

# **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE/TRUSTEES OF THE FRIENDS OF NUNHEAD CEMETERY**

**1 JUNE 2018 – 31 MAY 2019**

## **1. MEMBERSHIP**

FONC membership fell by 3% from 809 to 785 this year following a downward trend over the last few years. We recruited 89 new members but lost 113. We have 9 overseas members. Members paying by Standing Order remained at 48% of the membership and those signing Gift Aid declarations fell by 1% to 70%. Simon Mercer, FONC Membership Secretary, does a marvellous job keeping our membership data base in order and also drafted our new Data Protection policy. Gift Aid payments received from HM Revenue & Customs totaled £2300.48. This value is larger than the usual annual amount as it includes repayment claims until the close of the 'old' FONC.

## **2. CHARITABLE STATUS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**

A great deal of effort was put in to finalising the change of charity status to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). We were able to do this without any queries by the Charity Commission and retaining the original name of the charity. The change was supported by 100% of members attending the June 2018 AGM and the September and November 2018 Special General Meetings held to confirm the change. A copy of the new Constitution is available to members on request. Our new Charity Commission registration number is 1178763.

We have continued our good governance review of how FONC operates. As a result, in addition to a new data security policy, we have adopted a complaints procedure and a volunteer's Code of Practice and Agreement. The latter documents set out what volunteers can expect from FONC and what we expect of volunteers. We also now record all volunteer activities and by signing in when participating, volunteers agree to abide by the terms of the Volunteer Agreement. Trustee Ish Lennox has taken on responsibility for coordinating volunteer recruitment.

## **3. FONC MEETINGS AND MEMBERS' VISITS**

The General Committee/Trustees held eleven regular meetings during the year, and the Voluntary Work Sub-Committee met quarterly. Acting Chairman Jeremy Partington was confirmed at the June AGM and a wonderful Bermondsey glass work was presented to retiring Chairman Ron Woollacott, in recognising his fantastic service to FONC since its inception. Two new trustees, Alan Till and Keith Turpin, were appointed during the year. The 2018 AGM welcomed Matthew Neil who spoke about the work of the Music Hall Guild of Great Britain & America and their intention to raise a memorial at Nunhead to music hall star 'The Great Vance'. At the Christmas meeting various trustees gave a presentation recalling the contribution FONC had made to commemorate the events of the Great War, work that was recognised by the CWGC. In June 2018 a very well attended member's visit to Abney Park cemetery took place and in March 2019 an outing to part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century New River path was organised by trustee Cathy Mercer.

## **4. AFFILIATIONS**

We continue to be affiliated to the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (€25) and the National Federation of Cemetery Friends (£20 p.a.). We participate in the work of the Southwark Conservation Areas Advisory Group; support the Nunhead Community Forum and Community Southwark. We renewed our lapsed affiliation to The Conservation Trust as this is free this year! We maintain contacts with many other local and national groups. As a registered charity, FONC is

required to submit information to the Charity Commission on an annual basis which is available on line for public review.

## **5. NATIONAL FEDERATION OF CEMETERY FRIENDS (NFCF)**

Jeff Hart represented FONC at the AGM of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends in June 2018 when hosted by the Friends of Jesmond Old Cemetery, Newcastle upon Tyne. With 36 other delegates from 18 groups he received a warm 'Geordie' welcome with a choir and brass band on the cemetery tour. Gwyneth Stokes and Carol Stevenson attended in their positions as secretary and treasurer of the NFCF respectively. Before the officer and committee elections Carol said she wished to stand down as treasurer but would continue in an acting capacity for another year. During the year Melvyn Hawkins, chairman of the Friends of Stafford Cemeteries, was appointed treasurer and co-opted on to the committee. Gwyneth Stokes was re-elected as secretary and Robert Stephenson as chairman. The secretary reported a steady membership of about 90. FONC again took part in the NFCF's National Cemeteries Week by linking and publicising the Open Day.

## **6. FONC VOLUNTEERING AND PUBLICATIONS & ENQUIRY DESK**

Ish Lennox, one of the FONC Trustees, took on the role as the designated point of contact for volunteering with FONC, aiming to help co-ordinate people wishing to volunteer with the range of different activities in which they can participate. In January FONC participated in a well attended volunteering fair, organised jointly by Lewisham and Southwark Voluntary Councils, giving information on our volunteering activities. In addition there has been a dedicated volunteering stall at the Open Day to highlight volunteering opportunities and encourage visitors to sign up! The FONC publications desk has had a presence at all monthly and specialist tours during the year as well as during the Open House weekend and this continues to be an important initial point of contact for visitors to learn about FONC, volunteer to help with our activities, buy FONC publications, and sign up as members. The desk still continues to need new volunteers and it really does offer a great way to meet and chat with the cemetery's many and varied visitors. The only commitment is to help on the occasional Sunday afternoon for a couple of hours.

## **7. ANNUAL CEMETERY OPEN DAY AND OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND**

The annual Open Day on 18th May 2019 was, if the record receipts of takings by our plants, refreshments and publications stalls, and other donations received, are anything to go by, perhaps our best ever. Unfortunately the costs of putting the event continue to increase but Tim Stevenson works hard throughout the year to plan the event as cost effectively as possible. The very popular parade by Francis Chappell's Victorian style hearse with white and black horses was supplemented this year by James Shackleton's world's first motorised hearse, dating from 1906! A full programme of choirs, poets and musicians kept the chapel full of visitors and we were entertained by the colourful Black Swan Border Morris. Tours were full to brimming and we are hugely grateful to every one of our plant donators and home bakers and all the volunteers who work so hard on the day. Fortunately we had more volunteer support on the day, including from Good Gym runners and the choirs, to help set up and clear up afterwards which makes the Day a little less stressful!

London Open City weekend was held on 22/23 September 2018 and, despite the poor weather on the Saturday, attracted a good number of visitors who were also able to enjoy hot drinks and home-made cakes on site. Visits to the chapel and crypt were enhanced by FONC member Jolanta Jagiello's exhibition in the chapel 'Deeds Not Words' marking the centenary of the granting of votes to women.

## **8. FONC WEB SITE, PUBLICITY AND MEDIA COVERAGE**

Simon Quill continues to update and improve our website ([www.fonc.org.uk](http://www.fonc.org.uk)) providing information about the cemetery and FONC which is an essential link with the wider world. We have also improved the data security of the site. Our presence on social media continues to improve, with Fran White's great work advertising our activities in Instagram Fran White's great work advertising our activities in Instagram joining the efforts of member Pete Trotman on Facebook. These platforms produce some very positive feedback and really connect us to a wider, and younger, audience. Time Out advertises our events and there have also been highly complementary articles in The Times and Daily Telegraph. We also assisted with the update of our entry for the revised edition of the book 'London Cemeteries' to be published shortly. Even local estate agents selling properties in the area point out the proximity to historic and beautiful Nunhead cemetery! We have attended events such as the Stuart Road street party, Brockley & Ladywell cemetery Open Day and Peckham Rye Fete to advertise the cemetery, recruit members and sell our publications.

## **9. MEMBERS' JOURNAL**

*FONC News* is published quarterly in March, June, September and December, and keeps members informed about our work and activities In addition to providing current information about the cemetery. Many interesting articles about the history of the cemetery, its architecture, monuments, flora and fauna, and residents, famous or otherwise, have been featured over the years, as well as feature articles about other historic cemeteries and places of interest. The number of pages in each issue varies slightly according to the amount of material received. Last year two issues comprised 24 pages and two comprised 20 pages. Each illustrated issue contains details and times of tours and future events in the cemetery. The editor would like to thank all those members who sent him articles for publication and, of course, everyone involved in the production and distribution of *FONC News* including proof reader Gwyneth Stokes, Nicola Dunn and her team of hand deliverers and Linda Martin our postal co-ordinator. Thanks also to Jeff and Jane Hart for their assistance in collecting the work from Catford, and Mark Plummer and staff at Catford Print for their excellent service. We always welcome letters and articles about Nunhead Cemetery (and other cemeteries) and related subjects for publication which should be sent direct to: The Editor, *FONC News*, c/o 185 Gordon Road, London, SE15 3RT. Pat Manning and Peter Blount stood down after many years service as our Journal postal distributors, which we gratefully recognised with a gift token.

## **10. PUBLICATIONS, ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH WORK**

The fourth volume of 'Nunhead Notables', written and illustrated by Ron Woollacott and his daughter Michele Burford was well received, as was Ron's new book on the life and career of music hall star Mr. Peck Stevens – 'The Great Vance'. A new set of postcards has also been produced. FONC member John Turpin featured the cemetery in his recent collection of poems and Camberwell College of Arts students produced a 'Walking Poem' booklet based on monument inscriptions in the cemetery. Work has also begun on updating the free leaflet about the cemetery and FONC that we produce. We also continue to receive donations of various photographs, letters, and memorial cards etc. for our archives. Southwark Council have also shared with us the data base of 1,891 significant trees surveyed in the cemetery.

## **11. CEMETERY PRESENTATIONS, TOURS AND OTHER EVENTS IN THE CEMETERY**

In addition to our ever popular general interest tours and the well established quarterly crypt and woodland tree trail tours we continue to offer a number of specialist subject tours with mixed fortune in terms of attendance. Music hall, military connections, cemetery symbols and Waterloo walks were added to this year by new Great War and International Women's Day walks and poet Chris McCabe led a poetry walk. We also provide general tours for special interest groups as diverse as the Bookham U3A group and Sutton & Wandle Valley Ramblers. Another Peckham

and Nunhead Free Film Festival event, facilitated by FONC, was held in the cemetery in September with around 300 people enjoying 'The Fog', complete with smoke machine! The Southwark Local History Group enjoyed a new presentation on Nunhead's Waterloo veterans.

## **12. MONUMENT INSCRIPTION RECORDING AND GRAVESEARCH**

FONC member Garry Wiles volunteered at the June 2018 AGM to take on the task of coordinating a new attempt to resuscitate our attempts to continue monumental inscription recordings, a number of which are currently on our website. Garry has made huge progress in a very short time and has recruited a number of helpers with the task. It is some two or three years ago since Southwark Council Bereavement Services entered into an agreement with Deceased on Line which means the names of all those persons buried at Nunhead may be searched on-line at [www.deceasedonline.com](http://www.deceasedonline.com). It should be pointed out however, that a fee is payable to search for the grave and square number relating to the deceased and these are essential if you want to find the position of a grave in the cemetery. We continue to receive enquiries by post and by e-mail and we always give appropriate advice if at all possible. Trustee Malcolm Collins has assisted with a number of enquiries regarding finding graves on site and carrying out searches of the cemetery records throughout the year. Our grave search desk which is a feature at our Annual Open Day in May is always busy with visitors hoping to locate a family grave or the grave of an ancestor, and visitors are usually pleased with the advice and assistance they receive from stall-holder Michele Burford and her father. It is always pointed out to visitors that some areas of the cemetery are completely impenetrable and we explain that safe access is not always possible.

## **13. ART PROJECTS**

Jolanta Jagiello exhibited metal sheet artworks in the chapel in the summer with a music hall theme and in September the 'Deeds Not Words' exhibition was staged over the Open House and Nunhead Arts Trail weekends (see above). The exhibition also appeared at Brompton Cemetery Open Day in July and at Ladywell and Brockley cemetery chapel in September. The exhibition was funded by the Southwark Neighbourhood Grant 2018/19. We have also been working with Studio Voltaire, a prestigious London gallery, to stage an exhibit in the chapel over summer 2020 by internationally known Royal Academician, sculptor Phyllida Barlow.

## **14. RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

Unfortunately the All Souls Service in the Anglican Chapel on 4 November, led by Fr. Ole Ogunyemi of St. Antony with St. Silas Church was poorly attended but nevertheless appreciated by many who could not attend. Perhaps because it coincided with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of the Great War, our annual Remembrance Service was attended by nearly 150 people. We were again joined by members of Nunhead Women's Institute who laid a handmade wreath at the civilian war memorial. The service concluded at the Anglican chapel where FONC Chairman Jeremy Partington displayed maps showing the home locations of almost all war victims buried at Nunhead together with an exhibition mounted by Jolanta Jagiello recalling the 1918 Armistice. This was followed by a very well attended Great War tour of the cemetery highlighting a number of graves and memorials of those who fell. We again donated £250 to the Royal British Legion for wreaths placed at seven sites within the cemetery.

## **15. MANAGEMENT OF THE CEMETERY BY SOUTHWARK BOROUGH COUNCIL**

We continue with monthly site meetings with Southwark Bereavement Services to discuss various issues that arise during the year. Continuing staff shortages both in the cemeteries service and contractors idverde earlier in the year now seem to have been addressed, improving the provision of services to cemetery users. However, we still await the promised Land Use Consultants conservation management plan for the cemetery. An informal proposal to change the cemetery

opening hours was dropped following comments by FONC. We have also submitted comments regarding protection of the designated view towards St. Paul's cathedral from the West Hill.

The application of the borough-wide Public Space Protection Order to encourage responsible dog ownership has proved beneficial to the cemetery, with enhancement of the visitor experience, recovery of muddy dog exercise areas and more prolific ground level wildlife. With some improvement to signage on site, compliance by dog-walkers has improved throughout the year. We have assisted LBS by monitoring compliance. FONC has submitted its preliminary comments in advance of the promised policy reviewed after 12 months' application.

**16. CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS**

The Scottish Martyrs memorial repairs project was amended following FONC lobbying and the completed work, despite the concerns about the drainage channel, has proved satisfactory. However, cracks in the new surface have subsequently appeared and we are pursuing this with LBS. Progress on restoring the Limesford Road boundary walls has been very slow given the numerous technical difficulties that need to be considered. It seems likely that the committed budget of £650,000 will be insufficient for the work and we await further information from LBS. The biannual survey of the Anglican chapel has recommended that a roof be installed to protect the integrity of the building. This has been considered by borough officers but no commitment has been made as yet. Following a condition survey of the recently identified and tagged significant trees in the cemetery a number of diseased or unsafe trees have been felled following consultation and agreement with FONC.

Following the award of a grant under the Cleaner, Greener, Safer scheme we are awaiting delivery of ten new waste bins for the cemetery and three FONC information banners. FONC has also installed a new water point at the Limesford Road entrance with materials donated by members.

LBS had secured funding for the repair of unsafe monuments in the cemetery and consulted FONC on their proposed list of 18 memorials included in the first of three batches to be undertaken. We were able to influence the choice of memorials and also persuaded LBS to include some additional related repairs. FONC volunteers undertook vegetation clearance in advance of works. Given the cost effectiveness of utilising contractors already on site, FONC trustees also agreed to fund the repair of a further nine memorials. As other issues arose during the works, completed by the end of May, a total of 47 monuments have been repaired, of which FONC has funded ten.

**17. EAST LODGE**

In June an East Lodge Project Board was established, consisting of representatives of LBS, Historic England and FONC. This has met at intervals during the year to take forward the anticipated restoration of the Lodge. Progress has been hampered by various delays with consultant's reports and tendering problems and anticipated costs now seem set to exceed the available £1 million budget. However, LBS have committed finding additional funding to carry through the project to completion. We remain hopeful that the initial enabling works will begin on site before the autumn of 2019. The possible usages of the restored building that FONC considered to be unacceptable have now all been rejected by the Board and it seems certain that FONC will have the use of at least some space in the Lodge.

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