Not so Grave News

A Newsletter for the Friends of Cathays Cemetery



March 2022 Issue N° 50

The Disappearing Season

As this is written, we are well past the middle of Winter but, once again, there has been no lying snow in Cardiff ... so no snowscape to illuminate the newsletter. That is not to say that there have been no views to enjoy: the Cemetery aims to please, so the long shadows and a new vantage point can still be rewarding, as illustrated by the view into Section M shown below.



As a contrast, we show below a view of Cardiff Northern Cemetery, which was officially opened in October and has had its first interments.



While it has been landscaped and planted, it will take time to mature. But, perhaps, it gives an idea of what Cathays Cemetery would have looked like when the first burials took place in 1859.

A further sign of a gradually vanishing winter is the early appearance of spring flowers. The first primrose was spotted at the beginning of January, while the bergenia crassifolia (perhaps easier to remember as elephant-ears), around the perimeter of the cedar of Lebanon roundabout, started flowering at the same time. The bergenia can be found flowering at almost any time of the year so, on its own, is not a

reliable indicator of an early start to Spring.

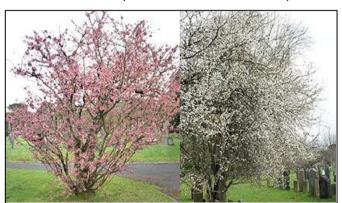


First primrose and pink bergenia

By mid February, you could find good displays of crocus and daffodil, as shown below.



Blossom, too, has been appearing, with bird cherry marginally ahead of the wild plum. The flowers on these trees are quite similar, but the plum fruit is readily distinguished later in the year. With a pink cherry blossom coming out in Section U, At least three tree species could be seen in blossom by the middle of February.



Cherry and bird cherry blossom

While the most common wildlife sighting has been squirrels scampering about, we are happy to report that the rabbit in the Old Cemetery seems to be thriving. But perhaps the best spot (during one of the Tuesday walks) was the

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sighting of an over-flying solitary swan.

The winter has been notable for a series of named storms, reaching a peak in the "red warning" generating Storm Eunice. The warning was sufficient to warrant the precautionary closure of the Cemetery for a day. This decision was fully vindicated as a few substantial trees or boughs came down, not to mention a mass of smaller debris. Two examples of fallen trees, blocking drives, are shown below.



Drives blocked by fallen trees in Sections F (top) and W (bottom)

We mentioned the new fungi survey in our last edition and we are now pleased to include a report on this (page 3), kindly written by Peter Sturgess, who organized the survey. And the number of different waxcaps recorded has increased by 50%, making the Cemetery a really special SINC.

If you are particularly interested in wildlife and/or photography, have a look at the Friends' website - Wildlife - Other. You will find a selection of superb images by Jonathan Prior, who has kindly given us permission to display them.

Winter Miscellany

This is the 50th issue of the newsletter ... and

it has changed a bit since the first, in October 2009. A typical early issue was four pages long, while now it generally runs to ten sides. There are more pictures and the layout has standardised into "Topical", followed by "Features", then "Events". If you want to check any back issues, they are all available on the Friends' website.

But the newsletter doesn't write itself, so we are always on the lookout for contributions, which may be fact or fiction (we have even had a poem or two in the past). It doesn't have to be directly related to Cathays, but there does need to be a link to cemeteries or funerary matters generally. It could be an interesting tale from your own family history research. If you don't consider yourself a writer, but have the facts, we can create the story. On the other hand, if you are a competent writer, but lack the relevant information for a feature that meets our criteria, we have lots of pertinent information just waiting to be transformed into readily digestible manuscripts. If you can help in any way, please get in touch.

The Tuesday walkers were more than a little intrigued to discover the Flying Scotsman in Section B. Not the real thing in steam, but a creditable replica as a memorial token to someone who must have been a fan of the Age of Steam.



Flying Scotsman

In our last issue, we mentioned the graveyard mapping project being set up by the Church of England. Well, the Church in Wales is considering a similar idea and has undertaken a pilot project at St Augustine's Church in

Penarth, close enough to home to be a visible landmark on Penarth Head, if not quite within the city boundaries. The Church's burial records have been linked to a map, with OS grid references down to 1m and photographs. The result is at

https://penarth.burialgrounds.co.uk/mapmanagement/#/

Alternatively, go to the St Augustine's Church website and look at "archives" for a link. While this looks like a good start, it does seem to leave plenty of room for improvement and it is likely that the Church in Wales' own appraisal of the pilot will result in changes, before it is rolled out across Wales, a process which will, in any case, be restrained by the availability of finance.

Waxcap Wander at Cathays Cemetery

On 12th November 2021 a group of waxcap enthusiasts gathered at Cathays Cemetery to join a walk organised by Plantlife, and led by Ranger Gareth Stamp from Cardiff Council. The cemetery is well known as one of the best places in the county to find waxcaps and other grassland fungi, and it has been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation because of this.



Hunting earthtongues and fairy clubs

(Photo: Lucia Chmurova)

The cemetery did not disappoint and a total 18 different waxcap species were seen in just 2

hours. These included stunningly colourful species such as the small button-like Scarlet Waxcaps, bright yellow Butter Waxcaps, chunky Orange Waxcaps, and some vivid green Parrot Waxcaps. We also found grey, but very distinctive Slimy Waxcaps and Yellow-foot Waxcaps, and the pure white Snowy Waxcap. Stocky, buff-coloured Meadow Waxcaps were some of the more frequent species. We also saw several delicate Pink Waxcaps, also known as the 'ballerina'.



Vermillion Waxcap and Pink Waxcap,

also known as the Ballerina

(Photo: Peter Sturgess /Lucia Chmurova)

There was discussion about the orange-gilled Oily Waxcap. This can readily be confirmed by its distinctive odour, but this is unfortunately difficult to describe. Another species with a sensory identification test is the small red Bitter Waxcap, which lives up to its name and is usually hurriedly spat out. A highlight this year was the confirmation of the Vermillion Waxcap, first suspected by Gareth in 2020, confirmed this year checking by characteristic cap texture and spore-shape under the microscope.



Parrot Waxcap and Beige Coral

(Photos: Peter Sturgess)

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Waxcaps are not the only fungi the cemetery has to offer, and we also found a good number of earthtongues and fairy clubs. These are also good indicators of grassland with a high quality for nature conservation, but they are often tricky to identify. One of the star species at Cathays Cemetery is the Olive Earthtongue. Resembling small greenish pegs amongst short grass this can be difficult to spot, but it is one of the rarest fungi in Wales, now protected through the Environment (Wales) Act 2019.



Citrine Waxcap and Olive Earthtongue
(Photos: Peter Sturgess)

Plantlife is a national charity promoting conservation of wild plants and fungi. As part of this they would like as many people as possible to find and record previously unknown waxcap grassland sites across the UK. Waxcap grasslands are a precious, vulnerable but easily overlooked habitat and the threat to them is made worse when no-one is aware of them. If you are aware of any other sites with waxcaps, or would like to join in the search for them next autumn, you can download the Plantlife recording app at

https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/habitats/grassland/waxcaps-fungi/waxcapp-survey

Grassland fungi species list, recorded 21st November 2021

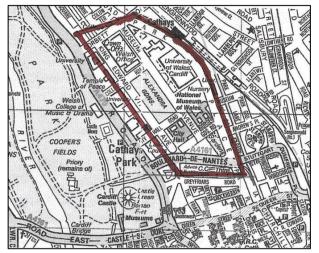
Yellow-foot Waxcap = Cuphophyllus flavipes Meadow Waxcap = Cuphophyllus pratensis Snowy Waxcap = Cuphophyllus virginea Glutinous Waxcap = Gliophorus glutinipes Slimy Waxcap = Gliophorus irrigatus Parrot Waxcap = Gliophorus psittacinus Orange Waxcap = Hygrocybe aurantiosplendens Butter Waxcap = Hygrocybe ceracea Golden Waxcap = Hygrocybe chlorophana Citrine Waxcap = Hygrocybe citrinovirens Scarlet Waxcap = Hygrocybe coccinea Blackening Waxcap = Hygrocybe conica Spangle Waxcap = Hygrocybe insipida Vermillion Waxcap = Hygrocybe miniata Bitter Waxcap = Hygrocybe mucronella Crimson Waxcap = Hygrocybe punicea Oily Waxcap = Hygrocybe quieta Pink Waxcap = Porpolompsis calyptriformis Pointed Club = Clavaria acuta Smoky Spindles = Clavaria fumosa Wrinkled Club = Clavulina rugosa Meadow Coral = Clavulinopsis corniculata Handsome Club = Clavulinopsis laeticolor Apricot Club = Clavulinopsis luteoalba Beige coral = Clavulinopsis umbrinella Hairy Earthtongue = Trichoglossum hirsutum Olive Earthtongue = Microglossum olivaceum sl. Plain Earthtongue = Geoglossum umbratile

Peter Sturgess

Balloon Girl - The 1896 Exhibition

The 1896 Exhibition always gets a mention in the Balloon Girl story, but what was it?

The Fine Arts, Industrial and Maritime Exhibition, to give it its full name, occupied an area roughly where Cathays Park sits today.



Exhibition site superimposed on today's street map

In all the Exhibition occupied more than 50 acres, stretching from the feeder canal, south of Boulevard de Nantes, up to Corbett Road and from Park Place to roughly King Edward VII Avenue.

Cardiff had held an exhibition, with a fine art and industrial show, in 1871, in the Drill Hall, in Dumphries Place. This 1867 Byzantine style building, funded by the Bute trustees, was 45 metres long and 20 metres wide. The central hall could reputedly accommodate a standing audience of more than 4,000 (must have been quite a crush and would not have met present day regulations). The hall was demolished in the 1970s to make way for the dual carriageway we see today. But the 1896 Exhibition was to be on an entirely different scale.

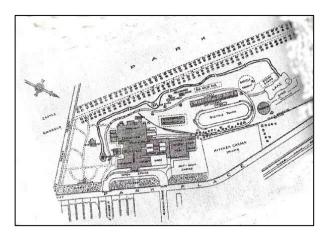
The mayor in 1893-94, William John Trounce, who is buried in Cathays Cemetery (M175B), thought to signalise his year of office with a mammoth Exhibition. Councillor Trounce first imparted his idea to a number of other

gentlemen on November 24th 1893. The proposal was then brought before the Cardiff Free Library Committee, which took it up enthusiastically. Mayor Trounce raised the matter with agents of the Marquess of Bute and obtained the promise of Cathays Park for a period of nine months, the idea being to open the Exhibition in the summer of 1894 and keep it open through the autumn and winter. A town's committee was formed, comprised of leading tradesmen, representatives of trade societies. and others and within days a guarantee fund of £6,000 had been established. It was even agreed that the prospective profits, would be distributed between the free library, the museum, and the Cardiff Infirmary.

Enthusiasm for the project gave rise to an inflation of ideas and the magnitude of the Exhibition. It was soon necessary to postpone the scheme for, initially, a year, to allow sufficient time to put all the arrangements in place. Stimulated thereby, Cardiff proceeded to lay itself out for the realisation of a much more magnificent scheme. Through The Lord Windsor (Earl of Plymouth), the patronage of Queen Victoria and Prince of Wales was sought, and readily accorded. The Lord Windsor was also invited to be President of the organising committee, which he consented to, with two conditions: first the delaying of the event until 1896 (surely not a coincidence that it would start at the end of his year as town mayor) and that the guarantee fund should be raised to £20,000 (about £2.7 million today). Lord Bute wrote to the Prince of Wales to put the castle at his disposal while attending the event.

The plan on the next page shows the layout of the Exhibition site on part of the Castle Park, of which the avenue of trees (across the top in the plan below) was a feature. The castle's kitchen garden (bottom right, by Park Place, on the plan) was excluded from the Exhibition site. The exhibition halls must have had a floor area similar to that of today's museum.

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The main entrance into the Exhibition, in Grand Moroccan style, was reached via a carriage drive off Park Place, while there was also a spur off the Taff Vale Railway into the heart of the Exhibition. The central archway, of the main entrance was about 12 metres high, with the Borough Arms emblazoned above, while, close behind, the central dome was 30 metres high.

The entrance led directly into the maritime hall, with a fine collection of ship and harbour models. From here, connecting doors linked to an art gallery, with pictures, sculpture. statuary, china, etc with an estimated value at today's prices in excess of £20 million. Another hall was filled by a model of Cardiff as it would have looked in mediaeval times and said to be so realistic, with detail including "green mould and cobble stones". An indication of the size of the model is that a gallery was provided to allow access to view the upper floors of buildings. Another hall showed off the industrial prowess of Cardiff and South Wales, where "marvellous machinery rattles away, performing prodigies in processes of manufacture hitherto heard of but here seen. The most powerful as well as the most delicate and complicated engines are at work."

Beyond the exhibition halls, the landscaped grounds included areas for quiet enjoyment, facilities for active sport and recreation, music and drama. There were streets of galvanised iron buildings, holding exhibits including a dairy farm, a biscuit factory, blast furnaces, a Shakespeare house, Dutch cocoa house, a replica coal mine (an idea that was to catch on

more widely 80 years or so later!), and a panorama of Waterloo.

The large oval (centre top) was a cycle track, but served as a general arena for sports and displays ... and launch area for the balloon flights. There were weekly track and field competitions as well as amateur professional cycling events. Close by was a large stage, fronted by a lake, where maritime themed enactments could be staged. These included the operatic "Siege of Santiago", depicting Drake's encounter in Chile in 1578. attracted thousands which every performance.

From this lake, a lead-lined canal skirted the western perimeter of the site and was used for boat rides, while coracles, water cycles and boats were available for hire. Two band stands were placed on islands along the canal which, at night, was lit along its length by prismatic gas lamps.

There was an "Old Welsh Fair", run by the Studt family, who have at least two graves in Cathays Cemetery and are still operating as showmen today. There were plenty of side shows to amuse and entertain, including jungle scenes with live lions, tigers, alligators and crocodiles.

The Dorlands Electric Railway, which was controlled and lighted electrically, was claimed to be the only one of its kind in the world. It was an aerial ropeway, carrying passengers, rather than minerals or mine waste, and very much at the forefront of the technology of the day. At night the whole exhibition area was lit by 10,000 fairy lights.

There was a Grand Concert Hall used for banquets, balls and concerts. On one evening alone, a 500-strong choir entertained 10,000 visitors here. Refreshments were available at a choice of tearooms, restaurants and bars.

When the Exhibition was visited by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward V11), the Princess and their two daughters, the opportunity was

taken to hold the first public performance in Cardiff of "animated screen photography" - some of the earliest moving pictures - by Birt Acres. Although born in the United States to British parents, Acres made his home in Britain, where his pioneering work in the development of moving pictures was undertaken.

The Exhibition had opened on 2nd May 1896. preceded by a luncheon hosted by the mayor (The Lord Windsor) at the Town Hall, in St Mary's Street, lavishly decorated for the occasion. The 160 quests included the principal civic dignitaries of South Wales, MPs, clergy and minsters (including the Bishop of Llandaff) and leading representatives of commerce and industry. After a lunch, a procession of 54 carriages carried the guests along St. Mary Street, Duke Street, Queen Street and Park Place, all thronged with people and alive with banners and flags. The final carriage, with a guard of mounted police before and behind, carried The Lord and Lady Windsor. By 3.30 the procession was all in the Exhibition. The dignitaries were followed by a cyclists' procession, which started from behind the Town Hall in Westgate Street. Over 200 cyclists were involved, indicating the popularity of the sport at that time. It was reported that the first rider entered the Exhibition site a minute before the last rider set out from Westgate Street.

The opening ceremony took place in the concert where around 8000 quests entertained, while awaiting the arrival of the dignitaries, by the band of the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers and a choir of 500 voices. When Dr. Joseph Parry arrived, he was greeted by the rendering of the hymn to his tune "Aberystwyth". After the Lord Windsor took his place in the centre of the platform, with principal guests seated to the right and left, the honorary secretary of the organising committee, Walter Cook, gave the opening address, particularly welcoming the mayor and mayoress and thanking the Marquess of Bute for placing the Park at their disposal. The first verse of the "Old Hundredth" was sung, the Lord Bishop of Llandaff offered a special prayer and the ceremony concluded with the choir singing "The Hallelujah Chorus" and "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau.". The guests then dispersed to enjoy the Exhibition.

The Exhibition ran for almost 6 months, to 2nd November, attracted nearly 900,000 visitors and cost about £37,000 (more than £4.5m today). For the prestige that it brought to Cardiff, the Exhibition would be judged a great success, despite the one glaring flaw, the balloon girl tragedy. For a town of around 140,000 people, it was a stupendous enterprise. But the sponsors ended up out of pocket, though not cripplingly so, while most of the concessionaires would have operated profitably.

Epitaphs

Harry Edsel Smith of Albany, New York 1903 - 1942:

Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was coming down. It was.

In a Thurmont, Maryland cemetery:

Here lies an Atheist, all dressed up and no place to go.

In East Dalhousie Cemetery, Nova Scotia:

Her lies Ezekial Aikle, age 102. Only the good die young.

Recent Events

AGM

Little did we realise that last year's online AGM would not be a one-off, but the Omicron variant had other ideas! The experience after two such events did prompt some interesting discussion at the end of this AGM, which is reported later. Attendance was perhaps slightly down on previous years' average but, crucially, well above the quorum required by the constitution.

The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. The papers for the AGM had been sent out by post

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and he hoped that everyone had had received them. He noted that, with rising postage charges, the committee were considering the use of email for this in the future. There were a few apologies for absence and these were recorded. The minutes of last year's AGM were accepted and there were no matters arising. The combined President's/Chairman's report had been sent out with the meeting invitation so was taken as read, although a minor amendment was agreed to make it clear that Martin Berkeley (representing The Light Dragoons at the John Henry Harding Dedication Ceremony) was not a descendant of The Charge of the Light Brigade veteran.

In commending his report, the Chairman mentioned that a substantial programme had been undertaken, despite Covid, and he reiterated the thanks to all those who had made this possible.

The Treasurer presented his report on 2021 and confirmed that the accounts had now been audited. Turn over was again down due to the affects of Covid. Notably, the suspension of subscriptions had reduced this income (the sum shown here was from new members joining in the year). However, many members paying by standing order chose to let the payments continue as donations. This figure was also boosted by two very generous donations, including one from Canada. One speaker had chosen not to cash his cheque, but the Zoom subscription was a new addition. Overall the surplus for the year was approximately £1050 and the account balance rose to about £8,500. Projects under consideration included restoration of the arch at the main entrance. lighting of the area between the entrance and the chapels (to facilitate evening use in the winter months) and more information signs. Members are invited to put forward other ideas. It was noted that a new PA system had been acquired for the Harding Event, but that the payment for this did not fall in the account year.

There was no competition for officer or member posts on the Trustees, all nominees were duly nominated and seconded and the new committee was elected unanimously. Those elected were:

Chairman: Paul Jones

Treasurer: John Farnhill

Trustees: Jean Sanford, Margaret Smith, Ivor Lippett, Paul Nicholson (Honorary President), Des Sanford, Ian Campbell and Sue Clancy.

Carmel Thomas gave an update on behalf of Bereavement Services, drawing attention to the greater number of events that had been possible and noting that more relaxed Covid restrictions had also allowed the chapels to be used for funerals and weddings. There were already bookings for this year. It was particularly pleasing that it had been possible for children to have a greater involvement in things like the Remembrance Services. The Green Flag and Green Heritage Award had been gained for another year. Denise Rogers has plans for this year's workdays, taking on some of the Friends' ideas, and the very popular dramatised walks will be back again this summer.

The last two items on the agenda were merged, the most significant points being:

- As a result of a recommendation by a local community group, the Friends had received a very useful gift of tools from Sainsburys.
- There was a suggestion that it would be quite reasonable to increase the membership subscription, to reflect the benefits of membership, increased postal costs, etc. This would be considered by the Committee.
- There was an interesting discussion about the pros and cons of Zoom lectures and AGM. It was fully recognised that these were more convenient for some, while not accessible

to others. The possibility of hybrid meetings that combined live and online involvement was suggested. While it was likely that some continued use of Zoom was likely, the whole subject would be investigated further by the Committee.

- This year's Midsummer Walk will be in the New Cemetery, for a change.
- One way or another, Open Doors will take place, even if the indoor element is restricted and more outdoor elements have to be inserted.

The meeting closed at 10.35 am.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

We meet by the chapels at 10 am and work until noon, with a break for elevenses. You can work at your own pace and tools and gloves are provided, so why not join us for a couple of hours sociable exercise? Our recent workdays have been well supported and it has been particularly rewarding to "see the difference" at the end of a session.

Our last workday (and the only one in the quarter), at the end of February, was an opportunity to undertake some clearing up after the recent storms. Concentrating on the central area of the Old Cemetery around the "heart", small debris was collected from the areas that are normally mown and left in small heaps close to the drives, for later collection with a "chopper". A considerable volume of material was collected into around fifty piles, of which the one pictured below was typical.



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Put the last Saturday of the month in your diary, as the next dates are 26th March, 30th April, 28th May and 25th June.

Weekly Health Walks

All are welcome on these weekly walks, which are now pretty much back to normal after the pandemic restrictions. The last few weeks have seen an unusually high proportion of wet Tuesdays, but our record of more than 12 years without cancelling a walk for the weather has been maintained. However, we now rank a walk in the middle of February as the wettest yet ... and we still had eight people in the group!

The walks are not strenuous and concentrate on finding the seasonal highlights around the Cemetery, while being informative about the history of the Cemetery and those buried in it. These sociable walks, which last about an hour, start just inside the gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning. The socialising continues afterwards over tea or coffee in a local cafe.

Future Events

Zoom Lectures

The maximum number of attendees at these lectures is 100 (although, to date, this has not proved a restraint) and it is necessary to register in advance. The link to register is sent out to members of the Friends for whom we have email addresses and will also appear on our website and social media. For those who have registered, a second link for joining the talk itself will be sent out automatically.

We anticipate that some of these lectures may prove popular enough to challenge the 100 people ceiling, so any members who have not given us their email address nay wish to do this now. We hope that people registering and then not attending will not prove a problem. It is appreciated that not all members will have the facilities to join an online meeting, but we feel that it is important to keep some sort of talk

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programme going.

The first Zoom lecture will be on Tuesday 8th March at 7:00 pm. Entitled 'Highgate Cemetery - a Victorian Valhalla', it will be presented by Stuart Orr of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust. With a background in Information Management in large organisations, Stuart has a long-standing interest in history and, following retirement, started volunteering at Highgate. He has since been a very regular tour guide and a member of the Group maintaining War Graves. Highgate is probably the best known cemetery in the UK, so this lecture is not to be missed.

On Tuesday 26th April at 7:00 pm. Janine Marriott of Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust will give an illustrated talk about Arnos Vale Cemetery. This Bristol garden cemetery has much in common with Cathays ... but one significant difference! Janine has been Graphic Education Officer for Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust for 13 years. For the last six years, she has also undertaken the role of Graphic Public Engagement Manager> with an educational background in heritage and museum experience, we can expect a knowledgeable talk about the cemetery.

Walks

On Sunday April 24th at 11 am, the Heritage Walk will be led by Bereavement Services. This popular walk is an excellent introduction to the Cemetery. The walk will start just inside the main entrance in Fairoak Road.

On Tuesday June 22nd at 7 pm, Gordon Hindess of the Friends of Cathays Cemetery will lead the Midsummer Walk. For a change, this walk will be located in the New Cemetery, accessed off Allensbank Road, north of Eastern Avenue. To avoid congestion around the entrance, the walk will start from the First World War war graves plot (Section EB).

Other Events

Wednesdays 2nd & 9th March - Stories from the Cemetery at Cathays performed in the

chapels by the **A48 Theatre Company**. Sorry, but these performances are fully booked.

The A48 Theatre Company will again be performing to new scripts by the writers of Living Lines on a guided walk around the Cemetery on Tuesday 7th June at 7 pm, Thursday 9th June at 7 pm and Sunday 12th June at 2 pm. There will be a small charge for these events. Further details will be available closer to the time on the Bereavement Services' website, the Friends' website, social media and posters on the Cemetery gates.

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.

There are also several free publications which can be downloaded from our website in pdf format.

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