

Growing Season

Nature has responded in delightful ways to this year's weather: there has always been something new to spot as you walk around. Among the wild flowers that have flourished this summer are red valerian, oxeye daisy, field scabious and wild strawberry. The latter loves an alkaline soil, so would not normally be expected in Cathays, but it does find favourable conditions adjacent to limestone memorials or where graves have been dressed with chippings of this rock.



Field scabious



Red valerian

As part of the Conservation Plan for the Cemetery, it was felt that the area around the main entrance and newly renovated chapels

should be as neat and tidy as possible all the year round. Unfortunately, the wild flower garden in the roundabout could shine for a few months, but then either look unkempt or an event waiting to happen, for the majority of the year. Plans were made to convert the roundabout into a lawn and to create wild flower beds elsewhere. However, the garden decided to have a final fling and, purely as a result of self seeding, put on one of the best and earliest displays of recent years. And, as if it knew that this was a special year, more poppies appeared than ever before.



Poppies in wild flower garden

July proved a good month for plums: although there are only a few trees, the crop was abundant, if short lived. The time span between ripening and falling off is naturally quite short, so you have to be there at the right time and quick ... especially after the news has broken on Facebook!

Even less easy to find is the ground bee (a general term, as there are many different types of ground nesting bee). They tend to favour mown grassy areas or cracks between paving flags and you should look out for a miniature molehill with a small hole in the top. These tiny bees (the vegetation in the image is blades of grass!) are solitary creatures and do not live in a colony for very long. This is one of the more peaceful bees of the world and is not usually aggressive. They are particularly welcome in the Cemetery as they are good pollinators of flowers.



Ground bee and nest

Before we leave nature, for those who have been following the "foxglove tree from seed" story (June 2013 issue), it is time for an update. The growing season last year saw minimal progress, with the seedling, still in a pot achieving a height of about 3". It was planted out in a corner of the garden during the winter and, since the spring, has shot up. In four months it has grown to more than four feet tall, with a stem thickness of about an inch and leaves in excess of a foot across. If this continues, it should be available for a principal role in Jack and the Beanstalk by next year's pantomime season!



Foxglove tree

Summer Miscellany

Once again, it has been an eventful time in the Cemetery. The inscription on the Blitz Memorial, which was getting hard to decipher, has been restored and the renovation work on the chapels has been completed, in good time for the Open Doors day (see page 10).



Restored blitz memorial



Chapel door

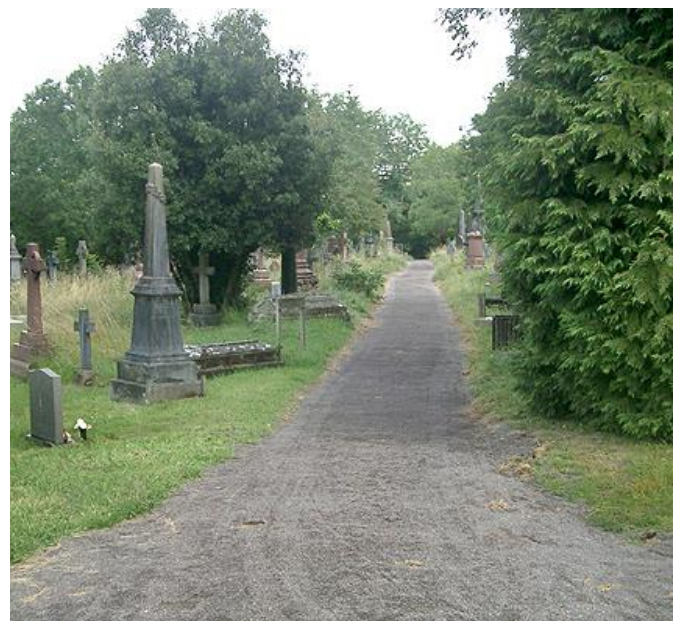
After a successful inspection and interview, the Cemetery has again been awarded a Green Flag. The Friends of Cathays Cemetery were present at the presentation, on 30 July, of the prestigious Award for 2014/2015. Alan Staniforth of the Bereavement Services, Prof Paul Nicholson, chairman of the Friends, and Paul Jones attended the Ceremony which took place at the Summerhouse in Bute Park. We are one of only 65 winners of the Award in the whole of Wales. A flag-raising ceremony is planned at the Cemetery to mark the event.



A collaboration between the University and Bereavement Services resulted in a dramatised version of the Heritage Trail, with a performance by students at selected stops, for example, an eyewitness account of the "Balloon Girl's" dramatic accident. Those who attended found it hugely enjoyable and it is to be hoped that the students undertake similar projects in the future.

Almost certainly the biggest event in the Cemetery in the last few months was the McDonalds Gives Back workday, when a small army of the fast food chain's staff turned out to tackle tasks like making rustic benches from recently fallen/felled firs, spreading stone dressing over substantial lengths of paths and clearing shrubs and undergrowth. Other jobs included turfing the entrance roundabout, cleaning up the Cedar of Lebanon roundabout, cutting out new wild flower beds, digging out

the drainage channel around the chapels and tackling patches of Japanese Knotweed. The recently restored chapels were put to good use as a base and lunch venue. The whole day was coordinated and supervised by Keep Wales Tidy Group, who provided most of the tools and equipment and any necessary specialist support. There were about 100 staff from McDonalds and this equated to about 550 volunteer hours. By comparison, the Friends workdays would take about three years to equal this total. Some 16 wagon loads of stone were barrowed along paths and spread.



Gritted path



Log seat

Unfortunately, due to the weather, the works were not fully completed on the day, leaving a fair amount of finishing off jobs to be done. However, Bereavement Services have this in

Friends FEATURES

hand, although the work has to be fitted in alongside its normal commitments. We are confident that the full benefit of the tremendous effort by the McDonalds employees will materialise over the next few weeks.

If any of you are readers of Woman's Weekly, did you contribute knitted or sewn poppies to the wreath that was placed on the Cross of Sacrifice to commemorate the centenary of the start of World War 1? On a parallel theme, a BBC Wales news item also featured the Commonwealth War Graves Commission plot in the New Cemetery, with particular reference to the information available online via the QR Code on the information sign, and the memorial to Barbara Williams, the young World War 2 victim, in the Old Cemetery.



Woman's Weekly wreath

Archibald Hood – the Welsh Connection

At the same time as he was consolidating his interests in Lothian (see our previous Newsletter), Hood was turning his mind to prospects in South Wales. The special qualities of South Wales steam coal had been brought into prominence during the Crimean War, being used for the first time by the Royal Navy.

Welsh steam coal combined high calorific value with the ability to generate heat quickly, making possible rapid generation of steam. It had the added attraction of giving reduced smoke emission, making naval vessels less obvious at sea. Subsequently, the Rhondda Valley was to produce more steam coal than any other South Wales valley. In Glamorgan, annual outputs were to rise from nearly 6 million tons in 1860 to around 35 million tons in 1911.

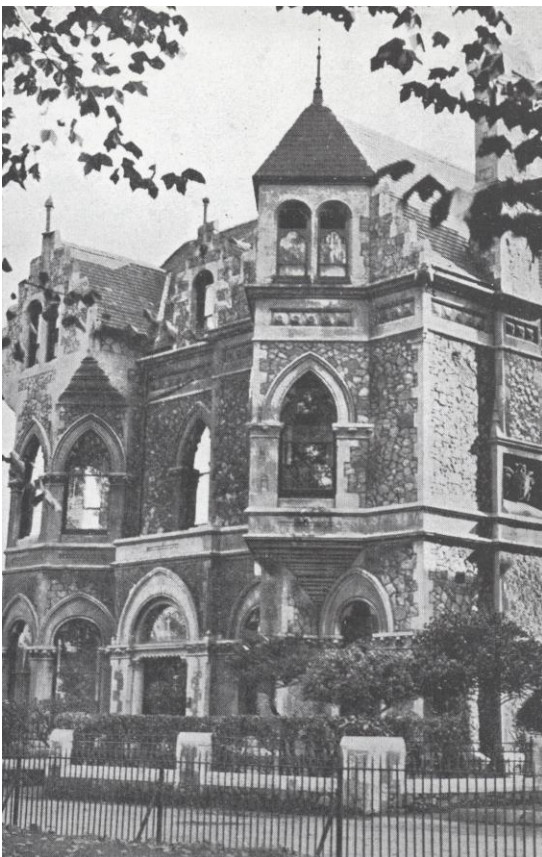
Demand for this coal had been increasing at a dramatic rate, and the fact had not gone unnoticed by some Scottish commercial interests. In 1860, Hood was commissioned on an expenses paid basis by two Liverpool based Scots, Archibald Campbell and Gilbert Mitchell-Innes, to visit South Wales and assess the potential. His specific task was to look at Wern Colliery, Llantrisant, which had been newly purchased by the Liverpool partnership. He quickly established that the colliery was not going to meet their long term expectations, and he then took time out to look at other mining possibilities, particularly in the Rhondda Valley, which, at the time, had few mines, and those were mainly at the lower end of the Valley.

Hood joined Campbell and Mitchell-Innes in the Ely Valley Coal Company Partnership and by 1862 had taken over management of the Welsh operations. He immediately turned his attention to the area around Llwynypia, at the time, a pastoral idyll with a grove of trees, presumably favoured by magpies, as the Welsh name implies. Boring operations started in July 1862 with satisfactory results although, some years later, it was discovered that there was a gap in the upper seam just west of the trial bore. Had the bore been sunk at this point, the course of Archibald Hood's life might have been very different!

Shaft sinking at the new Glamorgan Colliery started in March 1863 and, despite serious difficulties with water and running sand, coal was reached in the Rhondda No 2 seam in March 1864. The Rhondda No 3 seam was reached ten

months later. In 1863, Hood also started mining at Gilfach Goch and the company name was changed to Glamorgan Coal Company, which was eventually to operate six pits and become one of the top six mine operators in South Wales. Even at this early stage, Hood had established practical control over the company's operations, with his partners becoming 'sleepers'. By the 1890s the company's shareholding was virtually all held by the Hood family.

The output of the prized steam coal steadily increased. The coal was marketed under the name of "Hood's Merthyr" which was to become one of the best known coals on the Admiralty list for well over 30 years and was also used by foreign navies, and leading steamship companies. At its peak, the Glamorgan Coal Company was to produce 1 million tons of coal per year and employ 3,500 men.



Sherwood House - Courtesy of Cardiff Central Library Local Studies Section

With his Welsh interests outstripping those in Scotland, Hood moved initially to Gilfach House in Gilfach Goch then, in 1867, took up

permanent residence with his family at Sherwood House in Newport Road, Cardiff. This was one of a row of Gothic mansions, which gave way to offices about 60 years ago, and was next to the now disused St James' Church.

At about the same time, the Company's head office was moved from Llwynypia to 6 Bute Crescent, Cardiff, adjacent to the docks.



6 Bute Crescent today

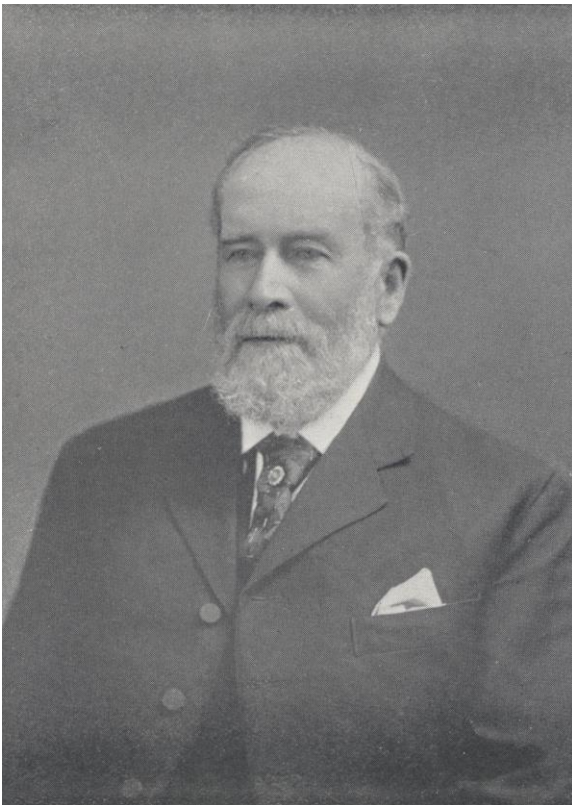
Two by-products of coal mining, fire clay and small coal, were produced in large quantities, but Hood put these to profitable use. He established one of the largest brickworks in South Wales, producing 10,000 bricks per day from the fire clay. A second ancillary operation was the production of coke from waste coal.

Eventually, he had 281 coke ovens at Llwynypia and Gilfach Goch, producing 1,400 tons of coke per week, marketed under the names of "Hood's Patented Coke" and "Glamorgan Foundry Coke", the latter name reflecting the demand from the iron and steel industry. The coke rapidly gained both home and international recognition. While no by-products were extracted in the coking process, the waste gases were used to generate steam.

Friends FEATURES

Hood believed in taking advantage of, and in many cases being in the forefront of, the latest developments. Examples of this were his use of compressed-air engines and, more importantly, electricity in mines. His belief in electricity was later to have him appointed to the Government Commission on Electricity in Mines, and also to become the first Chairman of the South Wales Electric Power Distributing Company.

As his status in the commercial and general life of South Wales grew, so did the positions which he held over the years, including Justice of the Peace; President, Cardiff Chamber of Commerce; Chairman, Monmouthshire & South Wales Coal Owners Association; Chairman, South Wales Institute of Engineers; President, Mining Association of Great Britain; Chairman, Sliding Scale Joint Committee (a management and union wage negotiating body for the mining industry in South Wales); Member of the Government Commission on Mining Royalties. He also wrote a major mining paper on 'The Explosive Nature of Coal Dust'.



Archibald Hood JP - Courtesy of Cardiff Central Library Local Studies Section

By the 1870s, such was the demand for South Wales coal that the existing Bute East and West Docks were incapable of coping with the tonnage. Ships were being delayed in loading, coal was held in railway wagons longer than necessary and coalmasters in the valleys had to reduce output or stock coal, neither action pleasing to cost-conscious owners. Of course, the main shareholder in the Docks and the Taff Vale Railway was the Marquess of Bute. Although the Marquess had obtained an Act of Parliament to build a further dock at Cardiff, the start had been delayed. One of the reasons for this was a requirement for additional revenue from the the coal freighters. Discussion between the parties was protracted and eventually escalated to the House of Commons. A group of the "freighters" led by David Davies of Llandinam, another South Wales coalmaster with mines in the upper Rhondda, and Archibald Hood, decided that a new and independent dock should be built at Barry. They were joined by local landowner, Lord Windsor (later 1st Earl of Plymouth), who also owned Penarth Docks. Against tremendous resistance from the powerful Bute interests, they pushed through Parliament the Barry Docks and Railway Act, to which Hood was one of the signatories.

The Barry Dock and Railway cost about £2 million (perhaps £2 billion today) to build. At the opening ceremony on 18th July 1889, Hood, in toasting the counsel, solicitor and parliamentary agents, said that he would be very happy to work with them again ... but that one Barry Docks was quite enough in a lifetime. The Earl of Plymouth was Chairman of the new company with David Davies as his Deputy and Davies' statue stands outside the Dock Office to this day. Although Davies received most of the public credit, the engineering brain and most consistent supporter of the project was almost certainly Hood, and he did become Deputy Chairman on the death of Davies a few years later.



Barry Dock 1901 - Courtesy of Glamorgan Archives

Surprisingly, there does not appear to have been any lasting acrimony with the Bute family and, in 1902, just a few months before his death, Hood presented an address to the young Marquess on his 21st birthday. Apparently, he spoke with such feeling on his connections with the family over the years, that the Marchioness was visibly moved.

We have seen what an exceptional engineer and businessman Archibald Hood was but, as we shall show in our next issue, there was much more to this remarkable man.

Unknown Warrior

With a special Remembrance Day approaching this year, it is appropriate to recall the story of the Unknown Warrior.

On November 7th 1920, in strictest secrecy, four unidentified British bodies were exhumed from temporary battlefield cemeteries at Ypres, Arras, the Asine and the Somme. None of the soldiers who did the digging was told why. The bodies were taken by field ambulance to the GHQ chapel at St-Pol-sur-Ternoise. There the bodies, on stretchers, were draped with the Union Flag. Sentries were posted and Brigadier L.J. Wyatt and Lieutenant Colonel E.A.S. Gell went into the chapel alone. They did not know from which battlefield any individual body had come. With closed eyes, Wyatt rested his hand on one of the bodies. The two officers placed the body in a plain coffin and sealed it. The other bodies were then taken away for reburial by Rev George Kendall.

The coffin stayed at the chapel overnight and, on the afternoon of 8th November, was transferred under guard, with troops lining the route, from St-Pol to the library of the medieval castle at Boulogne. A company from

the French 8th Infantry Regiment stood vigil overnight. The following morning, two undertakers entered the castle library and placed the coffin into a casket of the oak timbers of trees from Hampton Court Palace. The casket was banded with iron and placed on top were a Crusader's sword and a shield inscribed with 'A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and Country'.

The casket was placed onto a French military wagon, drawn by six black horses. All the church bells of Boulogne tolled and the massed trumpets of the French cavalry and the bugles of the French infantry played Aux Champs (the French "Last Post"). Then, the mile-long procession, led by one thousand local schoolchildren and escorted by a division of French troops, made its way down to the harbour. At the quayside, Marshal Foch saluted the casket before it was carried up the gangway of the destroyer, HMS Verdun, and piped aboard with an admiral's call. The Verdun was joined by an escort of six battleships and, as the flotilla carrying the casket closed on Dover, it received a 19-gun Field Marshal's salute from the castle. The body travelled by special train to platform 8 at Victoria station, where it lay overnight.

On the morning of 11th November, the casket was placed onto a gun carriage of the Royal Horse Artillery and drawn by six horses through immense and silent crowds. As the cortège set off, a further Field Marshal's salute was fired in Hyde Park. The cortège was taken to Whitehall where the Cenotaph, Lutyens' "symbolic empty tomb", was unveiled by King George V. The cortège was then followed by the king, the Royal Family and ministers of state to Westminster Abbey, where the casket was borne into the West Nave flanked by a guard of honour of one hundred recipients of the Victoria Cross. The coffin was interred in the far western end of the Nave, only a few feet from the entrance, in soil brought from each of the main battlefields, and the grave was capped with black Belgian marble

Friends FEATURES

and engraved with brass from melted down wartime ammunition.

The unknown soldier was the idea of a padre, David Railton, who had served at the front during the Great War and it was the Union Flag he used as an altar cloth at the front, that had been draped over the coffin. The intention was that all relatives of the 517,773 combatants whose bodies had not been identified could believe that the Unknown Warrior could very well be their lost husband, father, brother or son. To the surprise of the organisers, in the week after the burial an estimated 1,250,000 people visited the abbey, and the site is now one of the most visited war graves in the world. Part of the text inscribed on the tomb is taken from 2 Chronicles 24:16: *'They buried him among the kings, because he had done good toward God and toward his house'*.

There was an unusual postscript to this story this year. On the 6th April, a World War 1 edition of the Antiques Roadshow was filmed at the Thiepval Memorial. A manuscript of Rev George Kendall, which was presented by his grandson, described how six (not four) corpses were exhumed from various battlefields and taken to be received by him. He checked the remains to make sure that none had anything that gave a clue to identification and ensured that the coffins (not corpses covered by flags) were identical, with no indication of where the bodies had come from. The senior officer indicated which coffin should be taken by touching it. So should we believe the version that has been perpetuated for nearly a century, or the contemporary personal record of the person responsible for the selection arrangements?

Mystery Ships

In view of the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War in August 1914, Paul Jones had a browse through the listings held on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website to see information on the relevant graves at Cathays Cemetery.

One entry stood out from the rest because it referred to H.M.S. "Q.7." What was this? The grave was for Charles Alexander Preston, Royal Navy, Ship's Steward Assistant, son of William and Dorothy Preston, of 95, Paget Street, Grangetown. Delving further uncovered an astonishing tale of the Great War. The Q stood for Q-ship or Mystery Ship and Q.7 was named HMS Penschurst.



Contemporary cigarette card depicting Churchill's favourite weapon against U-boats: The Q-Ship. Mitch Peeke/Lusitania Online.

Their solution to the problem was the Special Service ship, also known as a decoy vessel, mystery ship or, most popularly, Q-ship. They were known as Q-ships because of their home port in Queenstown, Ireland. The ships were heavily armed and manned by Royal Navy personnel. They were dispatched to areas of intense enemy activity where, with their weapons hidden, an enemy submarine would surface to save its torpedoes and batter the "helpless" into the depths with their deck guns. The Q-ship's crew would rapidly uncover their armament and engage the submarine.

Q-ships came in all shapes and sizes, hinged bulwarks, dummy superstructures, deck cargoes

and even dummy boats were all used to conceal the ship's weapons. Some of the crew dressed up as black merchant seamen or, even, the captain's wife to deceive the U-boats! On one ship, the 'cook' was equipped with a stuffed parrot in a cage. A simulated abandon-ship routine was often put into operation, whereby half the crew, nicknamed the 'panic party', would leave the ship while the other half would remain hidden aboard to man the guns. It is claimed that there were between 200 and 366 Q-ships, with 61 being lost during the war.

HMS Penschurst had sunk coastal submarines UB.19, on the 30th November 1916, and UB.37, on 14th January 1917, both in the English Channel. However on Christmas Day 1917, she was herself torpedoed by German submarine "U-110" off the Bristol Channel. It is recorded that the entire crew of the Penschurst were either removed or got away in boats, but some were injured and, not long afterwards, on 16 January 1918, Charles Preston was buried in grave Y445 in Cathays Cemetery.



Recent Events

Walks

On **Tuesday 24th June**, over 57 people attended a sunny evening **Midsummer Walk** led by **Gordon Hindess**. He had skilfully arranged the walk around the latest research by the Friends and the ecology in the Cemetery for this time of year. Tales of fairground midgets, devastation of towns in Nova Scotia and battles in Gaza during World War I, combined with monkey puzzles, tulip trees and cedars to produce a delightful informative evening in the sun.

Phil Amphlett always attracts a large crowd for his annual **Heritage Walk** on behalf of the Bereavement Services. This year, on **Sunday 13th July**, it was no different with around 27 people attending the event. Many gems of local knowledge, added to the ambience of the Cemetery, made it another day to remember.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

Because of the summer break, there has only been one workday since our last issue. This concentrated on our regular target - re-growth of saplings, brambles and other shrubs in Section L. The next Workdays will be held on the **last Saturday of the month, in September, October and November**. Come and join us for a couple of hours of gentle exercise in the fresh air, with good company. **Meet by the chapels at 10 am**. Tools and gloves are provided and we have a half time refreshment break.

Weekly Health Walks

These sociable walks take place every week, regardless of the weather. All you need to do is turn up at **10.30 am** on a **Tuesday morning**, meeting just inside the **gates adjacent to Cathays Library**. Everyone is welcome and, after the walk, we adjourn to a cosy local café for a chat over tea or coffee.

Friends EVENTS



A typical walk lasts between 40 minutes and an hour and is taken at a leisurely pace, with occasional stops for a cemetery related anecdote, often based on recent discoveries. The picture above shows the group looking at the recently renovated Blitz Memorial in the New Cemetery.

Future Events

Talks

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the talk for Open Doors has had to be changed. Now, on **Tuesday 9th September at 7 pm**, **Alan Thorne** will give a talk on "**Ernest Willows, Cardiff's Pioneer Aviator**". The venue for this talk will be **Room 4.44, John Percival Building, Cardiff University, in Colum Drive** (behind Colum Road). Those who caught Alan's talk in May will know that this one will be based on extensive research and entertainingly presented.

On **Tuesday 18th November at 7 pm**, **Gary Williams** of the Western Front Association will give the Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture. The subject, befitting the centenary of the start of World War 1, will be "**Commonwealth War Graves Inscriptions**". The lecture will be given in **Room 2.01 John Percival Building, Cardiff University**. Not only has Gary travelled and researched his subject extensively, he is also an excellent photographer with a library of evocative images of memorials, cemeteries and

other commemorations, which he will share with us to illustrate his talk. Please note that there will be a **£3 admission charge** (payable at the door) for this lecture.

Guided Walks

On **Sunday 21st September at 2:30 pm**, as part of our Open Doors programme, the Friends will lead a **guided walk in the "New" Cemetery** (i.e. north of Eastern Avenue), starting from just inside the **vehicular entrance in Allensbank Road**. For those who have only been on walks in the Old Cemetery, the amount of interest in this part may come as a surprise.

The **Insignia Walk** will be led by Bereavement Services at **2 pm on Sunday 26th October**, meeting by the chapels. Having particular significance this year, this walk will look at a wide range of military insignia and relate stories of some of the servicemen buried in the graves and their regiments.

Open Doors

On **Sunday 21st September from 11 am to 2 pm**, the main event of our **Open Doors** programme will be the **opening of the chapels**, just inside the Fair oak Road entrance. This will be an opportunity to view the work which has been done this year to make these listed buildings habitable again. (Note that the guided walk mentioned above conveniently follows on from this event.)

Finally...

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

*Contact the editorial team on 2061 2164
or email <gordon.hindess@uwclub.net>*

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