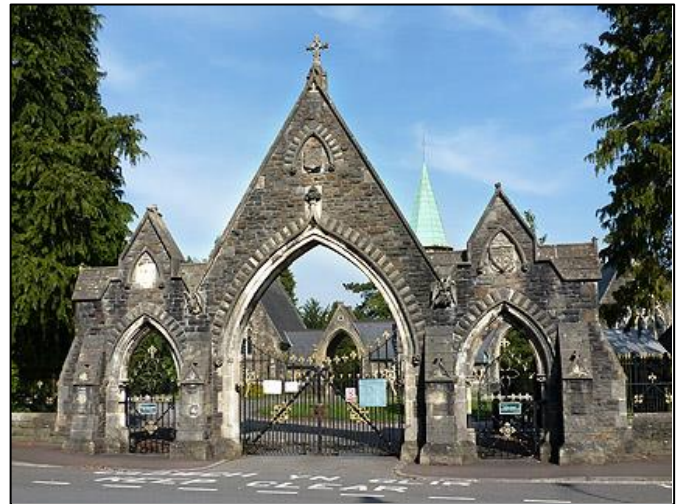


Outside ... Looking In!

We are in strange times. Our last issue was ready to go out, when the Covid 19 lockdown started and the last page had to be hastily revamped. All organised activities in the Cemetery had to be put on hold and our future programme is in abeyance, until we see restrictions relaxing and life getting back to normal.

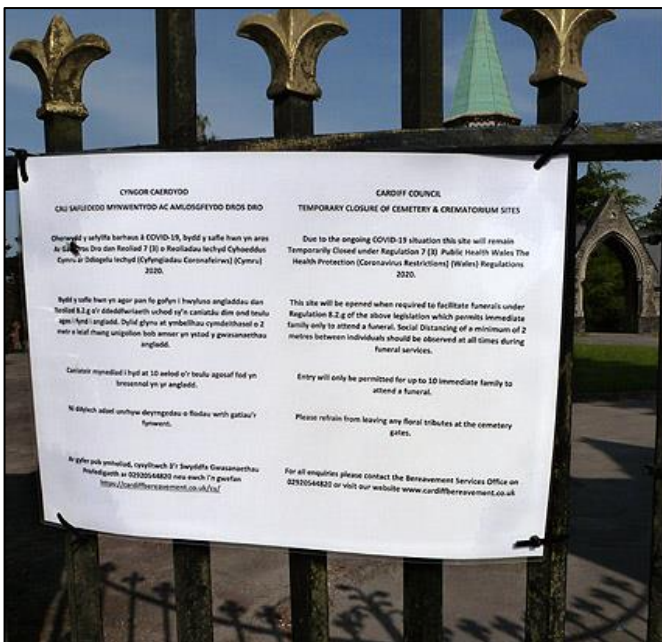
For a couple of weeks, the Cemetery was open and, initially, quieter than usual. Then more people began to use it for their daily exercise, when they recognised it as being an easier place to avoid crowds than local parks. But then new regulations laid down limitations on attendance at funerals and, to manage this, all Cardiff Cemeteries were closed, except when funerals were taking place under tight controls. Notices of the restrictions were posted on the padlocked gates of the Cemetery.



So you are now on the outside, looking in. But you could still enjoy the views through the railings, like that below of the New Cemetery.



Not all casual visitors to the Cemetery felt excluded and some even seemed to be enjoying the even quieter space - like the cat shown below!



Closure notice

Being confronted with this for the first time might cause you to step back ... for a renewed appreciation of the grandeur of the main entrance, a picture of which follows.

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Of course, nature carries on regardless and it was still possible to observe seasonal changes from the outside, like the bluebells and violets seen below.



You might also have seen the hawthorn blossom pictured below. Its alternative name of May was given to it before the creeping effects of climate change meant that it is now at its best in April.



There is an unusual type of bird cherry in Section U which is obscured by surrounding trees and, perhaps, more easily seen from a distance ... like from outside the Cemetery. *Prunus padus watereri* was first bred from a native bird cherry about 100 years ago and was originally called *prunus padus*

grandiflora, because of its spectacular spring display of 20cm long spikes of small fragrant flowers. These blooms are slender racemes made from many small star-shaped flowers, with white petals and yellow centres, that are so abundant that their weight causes the branches to droop downwards. The blooms carry an almond scent that is irresistible to bees and butterflies ... and most people, too. Small black fruits that are inedible but attractive to birds appear in summer.



Prunus padus watereri

After a couple more weeks, and a lot of public reaction to the closure of cemeteries in general, Cathays was opened again for those attending funerals and visiting graves. To ensure social distancing and compliance with the access terms, monitoring by council staff, supported by South Wales Police, was put in place. It will be noted that the limited use permitted did not include walking through the Cemetery, enjoying its park like surroundings or exercising.



Limited access notice

While interments still take place in Cathays and many families attend the graves of deceased relatives, normally the vast majority of users are using it as a park, exploring the heritage, enjoying the natural history or simply using it as a more pleasant route on a journey. There is a strong case for the Cemetery to be given similar consideration during lockdown as a public park. It also offers an ideal space for permitted exercise, with many wide drives, frequent junctions and good visibility on narrower paths, as well as, in most cases, a ready facility to step off paths, if necessary. When the role of the Cemetery during the current crisis is reviewed, we hope that these views will be taken into consideration.

Two of the rarer hybrid trees in Section M took advantage of the quiet to show off! The fresh foliage of the variegated tulip tree and the purple beech looked quiet magnificent. To

clear up any confusion, the purple beech is also known as the copper beech: new leaves are distinctly purple, but they gradually change colour to bronze by the autumn.



Variegated tulip tree and purple beech

In the brief time before lockdown, there was time to enjoy the earlier spring flowers like the wood anemones in Section H pictured below ...



... and the glorious magnolia display in Section K, shown in the following picture.



Also seen around the same time was a small dinosaur, hiding up a tree in Section Y. We hope the children enjoyed searching for it, although

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it would be appreciated if they could take all their treasure hunt creatures home with them next time.



Dinosaur

It has been a spring of varied weather - a wet March, a dry and warmer than average April and a cool, but dry, May. But there have been windy spells, too. One of the latter produced a strange effect in the communal Nazareth House plot in Section D. While most of the area was covered in fallen leaves and other small tree debris, one near circular patch was completely clear. A drooping leafy branch of a nearby tree had responded to the high winds with a circular sweeping motion, creating the unusual phenomenon.



The swept circle

On one of the last Health Walks before the programme was suspended, a laptop in a case was found on a seat in the Cemetery. Could it have been stolen or inadvertently left behind? If the latter, surely the owner would soon realise his or her mistake and return. With no sign of anyone looking for it after 5-10 minutes,

arrangements were made to get it to the depot in the New Cemetery and a note was left on the seat with contact details.

Later the same day a young man, with his mother bending his ear on the importance of looking after his property, collected his laptop - a happy ending. On the following week's walk, which by chance passed the same point, a small plastic take-away box was sitting on a piece of paper on the top of a post. The piece of paper was a thank you note and the box contained some homemade biscuits, that went down well with our usual post walk refreshments - an even happier ending!



The thank you biscuits

The 1912 Date Race and Captain Charles Bliault

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 cut a third off the steamer journey time from the Middle East to the USA and, particularly, to its principal goods port, New York. The growth of domestic fruit production in Florida and California, led fruit importers to concentrate on dried fruit and dates, the latter becoming a prime commodity. At least one of the importers established offices and riverside warehousing in Bussorah (Basra), set up its own farm in Iraq and employed a local agent to procure dates for them.

By the 1890s, several steamers a year were commissioned exclusively to carry Iraqi dates to New York. By the end of the century, competing shipping companies had started an annual date race to see who could land the first "golden dates" for the holiday season. The first shipment commanded significantly higher prices, a monetary prize and much kudos.

In 1907, Cardiff's Captain Charles Bliault competed in the race in his ship *Gulistan*, but lost by 24 hours to the *Umzumbie*. Bliault was not unfamiliar with the route to the Persian Gulf, as an Australian newspaper article in 1905 tells of the sudden death of a passenger on the *Gulistan*, while travelling from London to the Gulf. Captain Bliault was trying to trace relatives of the deceased who were thought to be living in Melbourne and had sought the help of the paper.

It appears that there were a few years after this where merchants collaborated to ensure that there was a more equitable distribution of the profits from the date trade and there was no serious racing. But, in 1912, the compacts had broken down so racing resumed in earnest. By now Bliault had a new ship, the *Turkistan*, and was competing against the steamship *Stanhope*.

The challenge did not start well for Captain Bliault. He had an outward cargo to deliver at Bandar Abbas, in Persia (Iran), on the Strait of Hormuz, but, just before reaching this port, the *Turkistan* sighted the steamship *Naderi* in trouble. The vessel, with 900 pilgrims travelling from Bagdad for Jedda on their way to Mecca, had lost its rudder and was wallowing, with the pious Persians kneeling and praying on the sea-swept decks. Her Captain asked for a tow to Muscat, but Bliault could not assist him as he had 3,000 cases of sulphuric acid on board and he was concerned that the additional strain of towing might cause them to explode. However, the *Turkistan* did stand by to witness another liner break three steel hawsers in an abortive attempt to tow the helpless ship. The *Turkistan*

then hung on until, eventually, an Indian Marine Service vessel arrived and succeeded in towing the *Naderi* into Muscat.

As a consequence of the delay on the outward journey, the *Turkistan* left Bussorah four days after the *Stanhope*. If this was not enough of a handicap, the crew had to fight a fire in the port bunker, which took twelve days to extinguish and burned up 100 tons of coal. The ship was also carrying some German passengers, workers on the railway which was being constructed from Bussorah to Bagdad, who apparently were unaware of the fire. Because of the fire, the *Turkistan* had to put into Aden for more coal and, on leaving Port Said, the *Stanhope* was five days ahead of the *Turkistan*.

Despite this, the *Turkistan* was the first to arrive in New York with, in her hold, the largest consignment of dates ever brought into the port by one ship. As soon as the *Turkistan* was made fast to the pier, hundreds of longshoremen started to unload her dates, working round the clock until the ship was empty. By arriving first, Captain Bliault had secured a premium of about 20% on the price of the dates for the consignees, equating to about \$120,000 (or \$3million today) for the complete cargo. In addition to the fruit, the ship carried 1000 tons of licorice root, 100 tons of Persian wool, and 100 tons of alfalfa seed from Persia, which the US Government intended to experiment with. The captain and crew of the *Turkistan* received substantial bonuses.

Although disrupted by the First World War, the annual date race was to continue until the early 1930s. In today's world, it would have been seen as a tremendous marketing ploy. Charles Bliault did not compete again, presumably on the basis that you can't do better than win ... but you could do worse!

At an age when most people would have retired, Bliault captained SS *Atherstone* as part of the Merchant Navy fleet through the First World War. He was one of the many Jersey seafarers

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who had come to Cardiff to seek their fortunes, and his war record is commemorated on the "Island of Jersey, Roll of Honour and Service".

It seems a great shame that Captain Bliault's proud record was tarnished when he was in his 80s, because of an incident that he did not need to get involved with. This was the loss of the SS Eastway, off Bermuda, in a hurricane, on 23rd October 1926. The Eastway was bound from Hampton Roads, in Virginia, to Pernambuco, Brazil, with a cargo of coal. The cargo shifted in the storm, causing a list to port. The hatches on the port side got washed away, allowing a large influx of water, which caused the ship to founder. Of the crew of 35 only 12 were saved.

It was not until 26th April 1927 that a prolonged Board of Trade inquiry concluded that Cardiff shipowner, Mr. Watkin James Williams, had contributed, by culpable conduct, to the loss of the steamship Eastway. He was ordered to pay £1,000 towards the cost of the inquiry. The justification for this conclusion was that, when the vessel left Norfolk, Virginia, it was 13½ in. below its loading line and the Court held that the instructions to the captain did not provide for proper precautions to prevent this.

This decision led to Watkin Williams, manager of the St. Mary Steamship Company of Cardiff, appearing at Cardiff Police Court on 11th August 1927, charged that he was a party to unlawfully sending the steamship Eastway from Norfolk, Virginia, to sea in such an unworthy state that the lives of the crew were likely to be thereby endangered. The case was considered so serious that Williams was remanded on bail of £1000 (more than £60,000 today) to appear in the Assize Court.

The trial in Cardiff Assize Court took place over a few days in November 1927. The prosecution evidence of the overloading was irrefutable, compounded by the fact that this had occurred on other occasions when the ship had loaded in foreign ports. It did not help

Williams' case that he had been notified of the previous overloading infringements, as well as others on another ship in the company's ownership.

Attempts were made to cloud the issue with arguments about loading in fresh water, but riding higher in sea water; the fact that had the ship left a few days earlier it would have been in the designated summer period; that heading south it would soon be below the 36th parallel, where sea conditions were regarded as less severe; and that consumption of fuel would soon have lightened the load. There was also an incident in court where Williams was heard to threaten a prosecution witness.

Captain Bliault appeared as a witness for the defence, as someone with extensive experience of sailing in the area and having held a master's certificate for 42 years. He stated that in loading his ship in Chesapeake Bay, in the winter months on voyages bound south, he loaded his ship to summer marks, and did not consider that likely to endanger the lives of his crew. However, the following day he was recalled for cross-examination. The prosecution produced evidence from his own logs that he had operated to winter marks, for journeys from the USA to South America, whenever it was appropriate to do so. Bliault was asked if he had made a false statement on oath the previous day or had falsified his log at the time. His floundering response was to claim an aberration of the memory and to concede that the information in the official logs was correct. The judge described Bliault's behaviour as deliberately misleading and disgraceful and dismissed him from the court.

Watkin Williams was found guilty on the thirteen counts of being a party to sending steamships to sea in an unseaworthy condition. He was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment and ordered him to pay the costs of the prosecution.

Captain Thomas Glyn Llewellyn Phillips

When the impressive marble memorial in Section I was revealed during a workday clearance, it was the words "1st Battle of Gaza" that caught the eye ... but meant nothing to those present. It was time to take to the internet.



The Phillips family memorial

The son of Thomas Richard and Annie Phillips of 45 Park Place, Cardiff, Thomas Glyn Llewellyn was educated at Malvern College, Treforest School of Mines and University College, Cardiff. He graduated in 1913 and was then articled to D. Hannah, mining engineer to Ferndale Collieries. But he was also listed as a 2nd Lieutenant the same year. By the time he went to the Crimea, he had been promoted to Lieutenant and he served as an Acting Captain in the landings at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, in August 1915. He was at Suvla for the duration of the tragic offensive, until the evacuation in January 1916.

But there was to be no respite, as the Welsh Regiment joined the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), led by Lieutenant General Sir Archibald Murray, and Phillips was promoted in the field to Captain. The EEF moved east from Egypt across the Sinai desert. Initially things went well, fighting short sharp battles and confidently pursuing the retreating Turks and, in January 1917, they crossed into Palestine. Aware that he was advancing through country that had few natural resources, Murray



Bliault memorial

Captain Charles Bliault died on February 16th 1946, aged 88, and is buried in the part of Section J closest to the chapels and beside the "heart" side drive. He joined his wife, Mary, who had died in 1914, aged 54. Buried with them is their son, Edgar Charles Adolphus, who died in 1971, aged 81. Edgar's wife, Vera Constance, is remembered on the pedestal of the memorial, having died at the relatively young age of 32, in 1920.



inscription on Bliault memorial

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ordered the simultaneous construction of a wire netting road, standard-gauge railway and a pipeline carrying water from Egypt, but this restricted the speed of the EEF's advance. On Monday 26th March, British and Anzac soldiers attacked the Turkish stronghold of Gaza. The assault started well, moving into and around Gaza, but anxiety about finding water for horses led to a loss of confidence at Murray's HQ, 50 miles away. As a consequence, the troops fell back, almost certainly letting victory slip through their fingers. This was the First Battle of Gaza, in which Captain Phillips died, aged 23. He was awarded the M.C. and is also commemorated on the Jerusalem Memorial, Jerusalem War Cemetery, just north of Jerusalem.

On 17th April, Murray launched a renewed attack. The consensus of reporters seems to be that this Second Battle of Gaza was a fiasco. In addition, the First World War generally wasn't going well and the new Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was convinced that there must be a better way. He saw Palestine, steeped in biblical history and the romance of the Crusades, as a glittering prize. If the British could snatch this jewel from the Turks' Middle Eastern crown, he argued, it would pave the way to victory. He decided that a new commander of drive and vision was needed and General Sir Edmund Allenby was appointed, with instructions to take Jerusalem before Christmas.

Allenby arrived at the EEF's headquarters in Cairo on 28th June. Frontal attacks on Gaza had failed twice, so Allenby favoured an initial strike inland against the town of Beersheba, to outflank the main Turkish position and divert attention from the direct assault that would follow. Beginning on 31st October, Allenby's mounted troops swung into Beersheba in a charge that ranks alongside that of the Light Brigade at Balaclava and is thought to be the last ever cavalry action. The next day his infantry surged forward into the Turkish

trenches. With Beersheba secured, the EEF commenced the Third Battle of Gaza, which was taken by 7th November, aided by a strategic withdrawal by the Turks. With Gaza taken, the road to Jerusalem lay before them but, although knocked back, the Turks fought fiercely as they withdrew. In pursuit, Allenby's men moved in two directions. One thrust pushed along the coast towards Jaffa which was taken on 16th November. Another was directed inland at Jerusalem. Acutely conscious of the need to avoid bringing Jerusalem under fire, Allenby planned to encircle the city and cut off the Turkish garrison. The first attempt to do this at the end of November failed. But Allenby repositioned his troops and on the night of 7th December he struck again. Believing that the withdrawal of their forward positions was the start of a general retreat, the Turks moved out of the city and relinquished Jerusalem with little resistance. After the final capture of the Mount of Olives, the city fell. Conscious of the city's special meaning for three of the world's great religions, in a deliberate act of humility and respect Allenby entered Jerusalem on foot through the Jaffa Gate on 11th December.



*General Allenby entering Jerusalem
- archive picture*

He walked to the Citadel from where he read a proclamation that made it clear he came not as a conqueror, but a liberator. Watching from the back of a nearby group of British staff officers was a small, strangely dishevelled young major. TE Lawrence had appeared at Allenby's HQ only days before the city's capture and had been invited to take part in the formal entry.

Buried in the Thomas family grave are his mother, Annie, who died on 7th July 1923 aged 60, his father, Thomas Richard, who died on 24th January 1941 aged 83, and his younger brother David Evan Llewellyn, who died on 22nd January 1974, aged 72.

VE Day Thoughts

The 75th anniversary of VE Day, in May, seemed very much a reason to celebrate, even in these difficult times. On VE Day itself the country was invited to celebrate - briefly - but also to remember all those that had died to make the victory possible. In the Cemetery, it is easier for our thoughts to turn to the latter. As examples of people who did their bit, but died, we have selected three young women.

Mary Cecily Polglase

The evening of Thursday, 6th August 1942, was warm and sunny in Truro. Just after 7.30, two German planes were spotted near over the Camel Estuary. In the next few minutes there were three more recorded sightings, but there seems to have been no attempt to plot their course, assess likely targets or sound a warning. The aircraft came in fast and low from the west, out of the setting sun.

One of the FW190s dropped a 500kg bomb on the Royal Cornwall Infirmary, making a direct hit on the main entrance and dispensary area, causing considerable damage. The initial explosion was followed by fire. The other plane strafed the railway station with machine gun and cannon fire then continued on its murderous way, machine gunning whenever anyone was sighted and, then, dropping a bomb on Agar Road.

A total of 14 were killed in the raid and many more injured. Among those killed at the hospital was Flying Officer Mary Cecily Polglase, a WAAF officer stationed at RAF Portreath.

Mary's grave can be found in Section D,

somewhat overgrown in the wooded strip behind Bishop Hedley's memorial, marked by a stone cross. The family memorial also records the death of her mother, Mary Teresa, who died just two years later, and her father, Samuel, who died in 1954. Both are interred with their WAAF daughter.



Polglase family memorial

Irene Thomas

On 27th March 1944, German bombers were over Cardiff and anti-aircraft gunners, including members of the Home Guard went into action. At the height of the barrage, gravity brought one of their shells down on the Royal Ordnance Factory, in Llanishen, piercing the roof of a workshop and exploded amongst the machinery. There was a crash and a flash and pieces of machinery were hurled in all directions. A number of workers, mainly 'girls', were hit by flying debris. The factory's first-aid and emergency arrangements were put into prompt operation and a casualty clearing station was established. The more seriously injured were

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rushed to hospital, but eight were killed following morning. Later three more died of their injuries. Eight of those killed were women

A father had been employed in the factory for some time, but in a department some distance from where the shell fell. His young daughter had only recently started working in the machine shop where the shell exploded. Just before the shell hit the factory, the father went to the shop to allay any fears she might have had. He had just spoken to her when the shell crashed amongst the workers, killing him almost instantaneously. It is believed that the daughter was also amongst the dead.

One of those killed was Irene Theresa Thomas, born in Cardiff in 1903, the daughter of Stanley and Caroline Roderick of Homerie, Ty-Fry Road, Rumney. She had married John Thomas in 1928 and they were living at 8 Bronllwyn Road, Pentyrch, at the time of her death. But she is buried close to the internal corner of Section O on the south side of the "heart", with her parents. Her father, Thomas Stanley Roderick died in 1960 and her mother, Caroline Sarah, in 1976.



Memorial on Roderick family grave

Barbara Sarah Watkin Williams

Barbara was the niece of one of our famous boxers, Jack Peterson, and their graves are next to each other, in the corner of Section O,

at the low point on the main drive. Barbara had joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1939, at the age of 16. By the following year she was an Aircraftwoman 1st Class, serving at RAF Digby, in Lincolnshire. In the chaos of a bombing raid on the airfield on 20 June 1940, she was hit by a truck and died, at the tender age of 17. A Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone has been erected in the family plot. A more recent stone plaque, which is easier to read and was commissioned by a sibling of Barbara, records her details and those of her mother, Annie Maud, and father, Tom Baker (before you ask "who" ... don't!), who are buried with her.



Memorial plaque on Williams grave

**ALL FRIENDS OF CATHAYS CEMETERY
EVENTS - WEEKLY WALKS, MONTHLY
WORKDAYS HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

**PLEASE CHECK WITH THE FRIEND'S
WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA SITES FOR
THE LATEST INFORMATION**

And finally...

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

*Contact the editorial team on 029 2061 2164
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You can find past Newsletters, the latest news
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