

## *A Taste of Things to Come?*

In our last issue, we featured record breaking weather. We have been warned to expect more extreme weather, as a result of climate change. In our last issue, we mentioned the near record breaking rain in April and the drought in the second half of May. Then June became the driest on record, while July came close to record breaking for precipitation. Perhaps we should be pleased that the peak holiday month of August, while pretty nondescript, failed to break any records!

On the whole, the flora of the Cemetery coped pretty well with all this but, with some help from some temporary problems in keeping on top of the normal grass cutting regime, there were some unusual sights. Much of the lawned area looked like a traditional hay meadow for a while and we could distinguish the varieties of grass from the seed heads that formed.



*Selection of grasses, including perennial ryegrass and Yorkshire fog*

A hay meadow brings other things, like the patches of meadow buttercup which were witnessed. Unlike the creeping and bulbous buttercups, which will flower in a mown lawn, the meadow variety grows to a height of two feet or more. There were also clumps of oxeye daisy, as pictured at the top of the next column.



While circumstances this year might have been unusual, the appearance of wild strawberries is unusual for another reason. This is a plant that likes alkaline soil, but the local Cathays earth is acid. However, where there are limestone memorials or chipping dressing, there are isolated patches providing the right conditions.



*Wild strawberry in flower*

A new arrival in the Cemetery is the Snug Bug Hotel, an architectural custom design that is sure to attract a host of insects. We have to thank St Monica's Church in Wales Primary School for this welcome addition to the Cemetery.



*Snug Bug Hotel*

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It has been erected close to the Conservation Areas under the shade of a large tree and behind the tulip tree in Section K.



*Tulip Tree flower*

For a number of years now, we have spotted an unusual plant, but it has not survived the normal mowing/strimming regime to produce flowers that would confirm its identity. This year a clump was spotted in Section Q that had grown to shoulder height and had produced flower buds, as shown below.



Checking a week or so later, hoping to see some flowers, was a shock - the plants had been strimmed, leaving them looking like this:



*However, the cut down and chopped up plants proved surprisingly resilient. The stems are extremely "stringy" and tough and some fought back and produced a few flowers a couple of weeks later ...*



*(Sorry, but this photograph is not properly focussed)*

The yellow flowers, about the size of a daisy, were sufficient to confirm the identity of the plant as prickly lettuce. The flowers form in a many branched inflorescence at the top of the plant and are much appreciated by bees and other pollinators.

But what is this prickly lettuce? The plant is greyish, tall and erect and the more mature stems can be bristly. Its leaves alternate up the stems and can also be prickly on margins and along the mid-rib beneath. The leaves can be variable in shape, sometimes irregularly lobed, though upper stem leaves are unlobed, attach to the stem with arrow shaped points and are held in a vertical position.

And where does the lettuce come in? The word

seems to be used in a generic sense, rather than as an encouragement to include it in salads. The young tender leaves are mild and, apparently, make an excellent salad, but this advice comes with the caution "to eat only small quantities"! The whole plant becomes bitter as it gets older, especially when it flowers.

The weather has certainly been to the liking of fungi, which seem to respond to warm moist conditions, like this one that appeared in a lawn near the chapels:



It was about the size of a dinner plate and this one looked like an omelette that had been inexpertly folded over. We haven't, as yet, come up with an identification, so if you can help, please let us know.

While examining the leaf and bud attachments on a pedunculate oak, this was spotted:



It is *Andricus foecundatrix* but, perhaps, easier to remember by its common name, oak artichoke gall. While it can be found on both of our native oaks, it does favour the pedunculate oak. The gall is formed when, around June, a gall wasp lays a single egg within a leaf bud, usually a terminal one, as in this case. The gall develops as a chemically induced distortion of leaf material. Young galls exhibit a tuft of long hairs protruding from the centre of the 'artichoke', the remainder being overlapping scales. The hairs are attached to a smaller hard casing inside, in which the larva lives. This hard core is released and drops to the ground from August onwards, though the gall remains visible. This reflects the situation in which our specimen was found.

Once the oak artichoke gall has fallen to the ground the imago may leave the gall in the following spring, or may delay its emergence for 2-3 years. The wasps emerging will be female and go on to lay a solitary egg in the male flowers of the oaks in the Spring, causing the formation of hairy catkin galls. The wasps that arise from these galls are of both sexes and the cycle starts again after they have mated and eggs are laid in the oak buds. Galls act as both the habitat and food sources for the progeny of the gall wasp. The artichoke gall is formed entirely from the bud and is composed of nutritious starch and other tissues.

Galls may also provide the insect with physical protection from predators. Perhaps surprisingly, there are vertebrate predators that will break open the hard core to recover the larva or pupa. The artichoke gall may also be parasitised by harmless insects, while some fungi may infect and kill it. The galls cause no measurable harm to the host tree.

The wide variety of trees is an essential component of the Cemetery's park function. A couple of issues ago, we reported on the sorry condition of the monkey puzzle: it has not perked up with the warmer weather and its

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demise must be recognised. We have previously noted the declining health of the Corsican pines, that create such notable avenues, and the approach of ash dieback, even though it has yet to take a devastating hold. The latest casualty is a clump of firs in the most northerly corner of Section K, which looks as if it has been sprayed with Agent Orange, the notorious herbicide used by the USA in Vietnam. We are confident that this is not the cause of the problem here, but it is yet to be diagnosed and is worrying. The firs are pictured below.



To finish on more cheerful note, as anyone who has visited the Cemetery since the end of July with a plastic pot can confirm, it has been a bumper year for blackberries, which have clearly enjoyed this year's up and down weather.

## Summer Miscellany



Yes, the replacement for the mayor's coat of arms has arrived on the main entrance. As we have come to expect, it is another example of Mossfords' care and expertise with stone. You can see a short video about the sculpting and fitting of the shield on Mossfords website by following the following link:

<https://mossfords.com/media/>

The image below, courtesy of Mossfords, shows the carving in progress.



On the subject of new plaques, we are pleased to record the fitting of a replacement aluminium alloy one on a French war grave from World War 1, in Section R. While this has been a while in coming, it was initiated by our EOHO (Eyes On, Hands On) volunteers, Jean and Des Sanford, reporting of problems with war graves to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

It also reminds us that successful international cooperation is still possible!



The marker, pictured above, is typical of the French war graves from this era, although the original plaques were cast iron.

If you visited the Cemetery in August, you may have noticed an outbreak of these yellow triangles on the drives ...



The crosses were survey reference points for some drone imaging that Bereavement Services had done for their cemetery mapping.

There are a couple of memorial plaques dating from the First World War, that have been moved around the Cemetery for some time. There is no obvious reason why Cathays Cemetery or Bereavement Services should be regarded as a proper permanent home for them. Their original homes have been lost to redevelopment, but it does seem right that they should be preserved ... somewhere.

One of the remembrance plaques is in white marble (pictured below) and has a "codicil" which makes it clear that it was originally in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Charles Street and was moved to "this church" in 1938.



The Wesleyan Methodist Church stood at the corner of Charles Street and Bridge Street and the foundation stone was laid on 16 July 1849. It was designed by James Wilson, of Bath, in a Gothic style unusual for nonconformist buildings in Wales at the time. It opened in September 1850. In 1895, this building was destroyed by a fire but was rebuilt quickly afterwards on the same site to a new design by Jones, Richards and Budgen of Cardiff. The chapel continued to serve Cardiff's Methodists until about 1937. It appears to have been used, in the late 1940s, by the Ministry of Labour and National Service (Women's Department) and, during the 1950s, it housed the Supplies Department of the Welsh

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Regional Hospital Board and also a Clothing Depot for the Women's Voluntary Service. Following this it was largely unoccupied apart from a short period when Welsh National Opera used it. It was eventually demolished in the mid-1980s and the site is now occupied by a modern building housing the Cardiff Jobcentre.

Does anyone know where "this church" (as referred to on the additional stone bar) was? It seems highly likely that this home has gone the way of the original church, which would be when the tablet came to Cathays. Can anyone shed more light on this phase of its history?

The second bronze plaque, shown below ...



gives no clue as to where it once hung. Can anyone identify it and give any advice about its journey to Cathays?

While new interments in Cathays Cemetery are relatively few, there is still a great deal of

activity by families tending their relatives' graves. Cut flowers or potted plants are popular, but require watering. There are a few strategically placed standpipes and there was always a watering can or two by these, but these have been lost over the years. People resorted to bringing their own containers, commonly plastic bottles, but these sometimes ended up as litter. In response to this, Bereavement Services have provided new plastic buckets with racks to hold them. The one shown below is by the Cathays Library entrance.



It is a sad reflection on society today that, within a month, one of these buckets had disappeared.

Have you explored the Friends' website recently? It is almost unbelievable how it has grown from a page of very basic information over the last 15 years or so. We believe that it is probably one of the best cemetery websites in terms of the available information. Whether approached for family history research, local or social history or natural history, you will find a lot of help and interest here. Huge credit must be given to our Chairman, Paul Jones, for the huge amount of time that he has put into developing and populating the website.

Recent additions are the removed memorials record for Section Y and comprehensive details of the Norwegian graves from about 100 years ago, in Section EG. The removed memorials record dates from the period of lawn

conversion, 50 or so years ago, and that for Section Y was the only one not on the website. The group of Scandinavian graves with a common style of headstone had previously been referred to as WW1 war graves, but this is incorrect. Norway, covering modern day Norway, Sweden and Denmark was officially neutral in WW1. The graves relate to a plot purchased by the Norwegian Church for 'unfortunates': many seem to have died from drowning in the docks. We are grateful to the Norwegian Church for kindly making available the transcriptions from Norwegian, including details such as cause of death.

There are many fine sculptures in the Cemetery and the one below can be found in the small detached part of Section G, just across the way from the Balloon Girl.



The memorial is on the grave of Alice Maud Pearce who died in 1908, at the relatively tender age of 26. It has been suggested that the figure has been influenced by the Statue of Liberty and this may be supported by the fact that her husband, Arthur, who is remembered

on the memorial, died in the USA, at Newport News, Virginia, in 1920 aged 35.

Reading the NFCF newsletter serves to remind us that Cathays Friends are very fortunate. Many Friends groups are also owners of their cemeteries, with full financial and management responsibilities, often including the provision of burial facilities. Their annual budgets can easily be more than two orders of magnitude greater than ours. We enjoy a happy cooperative relationship with the Council and, in particular, Bereavement Services. Many Friends groups do not enjoy this luxury and may have limited (or, in extreme cases, no) cooperation from the cemetery owner. The story of one of these is featured below.

### *How the Other Half Lives*

*With acknowledgement to the article in the NFCF Newsletter by Barbara Morris, Chairman of the Friends of Bethel Sketty Cemetery*

Bethel Chapel in Sketty, Swansea, is a listed building, constructed in 1870 on the site of an earlier chapel. It held services in Welsh until it closed in 2020. The adjacent four-acre cemetery contains about 4,000 graves dating back to around 1840, including those of historic figures such as Griffith John, a missionary to China who founded a hospital in Wuhan, and Private David Lewis, a survivor of Rorke's Drift in the Zulu War.

In August 2022, Barbara Morris visited the cemetery to look for the grave of her aunt only to find the gates securely locked and a 'For Sale' sign on the property. She learned that a meeting was planned between the Trustees of the chapel and potential buyers. She contacted the minister and offered her contact details, so that she could be kept abreast of developments. This offer was rejected and, when she enquired about plans for contacting the relatives of the deceased, the minister waved her hand towards the cemetery saying, "How can we?"

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In the face of this unhelpful, negative attitude, Barbara placed a small announcement in the local newspaper, resulting in more than 40 people turning up at a meeting in a local pub. This initiated the establishment of the Friends group. As well as joining the NCF (a source of invaluable advice), they have an email membership list and a Facebook group totalling more than 400 followers. The Friends do not dispute the Trustees right to sell the chapel, but are fighting against their unwillingness to share any information about what will happen to the cemetery after the sale. But the Friends do want to ensure that the cemetery will be properly maintained, allowing continued access for visiting the graves of loved ones and ancestors, and also for future burials.

Although the Friends have formally approached the Trustees, requesting a meeting to discuss the future of the cemetery, the Trustees have been unwilling to engage. The Friends' response has been to send out letters - to individual Trustees, The Union of Welsh Independents which loosely oversees such chapels, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, local members of the Senedd and the Charity Commission (Bethel Trustees is a registered charity). Though barely a year old, the Friends have obtained substantial press and media coverage to bolster their campaign, including from BBC Wales (in English and Welsh), ITV Wales, the online Welsh media and the local newspaper.

As a result of this action, the potential buyers of the chapel and cemetery have also raised a number of major queries with the sellers. The Charity Commission has announced that it is investigating "whether the trustees are complying with their duties and responsibilities". In effect, the Trustees stand accused of trying to sell off the listed chapel and its historic burial ground with a lack of adequate safeguards, while refusing to consult or discuss the sale with relatives of those buried there.

*This newly formed Friends group is facing problems which seem completely foreign to the Friends of Cathays Cemetery ... but reminds us how fortunate we are here. We are with Bethel Sketty Friends in spirit and hope that the confrontational atmosphere soon gives way to reasoned cooperation leading to a practical and amicable long term future for the cemetery.*

### **Reminder re Subscriptions**

In response to members' requests and as confirmed at the last AGM, the annual subscription rate from 1 January 2024, has increased to £10 per annum per household. Members paying by standing order should amend their instructions accordingly.

### **Recent Events**

#### **Erratum**

Our report in the last issue on the talk, "Angels in the Line of Fire", by Rosemary Chalenor contained some inadvertent errors, for which we apologise. The following is Rosemary's correction:

*Unfortunately there are some glaring errors!! It wasn't during WW1 British nursing services had failed the wounded. The problems mentioned referred to the CRIMEAN WAR. Religious Orders during this war in 1854, were French nuns. And they attended and nursed French soldiers. It is during the Crimean War that Florence Nightingale's nursing service evolved, "Army Nursing Service" and the "Indian Nursing Service. From this, Military nursing services developed and by the First World War were dedicated and working in hospitals at home, Western Front, Gallipoli, on board hospital ships. Etc.*

*In WW1 Nursing services were well organised and efficient. From Regular nurses "Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Service" attached to British Army Regiments, Auxiliary Nursing services, First Aid Nursing Services,*

(aristocratic girls, who used their own vehicles before enough ambulances but only early in war). Voluntary Aid Detachments (middle class girls who assisted on the home front and abroad). On hospital ships and on hospital trains. There was no class structure, women volunteered.

### Graveyard Voices

On two evenings and a Sunday afternoon in the middle of June, the **A48 Theatre Company** acted out **new scripts by the writers of Living Lines** on a guided walk around the Cemetery. All three performances were sold out and the audiences encountered a range of characters, who gave an insight into their lives and the conditions they lived in.



*Selection of the characters found around the Cemetery*

The weather was particularly kind this year, enhancing the pleasure of the audience, and the Thursday evening performance was filmed by S4C, to feature on Heno, on 11<sup>th</sup> July (and available afterwards on iPlayer). Deservedly, Graveyard Voices has grown in popularity each year. If you missed out this year, remember to book early next year.

### Walk

On **Tuesday June 20<sup>th</sup>**, **Gordon Hindess** led the **Midsummer Walk**, on behalf of the Friends. As usual, the primary aim was to present the

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results of more recent research into the residents of the Cemetery. Despite a threat of rain (that didn't materialise), more than 50 enthusiastic people enjoyed a variety of Cemetery tales.

### Our Regular Events

#### Monthly Workdays

Our last couple of workdays have concentrated on clearing vegetation that was encroaching onto drives (including from above!) or obstructing access to graves that are still visited regularly. It can be very satisfying to see what has been achieved in a couple of hours, although it is often more apparent from the volume of bagged cuttings, as the picture below shows.



Tools and gloves are provided for our sociable and well supported workdays and you can work at your own pace. If you want to join us, we **meet by the chapels (except in October) at 10 am** and work until noon, with a break for elevenses. Put the last Saturday of the month in your diary, as the next dates are **30<sup>th</sup> September, 28<sup>th</sup> October (meeting by the WW1 war graves, in Section EB) and 25<sup>th</sup> November**. There will be no workday in December.

#### Tuesday Walks

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

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# Friends EVENTS

## Future Events

### Open Doors

On **Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup>** from **11 am to 4 pm** the Cathays Cemetery Chapels will be opened to the public as part of the CADW Open Doors programme, which is Wales' annual contribution to the European Heritage Days initiative. There will be people on hand to tell you about the Chapels and the Cemetery and to answer your questions. During the course of the day there will be guided walks around the Cemetery to introduce some of the "residents".

### Walk

On **Sunday October 22<sup>nd</sup>** at **11 am**, **Roger Swan** will lead the **Heritage Walk, on behalf of Bereavement Services**. The walk will start by the chapels, just inside the main entrance in Fair oak Road. This walk is an excellent introduction to the Cemetery.

### Talk

On **Tuesday November 14<sup>th</sup>** at **7 pm**, the **Annual Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture** will be presented in the **Episcopalian Chapel** - on the right when you enter the **main entrance from Fair oak Road**. We are pleased to have **Amy Kitcher of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission** to talk about "**Gardening the World**".

## Publications

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

Cathays Cemetery on its 150<sup>th</sup> 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.

**Themed guides** (12 - 20 pages) - mostly £1.50 with black & white images or £2.00 for those with colour images. Because of disproportionate postal charges, these booklets have generally only been sold at events. The stock was replenished post Covid and there are some 20 titles available, many with new subjects. Those currently available are:

Murder at Cathays

The Cardiff Blitz and Cathays Cemetery

Another batch of Murders at Cathays

Builders & Architects at Cathays Cemetery

The Five Legs of Cathays

Restoring the Chapels at Cathays Cemetery

Sportsmen in Cathays Cemetery

Doctors & Men of Medicine

Exotic Trees in Cathays Cemetery

Cathays Cemetery Tree Trail

Cardiff Mayors in Cathays Cemetery

More Mayors & Councillors in Cathays Cemetery

Circuses & Fairs in Cathays Cemetery

Wild Flowers in Cathays Cemetery

Another Bunch of Wild Flowers

Men & Women of The Church

Mentioned In Stone - - Non-CWGC Graves

The Cemetery Gates

Queen Victoria's Wars in Cathays Cemetery

The Crimean War in Cathays Cemetery

The Boer War in Cathays Cemetery

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

## 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](http://www.friendsofcathayscemetery.co.uk)