

As Colourful as Ever

While Covid19 has continued to affect all of our lives, the Cemetery has carried on much as usual, although it seems to have made a special effort to cheer us up this autumn. With the variety of trees, autumn is not a one-off show, but a moving series of colourful sketches. Early in the sequence, the liquidamber shown below, lit up Section W.



Shortly afterwards, it was the turn of the cherry trees around the intersection of the paths that divide Sections T, U, V and W.



Flaming red cherry trees

It was into November before this beech tree in Section Q was at its shimmering best:



This is a hybrid on which the autumn changes occur uniformly. But just across the way, the common beech in Section R shows a more usual top-down habit, both in the change of colour of the foliage and the shedding of leaves. In the picture below, the crown of the tree is fully tinted, while the lower branches are predominantly green. By the time the lower leaves have achieved full autumn tint, the upper branches will be bare.



Friends TOPICAL

In Section A, you could have spotted this golden wonder:



Sadly, all that glitters is not gold, for this shrub is the dreaded Japanese knotweed, which is rapidly displacing all the native plants that get in its way. But it is easy to see why the 19C plant collectors would have seen it as an asset in the landscaped gardens of country mansions.

We mentioned the sole eating apple in the Cemetery in our last edition and the final crop turned out to be quite exceptional. The tree is not the result of planned planting and we cannot confidently identify the variety. The dark purple fruits (pictured below) ...



... do not look like anything that you might commonly see on the supermarket shelves. The apples tend towards a conical shape and only achieve the characteristic colour if they are exposed to plenty of sunshine on the outside of the tree. They are prone to dimpling and scabbing, but this does not affect their taste.

Picked early, they are crisp and juicy: later pickings (which can be right up to the end of November) turn softer and sweeter. Our best guess is that this is one of the many mutations of the red delicious but, if any of our readers know better, please let us know.

What is beyond doubt is that the scavengers from the natural world really appreciate them. Some of these scavengers, have their feast while the apples are still hanging on the tree, while more patient ones wait for them to fall. Pictured below are examples of part eaten apples on the ground and on the tree.



The fauna of the cemetery does not have to make do with apples, as there has been an excellent crop of fir cones, in places carpeting the ground, as in Section R, below.



Back in 2013 (Issue 14), we reported on the loss of what was then the biggest tree in the Cemetery, a multi-trunked holm oak. It left behind a stark, large stump and a bare circle of ground. Gradually, vegetation has draped itself over the stump, so that it is now a shelter for bugs and small creatures, and the bare patch

has become grassed to blend in with the rest of the area, so that it now looks like the image on the left below.



The stump continues to support the giant polypore fungus, as can be seen at the bottom of the picture.

A couple of years later, we reported on the planting of two replacement trees, diagonally opposite each other on the circumference of the bare circle. It is nice to be able to report that these are doing well: one is shown on the right in the image above.

It wouldn't be autumn in the Cemetery, without a display of fungi and it brings out the mycologists, who have this down as a good hunting ground. And we are pleased that this is the case, because it shows that the environmental maintenance regime is doing its job. What will appear each year is not always predictable, but these two pretty specimens were spotted in the New Cemetery.

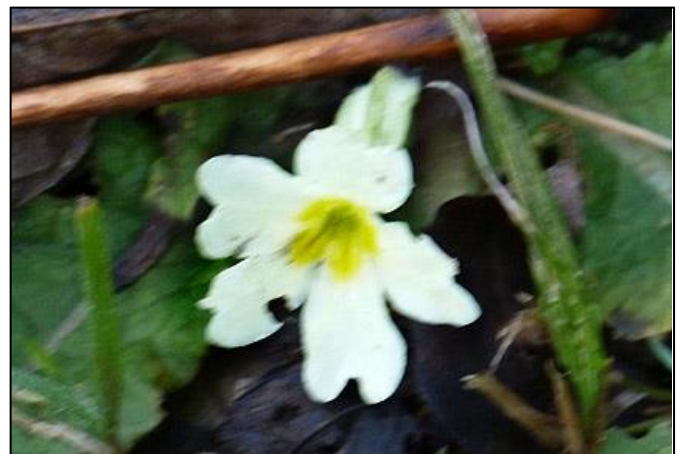


There is a downside to leaving the Cemetery to its own devices. Section B has turned into the impenetrable jungle, which the following image shows.



It will take a lot of work to get it back to its usual conservation area appearance.

But we must close this section on a brighter note. The first sign of spring, a lone primrose, was spotted in Section L at the beginning of November.



First primrose

In the midst of the pandemic, we all need these little things to cheer us up.

Autumn Miscellany

With the prevailing Covid restrictions, the usual Remembrance Service on the nearest Tuesday to 11th November had to be scaled back, with a tight limit on attendees. Social distancing had to be observed, with markings on the tarmac to assist, and the whole was excellently organised by Bereavement Services.



Socially distanced service

After the Director of Music, RAF St Athan, played "The Last Post", Rev. Caroline Downs led the service. Wreaths were laid by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Cllr Daniel De'Ath, Cllr Sarah Merry, Cabinet Minister for Education, Employment and Skills on behalf of the Council, Allensbank Primary School & Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, Mr & Mrs Birch on behalf of the Royal Marines Association, Neil Lewis on behalf of the CWCG, Gary Lloyd on behalf of the Community Payback Scheme, Alan Barter, at the plaque for Capt Frederick Barter VC, Martin Birch, on behalf of Bereavement Services, and by Ivor Lippett, for the Friends and the walking group.



Wreath being laid by Ivor Lippett

While it was not practical to read the roll of honour at the graves in the First World War plot during the service, two members of the walking for health group did this independently on a different day.



On the 11th November, Cathays was one of a handful of cemeteries in the UK selected to participate in a searchlight display, organised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, entitled 'Shine On'. The searchlights beamed into the night sky for an hour and should have been visible across the city. Because of the pandemic, the publicity for the event asked particularly that people did not go to the Cemetery. Unfortunately the weather was awful, with a very low cloud base and few people other than those operating the lights saw anything. The picture above shows how beautiful the display was at its source.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has launched an EYES ON, HANDS ON (EOHO) project which will enable local volunteers to help improve the service they provide. The CWGC maintain the graves or commemorations of over 1.7 million fallen service personnel worldwide, including more than 165,000 war graves at over 12,000 locations in the UK. Cathays, like many of the UK locations, have single graves that are not in a CWGC plot and called 'scattered graves'. The CWGC currently inspect these scattered graves on a rolling basis every 2 to 5 years. The EOHO Project was conceived to help ensure that scattered graves are inspected more frequently and, where needed, receive attention.

Volunteers will visit graves in their local area, take a photograph of each war grave, record its condition and report online. Volunteers will maintain regular contact with a Regional Coordinator, attend hands on training sessions, which will focus on how to clean and brush headstones. Volunteers will then visit allocated sites, and clean headstones working under CWGC supervision. Several members of the Friends have signed up to be volunteers.

Sticking with the CWGC, it has produced a series of guides entitled *Our War Graves, Your History*. The guide for Cathays Cemetery has just been released. It is in the form of a tour sampling some of the interesting stories related to our graves, some well known to regular visitors, but some that will be new to many. It can be found online at:

<https://www.cwgc.org/our-war-graves-your-history/explore-great-britain/west-region/cardiff-cathays-cemetery/>

Although it has been a strange year, the Cemetery has once again gained Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards. The Green Flag is recognised internationally and there is a public vote to find the world's favourite public open space with a Green Flag, which will then gain a People's Choice Award. At the time of writing,

the voting has closed, but we do not yet know the result.

This year, more than ever, we have come to understand just how important it is to have a great park or green space on our doorstep. They have been a place to escape to, to meet friends in, to exercise in or simply to have a quiet moment in.

Due to the continued Covid-19 situation and its impact on the Friends, the Committee has decided to suspend membership contributions for 2021. However members that pay by standing order will need to amend their instructions with the bank as soon as possible. We will not be able to refund any monies, due to the cost involved in this, but any such money received will be treated as a donation.

We hope to restart at least some of our usual activities and events, such as guided walks and lectures, in 2021. There is more on events on Page 10.

It is gratifying when drama groups turn to the Cemetery for inspiration for performances that can be performed online. The Sherman Theatre has produced a series of audio plays under the Heart of Cardiff banner. One of these is entitled 'Peerless' and is based on a strange meeting in the Cemetery. It can be found at:

<https://www.heartofcardiff.co.uk/listen-gwrandewch>

You may need to "join", but that's free.

Living Lines and the A48 Theatre (the people who do the Tales and Trails events) have also been busy. They have produced a series of Utube videos (a bit like Talking Heads). One of these has used the story of Charles Munday as inspiration. You should find this at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJUcKzC6zUQ&list=PL3XMkbse9Y3CdvfJ9ZGHqUQBqQQxkUi8&index=3&t=5s>

The Legless Ladies of Cathays Cemetery

For a long time, Cathays was pleased to boast about one grave containing a detached leg, that of Samuel Chivers. But now we know of five ... and two of these are the limbs of ladies.

Amelia Newton

Amelia Newton's leg was buried in Cathays Cemetery on 26 April 1915, in an unmarked grave in the area of Section T shown below.



Born Amelia Evans in 1848 in St David's, she married Henry Newton, a man ten years her senior, in 1881, in Cardiff, at the age of 34. Henry began life as a labourer on the family farm in Somerset but, at some stage, he moved to Cardiff and became a publican. They had one son but he died when just six months old. At that point, the Newtons lived in Tyndall Street, though they later moved to 6 Harriet Street.



6 Harriet Street today

It is a larger house than its neighbours in the street but the 1891 census shows that they shared the house with another couple. Externally, the house must look much the same as it did 130 years ago. How many houses being built today will last as well?

We don't know why Amelia lost her leg, but she was in her late sixties by then, so perhaps it was due to illness rather than accident. Her husband Henry died the following year, leaving Amelia to cope. Despite this, she survived another 8 years, dying in July 1923. It seems she had no family and few friends as, when she died, she bequeathed her personal effects, equivalent to about £7000 today to Edwin Jones, a postman. Amelia joined her beloved husband Henry in Cathays Cemetery, while their infant son George and a niece, Annie Jones, are also remembered on the headstone, pictured below.



This grave is in Section L, part of the Ecclesiastical area of the Cemetery. But, you will remember, her leg is in a Nonconformist

section, prompting speculation as to the reason for this. Could this have been a bizarre case of what we now call body integrity identity disorder, in which otherwise healthy individuals perceive one of their limbs as alien to the rest of their body (in this case a religious difference) and wish to have it amputated?

Edith Fanny Skyrme

You may recognise the name Skyrme from when we first announced the discovery of a second interred leg in our April 2014 issue. At this time, we had unearthed the tragic story of the accident in a coal mine in Gelli, Rhondda, that had led to the amputation of Miss Skyrme's leg. We can now expand on Edith Fanny Skyrme's story.

Within days of the accident, the leg was buried in an unmarked grave in an outlier of Section K in Section L. It is now marked by the wooden cross with a bronze plaque, pictured below.



But who was she and what happened to her? Edith Fanny Skyrme was born in Ystradyfodwg (Rhondda parish) in 1867. Her father, Edward Skyrme, was both grocer and postmaster in Pentre. Edith had three older brothers, two younger sisters and three younger brothers. Another sister had died when just a few months old. In the mid 1870s, the family moved to 6 Richmond Terrace, Park Place (the road now called Museum Place), in Cardiff, though Edward still ran his grocery business in Pentre. They were obviously quite well off, as the 1881

census shows that they employed two domestic servants. You can see the house, pictured below, today.



Early in 1900, Edith married 39-year-old Arthur Thomas Haddock, a coal salesman, and took up residence at Woodlands, Church Road, Whitchurch. A daughter, Margaret Frances, was born the following year. But Arthur died of pneumonia in the first months of 1907, aged just 46. For a time Edith and daughter Margaret continued living in Whitchurch, then lived for various periods with some of her brothers in England, and with her sister Kate and her family in Cathedral Road. She died in Cardiff at the end of 1924, aged 57.

She had managed to rise above the trauma of the loss of her leg to live a relatively long life. She was buried with her husband in St Mary's Church graveyard in Whitchurch, so was not reunited with her leg. Their grave, pictured on the next page, is just to the right of the main path leading to the south door of the church, quite close to the church itself.



Minnie McGuire

We now use the adjective legless in an entirely different way. Minnie McGuire was born in 1861 and we can plot her journey through life from a stream of newspaper reports about her court appearances. There are so many that space dictates that we only sample a few here.

In 1885, aged about 24, she had already clocked up 58 convictions for disorderly conduct, but we find her in court again, on this occasion, described as "a disorderly prostitute and causing an obstruction in Bridge Street, by behaving in such an indecent manner that a crowd of 200 persons were drawn together." She was sentenced to 3 months with hard labour.

In 1888, we find her "charged with assaulting and wounding PC Dymont on the nose and eye with an umbrella in Bute Street. The injured constable appeared in court with a bandage over his eye, but was not permanently injured. Minnie was sentenced to 6 months hard labour."

In 1889, under the headline "Shocking Indecency at Cardiff", she appears before magistrates (incidentally including Dr Henry Paine) "charged with being a prostitute and behaving in a disorderly manner and using

obscene language in Bute Street" once again "before a large crowd of people." "Minnie wept, admitting this and begged to be sent to the Union (i.e. workhouse). She had only just come out of prison after 3 months. She attributed her actions to the fact that her husband had yesterday gone to sea, an event she was celebrating by taking a glass too many. She was sent to the Union." Just a week later, she is back in court "charged with being a prostitute and behaving in a disorderly manner in Bute Street. The Stipendiary, Mr T W Lewis had previously let Minnie off leniently so imprisoned her for 3 months with hard labour."

Around this time she seems to have decided to try her luck further afield for, in 1891, she "appeared for the first time in Newport court charged with drunkenness. She promised to leave Newport once released." But a year later, we read that she had "recently transferred herself to Newport. Went into a public house and was refused a drink. She threatened to smash the windows. A passing policeman escorted her off the premises. She returned in the evening to repeat her bad behaviour, ending up throwing stones at the windows. Sentenced to 6 weeks imprisonment, she promised the landlord she would return with dire consequences."

In 1894, Minnie was intoxicated in Commercial Street, Newport at 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning and was disorderly (her 12th offence in Newport). Minnie said she had been married for 12 months. She had come to Newport to look for her husband and was celebrating the event by drinking whisky. "Now reunited they promised to make their way to Gloucester. On hearing that a commitment for 28 days imprisonment would be suspended to enable her to leave the town." Minnie said "I'll leave the town this minute; may God bless you all."

By 1903, we find her appearing in Merthyr for the 27th time, "charged with being drunk and disorderly. She pleaded for leniency as she had been very steady for the last 13/14 years. Her

husband was now blind and would not be able to cope without her. Let off with a 10 shilling fine and costs."

In 1916, she appears "Drunk and Disorderly in Oxford Street, Mountain Ash, fined 13 shillings."

Minnie's story can be found in "The Cruel Streets Revisited" by John F Wake. As a child, she is described "as an attractive young teenager", but some years later this changes to "a repulsive looking woman who bore on her face the marks of debauchery and disease due to her lifestyle."

In her life, Minnie clocked up well over 100 court appearances, many of them leading to prison sentences. She was buried in Cathays Cemetery on 24th November 1919 in plot R371. The plot, in the middle of the patch of dense shrubbery shown below, has not been cleared to see if there is a marker on, as this seemed unlikely to be the case!



Eric Fletcher

Sadly, we have to report the death of Eric Fletcher on December 1st 2020. Eric was a founding member of the Friends group, a committee member and on the editorial team for our first book, as well as the author of some of its chapters. He performed a similar role when this newsletter was getting off the ground.

He was a regular at some of the first workdays and an ever present at our events. Always willing to help out the group, Eric was also the 'face' of the Friends and features on one of our banner posters along with some of his family, as the picture below shows.



While his participation in the Friends activities was limited recently, he continued to take an interest and, only a couple of months ago rang to say how much he had enjoyed the last issue of the newsletter.

More recently Eric had faced a number of challenging health issues. Having suffered his first heart attack over 25 years ago, his heart condition began to worsen. Sadly after surgery for a broken hip following a fall, Eric died of heart related circumstances.

Our sympathy is with his family and friends who will sorely miss him, as do we.

Friends EVENTS

Recent Events

Sadly, the **Heritage Walk** planned for **Sunday October 25th** had to be called off because of the tightening of lockdown restrictions.

Future Events

AGM

In line with many Societies of similar size and membership, we are unlikely to be able to hold a physical AGM at the Chapels in January. Instead we propose to post out our usual AGM pack with the Accounts for the year 2019, Chairman's statement and Trustee nomination forms. Members will then be given a date to read the reports by, fixed for a week or so before the AGM, to submit comments and an option may be included for Members with access to Zoom to join in on **Saturday 30th January**. The Reports will be passed during the meeting but signed later by the Committee at a convenient time and place.

Zoom Lecture

As the Covid-19 situation continues into 2021, the Friends propose to enter the Zoom lecture arena, with our first one penned in for **Tuesday April 27th**. This will be an illustrated talk kindly agreed to be given by **Dr Ahmed** on the "**The Muslim Community in Wales**". This talk was originally scheduled for 2020, but had to be postponed because of the pandemic. Links and instructions for Members to access the event will be distributed nearer the time. It is appreciated that not all members will have the facilities to join an online meeting, but we feel that it is important to get some sort of event programme going again.

Events Schedule 2021

A tentative programme of events for the coming year has been drawn up and the aim is to pick this up as and when the Covid-19 rules allow. While the situation looks a little more optimistic, it is not yet possible to say exactly when events in the Cemetery can start up again.

**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**

Publications

Books (about 100 pages, full colour) - £5:

Cathays Cemetery on its 150th Anniversary
Hidden Histories: Tales from Cathays Cemetery

The books are also available by post, with an additional shipping cost of £3: in the UK, by sending your name & address and a cheque payable to "Friends of Cathays Cemetery" for the book price plus postage and packing to:-

Friends of Cathays Cemetery
c/o Bereavement Services
Thornhill Cemetery
Cardiff CF14 9UA

For orders from outside the UK please email us for a costing.

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
or email <gordon.hindess@uwclub.net>*

You can find past Newsletters, the latest news of events and lots of other information about the Cemetery on our website at
www.friendsofcathayscemetery.co.uk