



Snow – Beauty ... and Beast

The January snow arrived with its usual chaos, but there is no doubt that the Cemetery can look enchanting when it is clothed in white, although you have to be quick to catch it at its best.



Gravestones trimmed with snow

But there was enough time and snow to build several **snowmen**.



Two years ago, the snow damaged more than 100 trees in the Cemetery. This year, not as many have been affected, but **just one** of these will probably produce as much timber for the log-burner on its own. In the middle of Section O stood the grandest tree in the Cemetery, a **Holm Oak**: it had looked massive and healthy. But it was composed of multiple trunks, with bark inclusions where they touched. Also, with

so many trunks, a bowl had formed in the centre. This combination had encouraged rot and created a weakness.

The holm oak is, of course, an evergreen, so readily collected a heavy load of snow and the whole problem was compounded by the fact that, with multiple trunks, all the development on any one was on one side only. This tree almost certainly dated from the very first days of the Cemetery, so it is perhaps a miracle that it had lasted so long. Anyway, as a result of the snow, two thirds of the huge trunks came down, splaying out to cover a similar portion of a circle about 100 feet (30 metres) in diameter. On inspection, it was concluded that the remaining trunks were also unsafe. Bereavement Services have acted with commendable speed and efficiency: within a few weeks, the fallen trunks had been cut up and stacked, to be followed by the careful felling of the remaining dangerous trunks.



One of the fallen trunks



The base of the Holm Oak, showing fallen and remaining trunks:

Fortunately, a large number of the graves affected were not marked by large memorials so collateral damage was small. Perhaps there is one other plus point - this area is now much lighter and vistas have been improved.



A more open vista



One of the larger log piles

As if to show that the Cemetery can take all this in its stride, the first **crocuses** appeared within a week of the snow disappearing.

And did you notice the Cemetery playing a bit part in **Dr Who** (just before Christmas) and starring in the opening sequence of **Casualty** on 26th January?

The Cemetery has once again received The **Green Flag Award** for which green spaces have to meet strict criteria, such as being clean and well maintained, in a sustainable way, as well as being safe and secure. Commitment to a high level of community involvement, in which the council works closely with The Friends, holding regular guided walks, etc, is also important. Recognising the award's social importance, Cllr Ashley Govier, member for Environment, said:

"It reinforces all the good work that is being done both by council staff and the cemetery's volunteer group."

2013 AGM and Other Business

The **AGM** was held on Saturday 26th January in the meeting room of the new offices at Thornhill Cemetery and 17 people attended.

There was some helpful discussion, under "Matters Arising", about the transcription of the old Burial Diaries on the subject of progress and how to expedite this, the known extent of these records, possible copyright implications and the end result in terms of storage and accessibility of the digitised record. In the short term, it was agreed to seek volunteers to continue this valuable work (see 'Can You Help?' which follows this Report) while, in the longer term, the trustees would consider the broader issues and objectives.

The Chairman reported on another busy year, emphasising that this was only possible as a result of the efforts of his fellow trustees and the continued strong support from Bereavement Services. In summarising the year's events, his report made it even clearer how full and varied the programme had been, ranging from the ceremony to mark the rededication of Bishop Hedley's tomb after cleaning to lectures and guided walks. These were complemented by workdays, weekly health walks, the production of a colourful and informative membership leaflet (first used to good effect at the display in Central Library in July) and significant development work on an enhanced website. The issue of the Events programme for 2013 with the papers for the AGM indicates that this year will be equally busy.

The adoption of the Conservation Management Plan [CMP] for the Cemetery by the relevant Council committee now seems close. Its publication will enable the Friends to think positively about restoration of the cemetery and its buildings.

The Treasurer presented the Accounts for 2012, noting that a small surplus had again been generated, leaving a year end balance of almost £6,000. The surplus recognises continued income from book sales (where the remaining stock represents an asset of around £3,000)

and an increased level of donations. Some of the latter came in the category of unexpected windfalls, one of which was from a bereaved family whose donation was in appreciation of the exceptional help and consideration which they had been given by Alan Staniforth. He also drew attention to the fact that the healthy balance was a reminder that the Friends need to give thought to ways of spending it in accordance with their charitable status. This may be easier once the CMP has been published.

Some minor modifications to the Bye-laws, reflecting experience from the first year's operation, were proposed and approved unanimously.

As a result of the elections at the meeting, the Trustees' Committee is now:

Chairman: Bill Mosley

Treasurer: John Farnhill

Secretary: vacant [see below]

Other Trustees: Paul Jones, Ivor Lippett, Chris Marsh, Paul Nicholson, Hugh Payne, Margaret Smith.

Attention was drawn to the continued absence of a Secretary and that the number of trustees is less than optimum. It is open to the committee to appoint auxiliary officers and, if appropriate, also to appoint them as trustees. It is hoped that this facility will enable the current situation to be improved (see below).

Paul Jones outlined the progress that had been made on the new Website, which is now available at cathayscemetery.coffeecup.com. The effectiveness of search engines in finding the site depends on the number of 'hits' it gets. So pay it a visit - or, preferably, several. It won't be a wasted exercise, as there is a lot to see - and suggestions for improvement will be welcome. A vote of thanks to Paul for all his work on the website was passed by acclamation!

With a view to keeping the Friends and the Cemetery in the public eye, it was noted that 2014 will mark the centenary of the start of the First World War. It was generally agreed that consideration should be given to some sort of event to mark the occasion.

Can You Help?

Your Committee is not a closed shop. If you think you have something to offer, please feel free to talk to any of the committee members. You will be welcome to attend one of the meetings to see what goes on and how you might help.

Transcription of the old Burial Diaries involves the copying of long-hand information from digital images into a standard spreadsheet format. Essential to obtaining the optimum accuracy is the checking of the transcription by someone else, followed by a third person verifying any amendments picked up. Ideally, the work would be done in small teams, with interchanging roles. Also, the main element of the process requires the use of a computer.

We would like to hear from anyone who can offer assistance to improved working of our group and/or with the transcription of the old burial records. So PLEASE see the form at the back of this newsletter for further information and respond if you can.

Membership Renewal

Your committee is also anxious to avoid wasting time & money communicating with members who are no longer interested or, perhaps, have passed away. So a reminder about renewal is also contained in the form attached to the back of this newsletter.

Don't forget you can now pay your subscriptions by **Standing Order**.

Margaret Simpson

Take the path to the north-east from the chapels into **Section L**: take the second path on the left and a short way down, on the left, you will find the grave which is the resting place of **John David Simpson** who **died in 1885** aged 50 and his wife **Margaret** (née David) who **died in 1923** aged 85. Other members of the family are also buried there including two daughters - Margaret who died in 1937 aged 75 and Ethel Annie who died in 1953 aged 86.

John David Simpson's memorial - a fine Celtic cross - was erected by officers and men of the Glamorgan Rifles Volunteer Corps in which he had served upwards of 25 years.



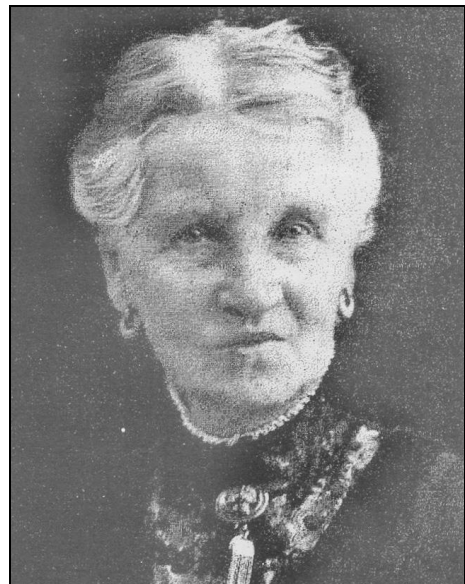
Simpson memorial

John's family had not been from Cardiff originally, but had no doubt moved around quite a bit as one of the daughters, Henrietta, had been baptised in St Helier Parish Church in Jersey in 1848. However in Cardiff the family show up at various addresses within the city centre in census details during the mid-1800s.

John's wife, Margaret, having been a widow for some years, had been running a school in Richmond Road, in the Parish of St John the Baptist, Cardiff, with her daughters. Finding her memorial card amongst my mother's belongings prompted me to delve further into the history of the school and the family who ran it, and to know a little more about **'Margaret Simpson, Late Principal of St. Margaret's School'** - the school my mother had

attended in her mid teens.

From the late 1850s, soon after their marriage, John and Margaret Simpson taught at several schools in the centre of Cardiff, starting with the **National School** in Bute Terrace, and later going on to run their own schools with other members of the family at addresses in Park Street (described as a commercial school), Windsor Place, Park Place and Park Grove. In the 1881 census the school at 12 & 14 Park Grove accommodated a number of boarders, as did the later school which opened in about 1883 at 45 Richmond Road - **St Margaret's Ladies' School** - and which continued into the 1920s and 1930s. However by 1949, although still a place of learning (housing a teacher of singing and referred to as St Margaret's Studio in the Cardiff Directory) only one member of the Simpson family remained there - Ethel Annie, one of John & Margaret's daughters. Although now converted into flats, as many of these large properties have been, the name 'St. Margaret's' can still be seen above the doorway.



Margaret Simpson

Before her marriage, Margaret had lived with her family at several addresses within the city centre, including the Three Horse Shoes (where her father appears as publican in the 1841 census) in High Street, and moving on afterwards by the 1851 census to an address in Caroline Street. It may well have been quite a 'good' address in those days, but it seems

difficult now to picture this refined and dignified lady growing up in the street which has become known latterly as 'Chip Alley'!

Margaret Smith

Editorial Note: Victorian society was dominated by men so, somewhat inevitably, most of our articles are about men. It is nice to redress the balance with the story of a noteworthy woman. Perhaps you know of another?

"Thou Gavest"

Those who went on the guided walk in the "new" part of the cemetery in September 2011 were treated to a musical interlude - a recording by a Welsh male voice choir singing *Tydi a roddaist* (*Thou Gavest*). The song was played beside the grave of its author, T. Rowland Hughes: his poem had been set to music by Arwel Hughes in 1938.



Grave of T Rowland Hughes

Thomas Rowland Hughes was born on **17 April 1903** at **Llanberis**, Caernarvonshire, the son of William Rowland Hughes, a quarryman, and his wife May. He was educated at Dolbadarn primary school, the county school at Brynrefail and the University College of North Wales in Bangor, where he graduated in 1925 with first class honours in English and Welsh. In Sept. 1926 he became a teacher at the county school for boys in Aberdare, where he remained for 2 years. He took his M.A. and, in 1928, he was

awarded a scholarship by the University of Wales to study at Jesus College, Oxford, leading to a B.Litt. degree in 1931, with a thesis on *The London Magazine from 1820 to 1829*. He was lecturer in English and Welsh at Coleg Harlech, from 1930 to 1933.

He married Eirene Williams, from Ogmere Vale, in **1933**. In 1934, he was appointed principal of the Mary Ward Settlement, an adult education centre, in London, but was swamped by administrative work there so moved to the BBC in Cardiff in 1935, as a producer of feature programmes. It was from this time that his writing became most prolific.

Although he is probably best known today for his **novels** about characters living and working in the slate quarries of northern Wales, in his day he was just as well known as a **poet** and also wrote **dramas**. Although he wrote in Welsh, most of his work can be found as English translations. After Daniel Owen he was Wales most productive and best-selling novelist. His work is characterised by gentleness, geniality, and kindness and by the courage of his chief characters. He had a flair for gripping and memorable storytelling, with loveable characters and a mixture of sadness and humour.

He wrote *Storiau Mawr y Byd* (*Great Stories of the World*), in 1936, for children, while he won the chair at the Machynlleth National Eisteddfod the following year for an ode, *Y Ffin* (*The Boundary*) and that of the Radio National Eisteddfod (which was to have been held at Mountain Ash) in 1940, for an ode *Pererinion* (+*Pilgrims*). About this time he composed his drama, *Y Ffordd* (*The Way*), on the Rebecca Riots, which was translated into English. He was the first to write a radio play in Welsh and his versatility is confirmed by the editorship of *Storiau'r Henllys Fawr*, a collection of short stories by W.J.Griffith (1938), and the way he adapted *Yr Hogyn Drwg* by R. Hughes Williams for radio.

Around 1937, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, but he continued to work for several

years. During his illness he began to write novels. The first, *O Law i Law*, appeared in 1943 and it was clear that a novelist of extraordinary stature had made his appearance. This novel was followed by others, published at successive Christmases from 1944 to 1947 - *William Jones*, perhaps his most famous novel, which includes a description of life in the Rhondda Valleys during the Depression, *Yr Ogof (The Cave)*, *Chwalfa (Upheaval)* and *Y Cychwyn (The Beginning)*. At Christmas 1948, when he was very ill he published *Cân neu Ddwy (A Song or Two)*, a volume of poems, which contains the famous poem inspired by a picture of *Salem Curnow Vosper*. In 1949 the University of Wales awarded him the degree of D.Litt. honoris causa, and in the same year he was granted a Civil List pension.

Welsh literature was sadly deprived of more quality works by his death at the tragically young age of 46 on **24th October 1949**. The following summer an English translation of *O Law i Law* was published and acclaimed by some English critics. A contemporary obituary noted that, because of the way he faced his illness, he was referred to in the englyn cut on his headstone as 'the bravest of our authors'. But there is no sign of this on the headstone today. After more than half a century, Rowland was joined by his wife, Eirene, in 2001. She had lived to the age of 94. This, of course, required the re-engraving of the original, or a new, headstone. Perhaps this is when the englyn was lost.

Recent Events

Workday on 23rd February: this was one of those days when you not only knew you had made a difference, you could see the difference. Tackling Section K for the first time, rampant bushes & brambles on the "heart" side were cut out and a lot of memorials that hadn't been seen for many years were revealed. With a student from the School of Journalism working on his documentary project, volunteers were filmed and interviewed, making it an

especially interesting session. It will be interesting to see the end result.

Future Events

Talks

Gordon Hindess will give a talk on **Tuesday 12 March** on: **Cathays Cemetery - Home of Cardiff's Hidden History**. [Like the Mid-summer Walk, this talk will aim to present some of the results of more recent research by the Friends of Cathays Cemetery].

Then **Dr Andrew Richardson** will give a talk on **Tuesday 14 May** on **John Batchelor and the Butes in 19th-Century Cardiff**.

Both talks will take place at **7pm** in Room 4.45 in Cardiff University's **John Percival Building** [formerly the Humanities Building] in Colum Drive (behind Colum Road).

Walks

The next **Heritage Walk** led by Bereavement Services will be at **2pm** on **Sunday 14th April**.

A **Bio-diversity Walk** will be led by Dr Peter Sturgess on **Tuesday 11th June** at **7 pm**.

Meet by the Chapels for both walks.

Work Days:

Our next three Saturday workdays in 2013 are @ **10am** on **23rd March**, **27th April** and **25th May**, meeting by the chapels. If you are able to help and can spare the time, come along for a couple of hours and join the friendly gang that makes a difference.

Digital Newsletters?

Would you like to have future issues by email rather than by post? If so, please let us know and we will arrange with Bereavement Services for this to be done.

Don't forget to let us have your bits of news or other items for future issues!
Contact the editorial team on 2061 2164
or email <gordon.hindess@uwclub.net>