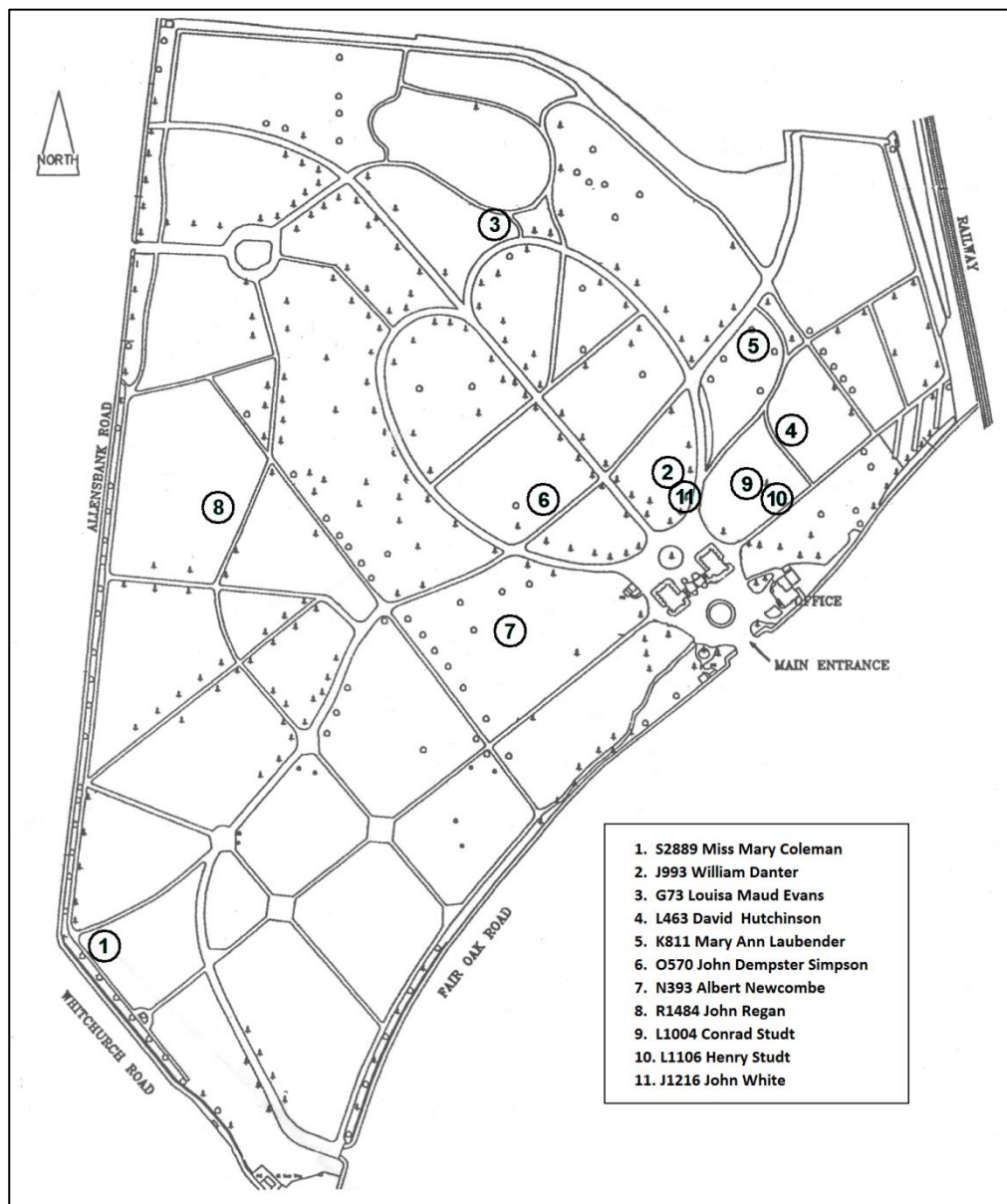


# **CIRCUSES & FUNFAIRS in CATHAYS CEMETERY**



**The Friends of Cathays Cemetery**





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# **1 Miss Mary Elizabeth Coleman (1878-1901)**

Giantess - PLOT S2889

## **EXTRAORDINARY FUNERAL AT CARDIFF. INTERMENT OF THE "IRISH WONDER,"**

Miss Elizabeth Coleman, otherwise "Polly Agracieux." or the "Irish Wonder," who died in Cardiff Infirmary on Friday, was only fourteen, but she had attained colossal proportions for that age and hopes were entertained that the girl would have developed into a giantess without a rival. But she succumbed after a few days' illness to an internal malady. The doctors had never seen such a phenomenon. They obtained permission to make a post-mortem. The lady was a protégé of Professor Lloyd and went about in a van for exhibition purposes. The funeral took place on Tuesday afternoon from 46, Penarth-road. The polished oak coffin, covered with pretty flowers, was of the usual length for a girl of that age, but the girth and bulk were extraordinary. The remains were deposited in an open hearse, and in the mourning coaches were Mr. James Coleman, the father (a miner from Oldham); Mr. Harold Coleman (professor of music), elder brother; Mr. William Coleman (mechanic), younger brother; Miss Sarah Coleman (sister). Professor Lloyd; Mr. Brown (bird fancier), Caroline-street; Mr. Joseph Hillard, 46, Penarth Road; Mrs. Freeman, show proprietress; Mr. Tranter, 56, Wood Street; Mrs. Armstrong, Penarth Road, and many others. The interment took place in the Non-conformist part of Cardiff Cemetery.

WEEKLY MAIL 8 June 1901

Mary was buried 4<sup>th</sup> June 1901 in Plot No S2889, Aged 23 and is recorded in the Burial Register as "Spinster-Giantess".

# **2 William Danter (1837-1902)**

Fairground Proprietor- PLOT J993

Beginning in the 1800s, the W Danter & Sons' company travelled the country delighting generations with penny rides on steam roundabouts,

galloping horses and swinging boats. William Danter was one of the leading travelling entertainers in South Wales with a career spanning over 45 years.

Many tributes were given in the local press to the family's generosity:

Messrs W. Danter and Sons, the enterprising proprietors of the steam merry-go-round entertaining the public nightly in the field opposite the Gas Works, Barry Docks, will give a special benefit this evening (Friday), the whole of the proceeds to be handed over towards the funds of the Barry Nursing Association and Accident Hospital. That they appreciate the good work done by means of the Nursing Association, but that they equally appreciate the generous large-heartedness, of Messrs Danter and Sons.

- Barry Dock News 1st May 1896

Messrs W. Danter and Sons, who are at present on a visit to Barry Decks, are well-known for their generosity towards deserving objects of charity in the different towns they visit, and we have great pleasure in announcing that on Friday evening next, the 21st instant, they will give the whole of the receipts from their steam roundabouts and galloping horses on the ground opposite the Gas and Water Offices, Holton Road, Barry Docks, equally for the benefit of the Barry Nursing Association and Accident Hospital, and Barry Dock Voluntary Hospital

- Barry Dock News 14th April 1899

William was buried in Cathays Cemetery on 26 February 1902 at the age of 65 in Plot J993. His occupation was described as Roundabout Proprietor and he resided in Penarth Road.

His funeral consisted of a procession of over 20 carriages with the funeral car drawn by four horses. The procession was preceded by 50 people on foot, gathering at Newport Station for the journey to Cardiff. The Rev J Baker, vicar of St Catherine's read the service at the Cemetery. The Ceremony alluded to the generosity of the deceased which had always been shown to local charitable institutions. The grave was covered in Wreaths.

The mourners were Mrs. Danter (widow), Mr. J. S. Danter (son), and family; Messrs. John and Jos. Danter (brothers), and four nephews and nieces of the deceased. Mr. J. Johnson, Prince of Wales Theatre, Neath, was

steward, and those present included representative outdoor entertainers in Wales and the West, of England. The attendants at the funeral were invited to tea at the King's Restaurant, St. Mary-street, where, by request, the proprietor (Mr. J. M. Gerhold), who had known deceased for 40 years, instanced his generosity by re-calling his large donations to the Newport Hospital, Merthyr and Dowlais Hospital, the explosion funds of the Park Slip, Cynewydd, Great Western, Cilfynydd, Senghenydd, and Llanbradach Collieries.

Recently a descendant of William Danter, Henry Danter, ran Barry Island Pleasure Park. In 2015, Henry determined to return the park to its glory days. Henry has fond memories of childhood trips to the seaside town and the island holds a special place in his heart.

### **3 Louisa Maud Evans (1882-1896)**

Balloon Girl – PLOT G73

This is the sad story of a young girl who died in a freak ballooning accident during the Cardiff Exhibition of 1896. The memorial was paid for by public subscription.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1896, the body of a young girl was washed ashore at Nash point, close to Newport. Identified by the sailor suit she wore, it was obvious to those who pulled her from the mud of the Bristol Channel that this was Balloon Girl.

Three days before, Balloon Girl, real name Louisa Maud Evans, had ascended in a balloon from Cathays Park. Part of the Cardiff Maritime and Industrial Exhibition, this stunt would be the crowd puller, a descent by a young girl using the latest in Parachute technology from a balloon was not to be missed. As a result this event on the 21st July attracted over 100,000 people. The brave aeronaut was supposed to ascend in the balloon and then descend by parachute unharmed on the outskirts of the city. The plan was for the heroine to be collected at this point by horse and carriage and make a glorious return to the crowds at the Exhibition field.

Louisa had decided on the exotic show name of Mademoiselle Albertina. Louisa sewed herself a sailors suit, navy collar with white trim, a white smock, and a straw bonnet.



As the crowd cheered, Louisa quickly took to the sky. In a matter of seconds she was high above the houses of Adamsdown, Roath and Splott. Many from the Docks could see Mademoiselle Albertina; picnicking families who lined the Penarth cliffs to see this amazing sight could even see her. The balloon travelled at great speed over Newport Road and the infirmary, where the wind suddenly dropped, causing the balloon to rapidly gain height.

5,000 feet in the Cardiff air, Balloon Girl had no choice but to release herself from the harness and parachute into the Bristol Channel. Her heavy parachute, made from cloth and wood, weighed over 30lbs. It was this apparent lifesaver that dragged her to the murky depths of the water. Louisa Maude Evans drowned at the age of 14 and half years.



The people of Cardiff paid for her tombstone and funeral via subscription. Her body now rests at Cathays Cemetery.

## **4 David Hutchinson (1813-1890)**

Circus Owner - PLOT L463

The old Cardiff Bus Station in Temperance Town by the Railway Station was built on the site of Messrs Hutchinson and Tayleure's Circus. David Hutchinson and his son-in-law Joseph Taylor (or Tayleure as it sounded more exotic), lived there and opened a circus in November 1870. The star of the show was Signor Napoli, the Italian Hercules, apparently 'the strongest man in existence'.

The Cardiff Times reported in April 1890 that Mr David Hutchinson, who was for over a quarter of a century inseparably identified with circus life in Cardiff, died on Wednesday at his residence in Park-street, after a protracted illness. The deceased had not taken any active part in the direction of the Circus for several years, but his interest for its success was only diminished by increasing infirmity, followed by his painful illness. A few weeks ago (in 1890), the work of demolishing the Circus in Wood-street was entered upon. Mr Hutchinson was the founder of the original Circus which stood at the corner of Wood Street and St. Mary-Street (the site of the Theatre Royal), but in keeping with Cardiff's rapid march of progress, it was not to be expected that a wooden structure would be tolerated in the most central thoroughfare, and therefore the building which has just disappeared was erected by Mr Hutchinson 14 years ago at the juncture of Westgate Street and Park Street. His professional career was in many ways remarkable, and, as usual, the members of his family trained to follow in their father's footsteps. Mr Hutchinson was married twice, and has left a widow and four daughters; one of whom is well known as Madame Tayleure, whose husband was formerly associated with Mr Hutchinson in partnership, but eventually became sole proprietor of the Circus which has now disappeared. Another daughter is the wife of Mr J. Hames, now in business- as a tobacconist in Bute-street, but who some years ago enjoyed a considerable reputation as "the boneless clown." The deceased's grandson (Mr Taylor) is now managing I his father's circus, which is on tour in Pembrokeshire, and is due, at Cardiff in about three weeks. Mr Hutchinson's benevolent disposition as an entertainment

caterer was well known in the town and district and several institutions have derived considerable pecuniary assistance as the result of the benefits" which he organised.

According to the South Wales Daily News the Circus' summer tour of 1879 took in Newport, Pontypool, Abergavenny, Brecon, Welshpool, Newtown, Knighton & Hereford, where it would have a powerful company of gymnasts, equestrians and clowns. The Transfield family formed a portion of the company.



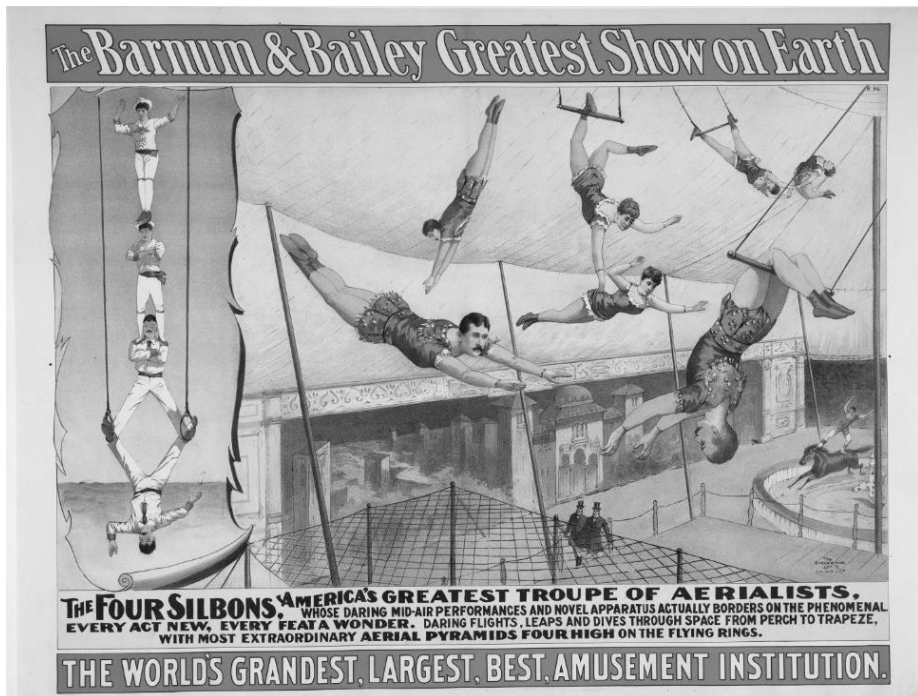
*Members of the Transfield family who ran a popular travelling circus in the late 19th century. Pictured in their costumes are Ann Polly, Teddy Beppo, Tom, Florrie and Rose.*

The South Wales Daily News of November 1878 stated the circus season started in Cardiff with a wonderful performance by Herr Blitz, who had been engaged for a limited time only. It also included a jester 'Croeste' and a 'Black Princess' with daring flights from a bare-backed horse. The performance also included the Rasselas family. Other favorites included Frank Jennings, Albert Wells and the 'Infant Jockey'.

Whilst the same journal on 27th November 1878 contained an article on the Cardiff Circus: There appeared nightly three flying wonders, named

Rolla, Alonzo and Prince Mite. A novelty will also be found in the appearance Mr Croueste, the popular jester, in a performance of Dick Turpin. The equestrian performances are sustained with extraordinary spirit. The Article concludes with "Such a programme as that underlined for the present week, affords something agreeable to everybody, and those who have not already visited the popular institution in Westgate Street, Cardiff, **should do so at once.**"

An added attraction to the Circus in 1879 was what was described as the 'greatest gymnastic artistes in the world' - the Silbons.



1892 saw the appearance of Joseph 'Joey' Haines, a favourite clown. One of his ring jokes was telling how he got over the difficulty of sharing a bottle of ginger-beer between three - "I gave Billy the cork; the other fellow the bottle; and I drank the ginger-beer myself." And then the band played and the horses galloped off.

## **5 Mary Ann Laubender (1863-1909)**

Giant Lady - PLOT K811

Evening Express, 10 March 1909:

### **DEATH OF A GIANT LADY**

Madam Royal, the giant lady, died last night at No. 3, Caroline Street, Cardiff, after a long and painful illness. Deceased will be buried tomorrow at the Cardiff Cemetery at 3.30 p.m.

Mary Ann Laubender, wife of John Henry Laubender, expert tattooist, was buried at Cathays Cemetery on 11th March 1909, aged 48.

## **6 John Dempster Simpson (1872-1902)**

Major Mite - PLOT O570

A celebrated 'Midget' of only 30 inches in height, who had appeared four times before Queen Victoria. The 'General Mite' had been in the employ of Charles Birch of Birch's Empire Novelty Company for seventeen years, succumbed to acute dyspepsia. In those years he had travelled all over the British Isles and the United States of America. He had been born in Washington in 1871. He was married and his wife lived in Washington and they had one child who died in infancy. Originally adopted by Tom Thumb, the General came under Mr. Birch's care after the death of the famous dwarf. In Cardiff "General Mite" was accompanied by Princess Pauline, Major Mite, Mrs. Mite. and Prince T'opa. On the coffin was the simple inscription: *John Dempster Simpson, died January 28th, 1902, aged 30.* No reference here to his stature, his title, or his fame in the strange profession to which Nature had allotted him.

## **7 Albert Newcombe (1865-1892)**

Fatal Accident at the World's Fair, Cardiff – PLOT N393

On 2nd April 1892, A ship's fireman, named Albert Thomas Newcombe, aged 27 from South Shields, employed on board the S.S. Briscoe, while

swinging in one of the swings at the World's Fair (or as later stated at the inquest, falling from an aerial flight or trapeze wire), Penarth Road, accidentally fell out, and sustained severe injuries to the head and neck. P.C. Latham conveyed the man to the Cardiff Infirmary, where he was detained. He was under treatment at that institution until the 14th of July, when he was removed to the union hospital. He, however, made no progress, and died. At the inquest, Dr. Sheen gave a verdict of Accidental death.

## **8 John Patrick Regan (1880-1897)**

Studts Accident – PLOT R1484

SWING BOAT ACCIDENT, Sad Fate of a Cardiff Youth. At the Town Hall on Friday evening Mr E. B. Reece held an inquest relative to the death of John Patrick Regan (17), of 56, Milton Street, who died on Wednesday from injuries caused by being thrown out of a swinging boat at Studt's shows, Queen Street. The evidence of Peter McKay, of 22, Adeline Street, was to the effect that in company with deceased he engaged a swing boat. They got in and had been swinging three or four minutes when the boat suddenly gave a jerk. Witness had turned his head to look at the people, and upon placing himself in position again found that deceased had fallen out. Witness had to hold on to one of the bars to avoid meeting with a similar fate. The boat was stopped and witness found his mate lying unconscious on some girders with several people around him. Regan was taken to Dr. S. Wallace, Charles Street, who ordered his removal to the Infirmary but death had taken place before he reached the institution. The boats were in charge of a youth, 17 years of age. Replying to questions put by Mr Studt, witness said neither deceased or himself stood up in the boat. A youth named Phillip Joshua said he saw deceased and McKay sitting in a boat. Something dropped from the top of the frame and then the boat began to swerve and Regan fell out. The boat in swerving struck the framework.—In answer to Mr Studt witness said that he believed the thing he saw fall was a bolt. Corroborative evidence was given by John Elliott.- Mr Studt, in reply to the coroner, said that Elliott had given them no end of trouble. They had been obliged to put him out nearly every night.- Charles Burt said that Regan was standing up. The boat was swinging quite straight, and after the accident two girls went into it, and it was continued working all night. Albert Fry stated that, the fittings and bearing were examined by himself after the accident, and there was nothing wrong with

them.-Other evidence was called, and the jury then returned a verdict of "Accidental death", adding that the evidence was so conflicting they could not express all opinion as to the exact cause of the accident.

South Wales Echo 12th June 1897

## 9 Conrad Studt (1808-1877)

Showman – PLOT L1004



Conrad Studt was born in Frankfurt, Main, Germany in 1808. He married Catherine, from Gloucester, and they had 3 sons and 2 daughters who were born at various locations across South Wales. John P Studt died 31

Aug 1912 age 63 and Katherine Studt died 26 April 1906 aged 55 are buried in the same grave.

In 1871 Conrad was entered on the Census as a showman travelling with swings, in Swansea. He died at Dumballs Road, Cardiff on 9 July 1877 aged 69. Katherine, his wife, living at Kingsholm in Gloucester, passed away 7 October 1895 aged 81. The family continued in the business, operating across South Wales, with references to "showmen and circus travellers" and "steam roundabout proprietor". The 1891 census found one son, Henry, with 4 daughters and 1 son, residing in Van No 1, Railway Arches, Strand, Swansea. Studt's Fun Fair, based in Swansea, still travels around Wales today and, until quite recently in 2015, Vernon Studt leased the Barry Island Pleasure Park.

## **10 Henry Studt (1808-1877)**

Showman – PLOT L1106



Born in Carmarthen on 30th July 1853 he was one of three boys and one daughter to Conrad, born at different locations across South Wales. Conrad's son Henry took over the mantle of the family business and Henry was referred to as an Amusement Caterer. By 1904 Henry owned a Carousel at Porthcawl on the College fields behind the Seabank Hotel of today. A page in the Souvenir of Porthcawl booklet of 1921 refers to Henry's generosity to completion of the All Saints Church. Through his life he donated monies to local hospitals.

Henry Studt, died 25th April 1922 aged 69. His wife Emma is also buried with him, died 16th October 1926 aged 74. Also buried with them is their daughter Elizabeth of Swansea who died in infancy aged 5 on 1st June 1891.

## **11 John White (1833-1910)**

Showman – PLOT J1216

This is undoubtedly one of the most impressive memorials in the cemetery, not least because of its sheer size. It was erected in 1910 to John White, who was the father of a well-known local amusement caterer, Mr Sidney White. John White, who died from heart failure at the age of 76, not only has an exceptional memorial but also had an unusual funeral, as this report from the South Wales Echo of 1910 shows:

Novel Sight at Cardiff

The dying wish of Mr John White, father of Mr Sidney White (1860-1938), the well-known amusement caterer, that his remains be drawn to the cemetery at Cardiff by one of his son's traction engines, was fulfilled this afternoon. The traction engine was draped in purple and black and was covered with many beautiful floral tributes. An exquisitely designed floral harp was fixed to the front of the engine and suspended above it was a design of the Prince of Wales feathers, composed of choice flowers.





The cortege left the residence of the deceased in Tin Street shortly before 3 o'clock and so dense was the crowd that the road had to be cleared by police. The line of the route – Newport Road, Queen Street, Park Place, Cathays Terrace, and right up to the cemetery, was thronged.

