1886, aged 38, depth 12 feet.

Charles Lloyd Lancaster - buried 29th of April 1891, aged 47, depth 11 feet.

William John Lancaster - buried 3rd of October 1893, aged 43, depth 10 feet.

Elizabeth Ann Lancaster *née* Hall - buried 12th Sept 1894, aged 42, depth 9 feet. *Grave No 18338, Square 127.*



As to the fate of Ann Elizabeth Foreman (*née* Epitaux). She died aged 49, her last journey being on the Necropolis Railway from Waterloo to Brookwood Cemetery at Woking, yes it had a railway, two in fact, as Nonconformists did not usually mix with Conformists, even in death.

Sally wanted to bring her newly found knowledge to members of FONC, hence this article.

*The Lancaster grave at  
Nunhead Cemetery.*

Photo: Malcolm Harris.



# Limesford Road Boundary Wall Repairs Completed

*Report by Jeff Hart*

By the time you read this article the rebuilding of the Limesford Road boundary walls will have been completed! It is the culmination of a saga which began back in September 2016, when Southwark Borough Council Engineers commissioned a report on the state of the boundary walls as a result of concerns about the tilt of some of the pillars towards the pedestrian pavement. A second survey was completed in July 2017. As a result of this survey, it was deemed that emergency health and safety works were needed. The first FONC knew of this was when, in September 2017, a number of pillars and loose brickwork were removed leaving gaps in the fencing between the truncated pillars.

As urgent safety works, no planning permissions were expressly required for this work. However, as the walls are part of the Listing of the whole cemetery, FONC had to initiate a Freedom of Information request in October 2017 to ascertain exactly what was happening to the walls and what plans Southwark Council had to reinstate the pillars. It appeared that Southwark had no plans at all! There followed considerable correspondence to force Southwark to re-think their approach and eventually



(1) East wall showing final curved railing gap to be completed prior to safety barrier removal.

(2) Detail inside of east wall before being cleaned up. Photos: Jeff Hart.

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the Council accepted the need to reinstate the pillars that had been taken down. However, by this time, further surveys indicated that the entire wall down the length of Limesford Road was in such a state that it could not be built on. A much more radical, and expensive, plan was therefore needed. FONC campaigned to have the walls reinstated as original and eventually it was agreed that, in order not to disturb graves adjacent to the walls, the original wall would be taken down to ground level and a new wall be built in front of it on which new pillars could be safely built.

This also required the pavement in front of the walls, and the services under the pavement, to be moved forward. Southwark undertook a public consultation, particularly with residents of Limesford Road, to explain their plans. FONC's comments included the need not to reinstate the temporary mesh fencing that had replaced the original railings when Southwark acquired the cemetery, removed during the Second World War, but to take the opportunity to reinstate railings of the original design. We also wished to minimise the impact on boundary trees.

The plans received general support, including from FONC, and Planning Permission was granted in July 2022. Further delays followed from consultations with Thames Water, road closure permissions, the need to source materials and scheduling the work. It was thus not until September 2024 that work finally began. Whilst it had been hoped to reuse some materials, apart from the York stone paving, this was found to be in such poor condition as to be unfeasible. Even the coping stones on the walls were found to be concrete replicas rather than the original stone. Once work had begun, progress was rapid (*see previous FONC News reports*) and now, on completion, the end result is magnificent! The new railings look superb and unless you knew that the entrance gate pillars had to be brought forward by about two feet no-one would realise this. In addition to the Limesford Road facing wall, the interior old walls have been enhanced by new brick work and stone capping which has provided an attractive seating facility! This will be particularly appreciated by visitors to the war memorial plot at the east side of the entrance gates. Some further landscaping here will be necessary, but we expect FONC volunteers can contribute to carrying out this work.

## *Visit to Willesden New Cemetery - Report by Jeff Hart*

Ten FONC members enjoyed a visit on the 26th of April 2025, to Willesden New Cemetery, led by former FONC Treasurer, Cathy Mercer - to whom many thanks. The weather was kind and on the way from the tube station we passed the site of the Grunwick factory sites made famous by the two-year long trade union recognition strike beginning in 1976 and now marked by a colourful mural. Cemetery historian Hugh Meller rather unkindly bemoans the demolition in 1986 of the original two cemetery chapels built in 1891 and their replacement with a vehicle turning circle. Some fine chestnut and other trees grace the rather flat grid-plan layout of the modest memorials. Meller says there are few memorials worthy of mention but we were fascinated with what Meller calls the 'mawkish' life sized white marble figure of Georgina Robinson in her wedding dress, recording her death in a car accident when return-



*FONC members admiring the civilian war memorial.*

Photo: Jeff Hart.

ing from her honeymoon in France in 1965. The granite rocks marking the burial plot of 'Ernest Schwarz of the Kalahari' who died in Senegal in 1928 were rather perplexing but *The Times* at the time said he was remembered chiefly for his persistent advocacy of a scheme for the irrigation of a consid-

erable portion of the Kalahari desert!

However, we were most touched by the splendid memorial to civilians of the Borough of Willesden killed in the Second World War. In addition

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to listing names, fine brass sculptured figures of the period adorn the memorial plaque, including children, a cat and a dog! What a contrast to Nunhead's pitifully small stone at the Limesford Road entrance.

We also saw the adjoining crowded Jewish cemeteries and enjoyed a refreshment break in nearby Roundwood Park where we visited the bench dedicated to the memory of FONC Membership Secretary, Simon Mercer. On the way back to the station we also walked through the churchyard of the incongruous Norman, St Mary's church, also erroneously referred to locally as 'Willesden Old Cemetery'.

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## My Family at Rest in Nunhead Cemetery (Part 2)

*by Michèle Louise Burford*

**I**n the last issue I wrote about six members of my family who were buried at Nunhead between the years 1898 and 1945. In chronological order below are those whose remains were interred at Nunhead between 1951 and 2012.

**Florence Rose Lelliott** *née* **Smith**, my great-grandaunt, was born at Daniel's Road, Nunhead in 1883. She was the second daughter and fourth child of William Charles and Catherine Maria Smith *née* Garrad, my great-great-grandparents. Florence's husband was Alfred Henry Lelliott, a gravedigger at Nunhead Cemetery. In the 1939 Register Florence was a patient at Banstead Mental Hospital, Surrey. Her husband committed suicide in 1944, and she died in 1950, aged 67. She was buried with her husband. *Private grave No 41297 Square 55.*



*Florence Sarah O'Dell  
c.1936.*

**Florence Sarah O'Dell** was my father, Ron Woollacott's grandmother and another great-grandmother of mine. A proud East-Londoner, she was born Florence Sarah Brown at Spitalfields in December 1885, the daughter of Thomas Brown, a smith and harness-maker, and Elizabeth Raynham *nee* Pryke of Ipswich. At the age

of 16 she was employed as a printer's labourer. She was twice married, her first husband, with whom she had eight children, died in 1924, after which she spent some time in a workhouse before marrying secondly, in 1926, Thomas William O'Dell, a Bermondsey dock labourer, with whom she had two children. She died in Lewisham Hospital on the 13th of October 1951, aged 66. *Common grave No 42876 Square 88.*

**Thomas William O'Dell**, my father's step-grandfather, was Bermondsey born and bred, the eldest son of Thomas Odell *aka* O'Dell (1859-1900), a skinner and tanner, originally from Leicester. Thomas William was employed for many years as a docker at the Surrey Commercial Docks and served as a private in the East Surrey Regiment during the First World War. He died at his home in Brockley in 1956, aged 76. *Common grave No 43511 Square 13.*

My maternal great-grandfather, **Charles William Southwood**, was born in September 1889 at 8 Dennett's Road, Hatcham (now New Cross), the son of James Thomas Southwood, a journeyman house decorator, and Marianne Susan *née* Cossins of Bristol. He married Elizabeth Smith, the daughter of William Charles and Catherine Maria Smith, and they had five children, one of whom was my grandmother who was born Elizabeth Kate Marian but was always known as Sybil. During the First World War Charles served with the Army Cyclist Corps in France. For many years he was a goods foreman at London Bridge Railway Station. He died of cancer at St Giles' Hospital, Camberwell in September 1960, aged 70. *Common grave No 44096 Square 18.*

My maternal great-grandmother, **Elizabeth Southwood**, was born in 1888 at 75 Linden Grove, Nunhead, in a house that faced the high brick wall at Nunhead Cemetery. The wall was erected a year earlier to



*Charles William Southwood (nearest the camera) and colleague at London Bridge Station c.1954.*

*continued on next page*



(1) Elizabeth Southwood with baby Sybil in 1912. (2) Portrait of Elizabeth c. 1920.  
(3) Grave marker in Nunhead Cemetery.

shield mourners from the prying eyes of the occupants of the houses. Elizabeth was the seventh child of William Charles and Catherine Maria Smith. She married Charles William Southwood in 1911 and the couple moved to 10 Daniel's Road, Nunhead, where Elizabeth Kate Marian (Sybil), my grandmother, the first of their five children was born in 1912. When the houses in Daniel's Road were demolished in the 1960s, great grandmother Elizabeth went to live at Bellingham. She died at Hither Green Hospital in 1982, aged 94. *Common grave No 45205 Square 19.*

My great-uncle, **Charles Henry Thomas Southwood**, always known as **Henry**, was born in March 1914 at 66 Daniel's Road, Nunhead, the



*Leading aircraftman  
Henry Southwood c.1943.*



*Grave of Henry and Lily Southwood  
at Nunhead Cemetery.*

second child of William Charles and Elizabeth Southwood *née* Smith. He married Lilian Welsh at St Antholin's Church, Nunhead, and they had three children between 1939 and 1945. During the Second World War Henry served as a leading aircraftman at the famous RAF fighter station at Biggin Hill in Kent. In later life, he was for some time, a park keeper at Peckham Rye Park. He resided with his family for many years in Landells Road, East Dulwich. He died in December 1991, aged 77. *Private grave No 45960 Square 17.*

**Lilian Ida Southwood** known as **Lily**; *née* **Welsh** was the wife of my great-uncle Charles Henry Thomas Southwood. She was born in December 1913 and died in November 1996, aged 82. She was buried with her husband in private grave *No 45960 Square 17.*

My grandmother, **Elizabeth Kate Marian Vearonelly**, always known as **Sybil**, was born at 10 Daniel's Road, Nunhead in May 1912, the eldest of five children of William Charles and Elizabeth Southwood. She was employed as a machine minder/printer at Waxed-Papers Ltd, Nunhead Lane, and married George Charles Martin of Peckham at St Antholin's

*continued on next page*

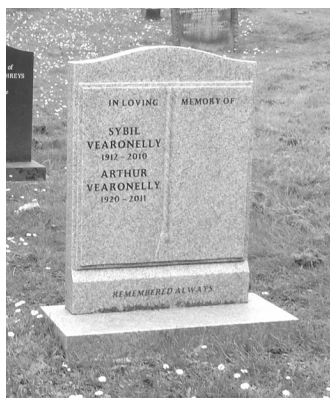


*Sybil with her first husband George Charles Martin c. 1924.*



*Sybil Vearonelly c.2002*

They lived for many years at 28 Daniel's Road, Nunhead. Grandfather Martin died in Lewisham Hospital in 1972, aged 61, and was buried at Hither Green Cemetery.



*The Vearonelly headstone at Nunhead Cemetery*

Church, Nunhead in May 1934. They had two daughters, my mother Maureen Woollacott and my aunt Linda Martin. In 1974 Sybil married secondly Arthur Vearonelly. She died at Hamilton Lodge Nursing Home, Forest Hill in February 2010 aged 97 years and nine months, and was cremated at Honor Oak. Her ashes were interred in a private grave at Nunhead in 2012 together with those of Arthur. Sybil who was a longtime Friend of Nunhead Cemetery, was well known in the early days of FONC for making woollen bobble hats for the cemetery volunteers. *Grave No 46417 Square 17.*

**Arthur Vearonelly**, my step-grandfather, was descended from Giovanni Basilio Veronelli (1778-1852), an Italian, who settled in Deptford and was a tailor. Arthur was born in Sydenham in 1920 the youngest son of Robert and Gertrude Vearonelly. He served with the Pio-



neer Corps during the Second World War. A bachelor, he married Sybil Martin, my grandmother, a widow, when he was 54. He died at Hamilton Lodge Nursing Home, Forest Hill in December 2011, just four days before his 91st birthday, and was cremated at Honor Oak. In 2012 his ashes were interred with those of Sybil in the private grave at Nunhead Cemetery. *Grave No 46417 Square 17.*

**FONC'S AGM WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE ANGLICAN CHAPEL AT  
NUNHEAD CEMETERY ON SATURDAY 28th JUNE 2025 AT  
2.00pm. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE.**

*For further information please see pages 8 and 9.*

## Look Beyond

*A poem by Mrs Valentine Roberts*

**T**he remarkable Mrs Valentine Roberts *née* Liddon *aka* Sara Lacy (c.1822-1881), was an actress, soprano, poet and lyricist. (see the article in the last issue of *FONC News*, No 167, pages 16-18). The following poem was written by her at 2 Angel Row, Walworth Place, Walworth, Surrey and was published in Poets' Corner, *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, on Saturday the 7th of April 1860.

Oh, life is very beautiful,  
And earth is very fair,  
Wild youth hope and gladness full,  
Finds pleasure everywhere;  
Yet while the present fills the heart,  
dreams and fancies fed,  
Sweet peace may flee and joy depart,  
And leave woe in its stead ;  
The happy bride, the maiden gay,  
The wife and mother fond,  
Blest in the sunshine of to-day,  
Forget to look beyond.

*continued on next page*

Oh, life is very beautiful,  
Yet like summer's day,  
Or as the flowers we love to cull,  
Too soon will pass away,  
The dead are carried by our door,  
the shadow on us falls.  
The clouds disperse, we grieve no more  
With sunlight in our halls,  
breathe the wishes of the heart,  
And gentle tones respond  
So, till the loved and loving part,  
We never look beyond.

Oh, life is very beautiful.  
But can the present last ?  
Grim death will come with trappings dull,  
And all our joys be past.  
The future may be fraught with woe,  
Though now all's bright and fair.  
To meet the ills that flesh may know,  
Oh would could prepare !  
We may not fear, we need not droop,  
Nor sick, nor sad despond,  
But ask in faith, and live in hope,  
And calmly look beyond.

~~~~~

## **\* 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.

## DIARY DATES *continued*:

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

**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.

**Sunday 15th June › Waterloo Anniversary Event at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide at the flint circle inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Sunday 20th July › Woodland Trail tour at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide at the flint circle inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Sunday 20th July › Crypt and Chapel visits at 2.15pm, 3.00pm and 3.45pm.** Meet your guides outside the Anglican chapel.

**Sunday 10th August › Cemetery Symbols tour at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide at the flint circle inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Sunday 24th August › Music Hall tour at 2.00pm.** Meet your guide at the flint circle inside the main cemetery gates in Linden Grove.

**Thursday 4th September › Bat Sighting walk at 7.30pm.** Meet just inside the 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.*

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

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