



## *Bumper Double Issue*

## **February 2011 Issue N° 5**

### ***Snow: the good, the bad and the ugly***

We were all affected by the snow before Christmas - admiring the wonderful white scenery, but becoming increasingly disaffected by the disruption to our daily lives and treacherous surfaces. The cemetery was not immune to such contrasting effects. While the snowy landscape was enchanting, the weight of snow on many of the oldest fir trees caused extensive damage. With paths blocked by fallen boughs and dangerously hanging branches, the oldest part of the cemetery had to be closed for several days for safety reasons.



*10" of snow blankets the cemetery ...*



*but snaps huge boughs ...*

Fortunately, the Action for Employment team, who have already done so much valued work in painting the perimeter railings and clearing overgrown areas, were able to come in for the initial clearance of paths and removal of

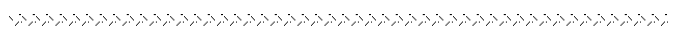
dangerous branches. This still left much work for professional tree surgeons to do to ensure that the rich heritage provided by these trees is properly tended.



*completely blocking a drive ...*



*until Action for Employment convert the timber into a log pile*



## ***Friends' Notice Board***

### **WORK DAYS**

**February 25th, April 30th, June 25th - all Saturdays.** Meet at the Chapels, Fair Oak Road at 10 am. Two hours of gentle exercise, fresh air and friendly banter. We always welcome new faces, come along, give it a go.

### **TALK**

**Tuesday 10th May: Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe on 'Unsolved Mysteries'.** This talk is at 7pm in room 4.45 of the University's **Humanities Building** to the rear of Colum Road.

## ***It's a Small World***

After the War Graves walk in October, when almost everyone had left, a couple were seen going into the information hut. It turned out that they were visitors from Australia, **Bryan Kelly and his wife**. Bryan, a descendant of **R G Thomas**, who was the architect for the chapels, had been a constructive contact during the preparation of the Cemetery Book. Fortunately, Phil Amphlett who had led the walk was still there, so was able to open the chapels so that our visitors could look inside, to see both the beautifully restored timber work of the roofs and, in complete contrast, the extent of the work still required on the rest of the buildings.



*Bryan Kelly and his wife outside the chapels*

This is perhaps an opportune time to record that the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book has been a great success, with around 1200 copies sold. However, there are still copies available for £9.99 through bookshops or, directly from the Friends, for £7.00. Contact any of the trustees if you still have not got a copy. And do not forget that this book makes an excellent birthday or Christmas present.

## ***Friends' Business***

An exceedingly short Extraordinary General Meeting, before Professor David's lecture on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, resulted in unanimous agreement of the Friends' objectives. This was the last step towards the achievement of charitable status, which was obtained just before the end of the year. This brought with it a number of advantages, starting with the ability to recover

income tax on the subscriptions due in 2011 from tax-paying members.

The Friends Annual General Meeting was held in the Briwnant Chapel on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> January. The main business of the meeting was to elect trustees and officers for the forthcoming year. The change from management by committee to being run by trustees is a consequence of the transition to registered charity. The following were elected:

Chairman: Paul Nicholson

Treasurer: John Farnhill

Secretary: Mike O'Callaghan

Committee Members/Trustees: Eric Fletcher, Cllr Brian Jones, Ivor Lippett, Chris Marsh, Bill Mosley, Hugh Payne & Margaret Smith.

The Chairman announced progress on two memorial projects. Damaging trees around Bishop Hedley's tomb, the largest in the Cemetery, had been removed and funding for the renovation of the stonework was now available. This work was expected to be undertaken in the early part of the year. Approval has been sought from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for permission to provide a stone memorial in their distinctive style, to mark the grave of Edward Savage, a Rorke's Drift survivor. It is hoped that it will be possible to make more definite announcements on both of these projects before too long, so watch this space.

The meeting concluded with an open discussion intended to encourage members to put forward ideas for action or consideration by the trustees. The main topic was the restoration of the chapels, where the continuing dilemma is to find a sustainable use which will be the key to obtaining grants for the work. The discussion was lively and constructive and could clearly have continued longer had the deadline for vacating the chapel not arrived.

It was refreshing to witness so much positive interest, but it is emphasised that good ideas do not have to be kept on hold until the next AGM, but would be welcomed by the trustees at any time.



## Another Fungi Update

We continue to be grateful to a small band of volunteers who scour the cemetery in the late autumn, to continue the fungi survey. In our last newsletter, we reported that more varieties of waxcap had been found, but the work is not confined to wax caps and another fungi discovery has been the Olive Earthtongue, *Microglossum Olivaceum*.



*Olive Earthtongue*

This is a UK Bio-diversity Action Plan Priority Species, protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and is considered vulnerable and at risk in the UK because of a decrease in grazing or cutting and the addition of fertilisers, which are destroying much of the natural habitat of this species.

## The Cardiff Blitz

The 2<sup>nd</sup> January this year was the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the major bombing raid on Cardiff and you may have caught commemorative items on local television and radio or have seen articles in local papers. As well as targeting the docks, the raid also sought out the rail links feeding the docks and, particularly, bridges on them. With one line running beside its eastern boundary and another separating its two halves, the cemetery suffered what modern parlance terms collateral damage. You can find more on this in the Cemetery Book.

Sadly, the collateral damage also included

residential areas, with consequential deaths, and these are recorded on the Blitz Memorial which is in the northern section of the cemetery. Perhaps appropriately, this memorial is not far from the Rhymney Valley Line.



If you do not know where the memorial is, it will almost certainly be visited during the programmed walk on 18<sup>th</sup> September, which will be in the newer part of the cemetery.

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## The First Victoria Cross

One of the memorials revealed by the clearance of section L of the cemetery, during the Friends workdays, marks the burial place of **John Abercromby Knox** in 1880, at the age of 10. For the time, sad but unremarkable. But read on ... the inscription continues, "**only son of Major J. S. Knox (late Rifle Brigade)**".

Although the VC was instituted by royal warrant in 1856, the first awards were backdated for service in the Baltic and the Crimea. The first recipient of the VC was a Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Charles Lucas, who was given the honour for throwing a live shell overboard in June 1854 while serving in the Baltic. But the Army's first VC action was the Battle of Alma in September 1854, for which six Crosses were awarded - four to the Scots Fusilier Guards and two to the Royal

Welsh Fusiliers. One of these went to **John Simpson Knox**, a sergeant in the Scots Fusilier Guards, who rallied retreating troops and was credited with a major role in turning a potential defeat into victory.

He went on to distinguish himself at the Battle of Inkerman (November 1854), where he took part in the storming of a battery and, single-handedly faced a party of enemy skirmishers. He was honoured again for his bravery when he volunteered for the ladder party for the first assault on the heavily defended Grand Redan, Sebastopol (June 1855), where his left arm was blown away by a cannon ball.

Knox was born in Glasgow on September 30 1828. His childhood was not a happy one so, at the age of 14, he ran away from home and, being tall for his age, enlisted in the Scots Fusilier Guards. He was promoted corporal in June 1846 (whilst still under-age), sergeant in July 1851, and acting sergeant-major and drill sergeant in July 1853. He was still an exceptionally young, but senior, N.C.O. at the time of the Crimean War.

The Bravery of the three Battalions of Foot Guards and, in particular the valour displayed by them at Inkerman, so delighted the Prince Consort, that he offered a Commission in his own Regiment, the Rifle Brigade, to the most deserving N.C.O. Knox was duly selected and commissioned Ensign in the Rifle Brigade, in March 1855, and was promoted Lieutenant the following month.

After the Crimean War Knox was appointed Instructor of Musketry and promoted Captain on the 30th April 1858. He married Miss Louisa Harriet Gale in 1862 and they had seven children, while he served as Instructor of Musketry at Gibraltar and at Portsmouth until June 1872, when he retired from the Army.

He had been recommended for the rank of Major some 11 years earlier the Duke of Cambridge. For some reason, this had been refused but the Duke, on learning of this shortly before Knox's retirement, tried again. The promotion was finally confirmed on the 7th

June, and Major Knox relinquished his Commission the following day. He would undoubtedly have been pleased with both the ranking title and that he received the full market value of the commission, £2,500 - a significant retirement "lump sum".



The headstone of John Abercromby Knox

Having left the Army Knox served as **Governor of Cardiff Gaol** from 1872 until 1886, when he transferred as Governor to Kirkdale Gaol, Liverpool. In October 1891 he was appointed to the Governorship of Hull Gaol, an appointment he never took up, owing to ill-health caused by his wife's recent death, and he retired from the Prison Service in April 1892. Throughout this second career he was noted as a model prisons' official - a stern disciplinarian, he maintained perfect order, but at the same time showed the utmost kindness to the prisoners. It was while Governor of Cardiff Gaol that Knox's son died, to be buried in Cathays Cemetery. And there appears to be one other lasting legacy from this period: it is surely no coincidence that the entrance to Cardiff Prison is in Knox Road?

Major Knox died at home in Cheltenham on the 8th January 1897, and was buried in the Cheltenham Cemetery four days later.

The Knox VC was the principal item in a lot which included three other medals, two



portraits, a cap badge, a belt plate and a Russian cannonball reputed to be the one which took his arm off. The lot sold for £252,000, more than double the original estimate, at Spink Auction House in London, in April 2010. Lord Ashcroft, the Tory peer, was outbid by an anonymous buyer, to the disappointment of the descendants of Major John Simpson Knox, who had hoped that it could be kept in this country and on public display.

A fortunate coincidence of the auction was that much research for this article had been done and documented in the catalogue which can be viewed at:

<http://www.spink.com/auctions/pdf/1005.pdf>

The catalogue borrows heavily from Knox's own diaries and letters and includes detailed personal accounts of the actions at Alma, Inkerman and Sebastopol. If you read these, you will be left in no doubt that Major Knox was a remarkable and brave soldier, who was fully deserving of the honours bestowed on him.

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## **Ancient Egypt in British Cemeteries**

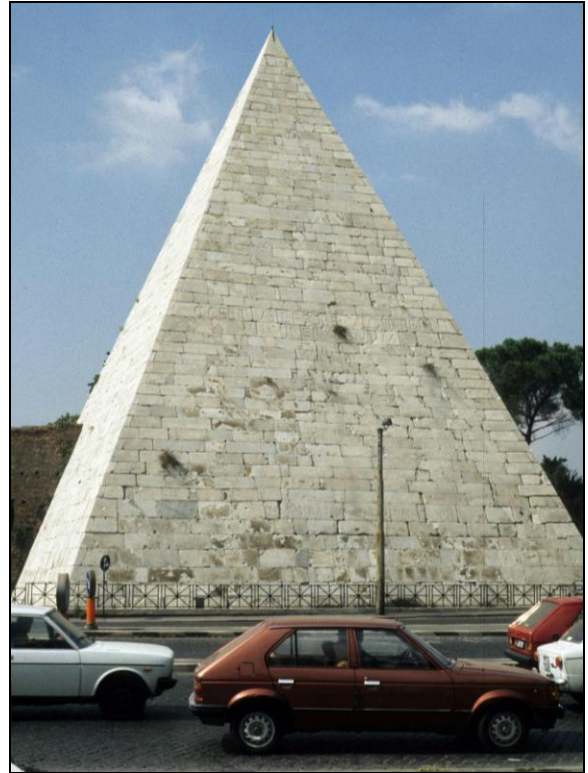
A lecture by Professor Rosalie David, O.B.E.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 Professor Rosalie David, O.B.E., of the KNH Centre for Biomedical and Forensic Egyptology spoke on behalf of the *Friends* at a joint *Friends* and Cardiff University School of History, Archaeology and Religion (SHARE) event.

An Egyptologist might seem an unusual choice for a group whose interest is in the Cathays cemetery in Cardiff, but Professor David was well qualified to speak on two grounds. First, her topic *Ancient Egypt in British Cemeteries* reviewed the development of Egyptianising cemetery architecture in Britain and second she is a native of Cardiff and has ancestors buried in Cathays Cemetery. As a leading promoter of Egyptology in Britain she is also a very accomplished speaker and television presenter.

Although focussing on Britain, her talk took in many aspects of the development of Egyptianising architecture. She began by looking at the influence which Egyptian monuments had had on

Roman civilisation, not least with the erection of the pyramid of Gaius Cestius in 12 B.C. and the Roman mania for collecting obelisks (there are now more standing obelisks in Rome than in Egypt!).



*Gaius Cestius Pyramid [PTN]*

It is perhaps through the acceptance of the obelisk as a 'classical' monument that it came to be part of British funerary tradition. It has been suggested that it was particularly popular amongst Catholics during times of persecution by the Protestant state because it was an acceptable monument but one which had a direct link to Rome - not least through the Vatican obelisk. However, the greater influence of Egypt in British cemeteries is probably the result of the British occupation of Egypt following Nelson's defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of the Nile in 1798 and the opening up of the country to Westerners.

Ironically, although the British defeated the French it was the publication of the drawings made by Napoleon's *savants* and published in the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809-22) which really brought Egyptian monuments to the attention of the British and which, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, had led to an interest in incorporating them into cemeteries.

This was a time of numerous architectural schools and 'Egyptian' was just one of many competing

styles available. Although we think of it as popular, not least through the Egyptian catacombs at Exeter and the Circle of Lebanon at Highgate, it was neither the most prominent nor the longest lasting. Its influence, however, is undoubted and the continued use of obelisks is a testament to that.

After reviewing some of the cemeteries most associated with Egyptianising architecture (many illustrated with images provided by Ms. Kayleigh O'Leary, a student at SHARE) Professor David concluded by showing the graves of two well known archaeologists whose inscriptions carry Egyptian themes - that of Howard Carter (1874-1939) the discoverer of the tomb of Tutankhamun and the more recent monument to Professor Peter J. Ucko (1938-2007) some of whose early work had dealt with Egyptian figurines.



*Courtesy of Kayleigh O'Leary*

Professor David's lecture was very well received by an audience of 80-100 people, including members of the *Friends* and staff and students from SHARE. Professor Ian Freestone gave a vote of thanks on behalf of both groups and we are indebted to Professor Peter Coss, Head of SHARE for making the lecture theatre available to us.

*Paul T. Nicholson*

## Letters

I was most interested to read the **Monumental Mystery** article in the July 2010 issue of *Not So Grave News* because my own family were affected by the 1960s policy of trying to simplify the cemetery layout for ease of maintenance.

My great-great-grandfather was William Sanders, founder of the Principality Building Society and Mayor of Cardiff in 1889-90. He bought plot 3 adjacent plots for his family in the Methodist section of Cathays and commissioned an enormous 6 ft marble monument carved by Goscombe John, the sculptor and one of his lifelong friends.

I only visited Cathays for the first time in 1972 to visit the grave of my grandfather, who had died earlier that year. The elaborate monument (which cost £46 to build in 1903, the equivalent of almost £4000 in today's money) had only recently been taken away and broken up, to be replaced by a simple headstone listing only the surname of the family and the year dates of successive interments. As a result I never saw the monument itself, although I spoke to the workmen responsible for taking it away. I assume my grandfather, my mother and aunt must have collectively agreed to this act of corporate vandalism but I have never seen any correspondence relating to the matter, and since all three have been dead for a number of years, the facts of matter are likely to remain unknown.

Best wishes, and keep up the good work!

*Dr Robert Treharne Jones, Henley-on-Thames*

*This is the first correspondence to appear in the newsletter - but we hope it will not be the last! If you wish to comment on anything in the newsletter, have an interesting anecdote about the cemetery or ideas for the Friends, please write to us. (Contact details on page 8.)*

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### Reminder:

Have you renewed your Membership?

## ***Fantasy Fiction***

I don't know how many there are. A couple of dozen, maybe thousands. I have no idea. You can't count things you can't see, things you cannot hear or feel. Possibly there's one in this room, passing by the table at which we are sitting, maybe one standing next to you when you load your shopping into your car outside Tesco's. We need a name for these unseen, unseeing mystery beings. The best I can come up with is the "up-and-downers". Try as you might there aren't any references to them on Google, no mention in even the most comprehensive of dictionaries. How do I know of their existence? Well I was in school with one, one who became, and presumably still is, an up-and-downer. His name was John, but everyone, with the exception of his Mother called him 'Jack'. He was never what you could call a Jack-of-all-trades but he did become the master of one, if you can call a life of crime a trade.

It all began at the "pick and mix" in Woolies. Jack and I would stroll towards the display, all innocent like, I was the look out man, keeping an eye on the shop assistants while Jack filled his pockets with toffee creams, sherbet lemons, Turkish delight, anything that was going. I suppose I was as guilty as him, an accessory I think they call it, but we were only ten or eleven years old, just a bit of fun, a laugh.

It was about that time Jack's family moved house. He went to a new school so we saw less of each other. We'd meet up occasionally, perhaps share a can or two of coke. After 'A' levels I went away to Uni, so didn't see Jack for, oh could have been four years, perhaps more. I remember I did meet him once outside the football ground. But, to be honest he wasn't the same Jack I'd known in school. OK, we all change, grow up, our lives go in different directions. But Jacks seemed to have carried on as before except he'd progressed, if progressed is the right word, from stealing sweets from Woolies to running a black market operation dealing in the latest "must have" trainers and designer tee shirts. I asked where he got them; he tapped the side of his nose and replied: "Fell off the back of a lorry, didn't they." Anything not tied down was fair game to Jack.

A few times my Father would cut out pieces from the Echo about Jack. Usually under a heading

such as: "LOCAL BOY MUGS ELDERLY SHOPPER". Another one I recall was "OLD AGE PENSIONER'S SAVINGS STOLEN. LOCAL MAN ARRESTED". We did meet once more, wasn't planned, to be honest our lives had gone in totally different directions, we had nothing in common any longer. But I must tell you the strange story Jack told me at what would turn out to be our last meeting.

He reckoned he was ambling down the road, making his way towards the park. He'd pinched one of those long French loafs and a couple of bananas from outside the deli. When all of a sudden, and this is where I began to have serious doubts about Jack's mental state, anyway he reckoned there was a strong smell of burning and there standing in front of him was the devil. According to Jack this devil looked him straight in the eyes and said "I've been keeping a watch on you and you are just the man I need, an apprentice to help me in hell." Jack took a couple of steps back, the devil's hot breath was scorching his face, and shouted: "No way. I'm getting out of here". He dropped the bananas and tore the French loaf in two, holding the two pieces of bread in front of him in the shape of a cross. Jack strode towards the devil who, covering his eyes, backed away. The devil had only gone a few steps when he bumped into a road sign; he turned around and screamed an almighty yell of anguish. It was a cross-roads sign. I almost felt sorry for the devil. There he was unable to move backwards because of the cross on the road sign and couldn't move forwards because Jack had lain the bread in the shape of a crucifix on the road just out of reach of the devil. Believe that or not, it's up to you, but that is the story as Jack told it.

As I said that that was the last time I saw Jack. A few months later he was dead. I seem to remember it was a day or two before the New Year. He came out of a local pub, possibly for a smoke, probably having had too much to drink, and stumbled straight into the path of a speeding taxi. The paramedics pronounced him dead at the scene. I went to the funeral, after all our Mothers had been close friends and I think our Dads would meet occasionally at the football. Didn't recognise anyone else. Looked like an "away day" for the local Mafia, you know closely cropped

hair, tattoos and sunglasses. All it needed was a couple of violin cases. Now I don't know how long it takes from being a corpse at the side of the road to arriving outside the pearly gates, but no doubt Jack was very surprised to find himself surrounded by fluffy white clouds and celestial music.

Anyway Saint Peter said "Hello Jack. We are expecting you".

"Well it's a total surprise to me. Who do you say you are?" Jack replied.

"You don't know. Didn't they teach you anything in RE lessons? I'm Saint Peter. I'm in charge of the gates...."

"Oh I know, Pete, like a bouncer outside the Pig & Lettuce night club" Jack interrupted. Saint Peter looked puzzled and reaching out to make sure the locks were secure replied: "Two things you need to know Jack. The first is: Don't address me as 'Pete'. I'm 'Saint Peter', never 'Pete', never 'mate' and certainly never 'butty'. Only ever 'Saint Peter', got that?"

"And the second?" Jack asked.

"Well I'm afraid we've had a meeting and the committee decided, unanimously I may add, that we don't want you here. You're too disruptive, a real danger. We don't do crime up here. Sorry Jack but you'll just have to go back down. You could try the devil, I've heard he'll take anybody."

So Jack, or at least Jack's soul, arrives back on terra firma. Guess who's there to meet him? Yes, that's right: The devil. "Before you ask, Jack, I don't want you any longer. I was stuck up against that cross roads sign for hours, couldn't move until a stray dog ran off with your broken loaf and that was after he'd cocked his leg up against my cloak. I'm afraid you are destined to spend eternity as an 'up-and-downer'."

"What's one of them when it's at home?" Jack shouted. Too late, the devil had vanished; all that was left was burn marks on the road.

Now I don't know if this story has a moral but if any of your children or grandchildren start hanging around the pick-and-mix display take note. Beware they may be on the slippery slope to becoming an "up-and-downer".

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## ***Forthcoming Events***

### **HERITAGE TRAIL**

The first **Heritage Trail** this year organised by Bereavement Services is at **2pm on Sunday 10th April 2011** - meet at the Fair Oak Road main entrance to the cemetery. These heritage trails are an excellent way to learn something about the history of the cemetery and the lives of its more notable residents.

### **PALM SUNDAY AT THORNHILL**

The usual **Annual Service** will be held on **Sunday 17th April 2011** in the **Wenallt Chapel** at Thornhill Crematorium at **2pm** led by Rev. **Michael Witcombe**. Refreshments to follow. Everybody is welcome.

## ***Visit to Highgate Cemetery***

The Friends of Cathays Cemetery are planning a visit to Highgate Cemetery, in London, opened in 1839, twenty years before Cathays. Interred within its walls are figures as diverse as Karl Marx, Michael Faraday, Beryl Bainbridge and Sir Ralph Richardson. They have a vigorous Friends group and their website is well worth a look.

Our visit would take place on a weekend, probably in June or July. There would be a minimum charge for a guided tour of the cemetery of £14 per person and the approximate cost of a coach would be £15. Both of these charges are dependent on the numbers in the party. There is a possibility of combining this with a guided visit to Kensal Green Cemetery. The additional cost of this is not thought to be significant.

We need to know approximate numbers in order to confirm costs and arrange transport. If you think you may be interested, please let the editorial team know (contact details below).

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**Don't forget to let us have your bits of news or other items for future issues!**

Contact the editorial team on 2062 7848  
or email <doricwales@o2.co.uk>