

## Flowers ... and More

With a noticeably cold April following a mild winter, nature's timetable has got back on track, resulting in an extended display of spring flowers. Carpets of primroses, joined by celandine and wood anemone, have been better than ever, and have lasted well into May.

These were joined latterly by bluebells and it seems that, each year, the proportion of albino bluebells rises so that, in some places, the mix proportions are almost equal. This phenomenon is relatively rare in our native bluebells, but more common in the Spanish version and hybrids of the two. The Spanish version predominates in the Cemetery and, if you look carefully, you will see that it is not just blue and white, but purple and a variety of shades in between.



All too easily, attention is drawn to the flowers and brighter blossoms, but the deciduous trees go through a colourful transition, during bud



*Autumn in April?*

break and as leaves sprout and mature. While the commonest transition colours are yellow, lime and pale green, some trees take on quasi autumn hues, as the picture above shows.

It is also easy to forget that our more common deciduous trees also have blossom at this time, but are less showy. The oak and silver birch, for example have catkins shortly after bud burst, but are yellowish, so tend to blend in with the infant leaves.



*Oak catkins among new leaves*

Bereavement Services obtained a diverse range of plants aimed at increasing the biodiversity of the Cemetery and these have been planted, with the assistance of schools and the Friends. One group of plants will attract pollinators, which are currently in decline nationally, to the Cemetery, for the benefit of both the Cemetery and the surrounding area. Other plants have been chosen for their strong scents, to heighten the sensual experience of a visit to the Cemetery. In addition, 300 yellow rattle plants have been obtained. This flower was once very common in traditional hay meadows, but has been in decline for many years. The new flowers will be something to look out for in future visits to the Cemetery and, although it may well put our plant identification

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to the test, will give us some interesting subject matter for future newsletters.

Nature itself is good at introducing different plants to the cemetery and one spotted for the first time this year is garlic mustard, or Jack-by-the-hedge. As the name suggests, it can be used for flavouring ... but please do not harvest it in the Cemetery until it becomes better established.



*Garlic mustard*

### **Congratulations All Round**

Firstly our congratulations go Claire and Mark Slesser, who were married in the Non-conformist Chapel on 9<sup>th</sup> April and were the pioneers of this new use for the building.



There has since been a second wedding in the chapel.

But we would also like to congratulate ourselves! In the year that the Friends celebrate their tenth anniversary, seeing the first example of a sustainable use for the chapels is something that the founder members would hardly have dreamt of achieving in a relatively few years. In 2006, saving the chapels at all was not an optimistic expectation!

We must also thank and congratulate the Council, and particularly Bereavement Services, who provided the commitment and, as the building owner, had the task of finding the funds. And to show that progress continues, the bell tower now has a new front door.

The newsletter editorial team is feeling quite proud, too: another Friends group has asked to use our template for its own newsletter. As the saying goes, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. We look forward to seeing the first issue of the newsletter of the Friends of Jesmond Old Cemetery, in Newcastle.

Just to bring us back down to earth, we have to report another fly-tipping incident, this time a small tipper load of builder's rubbish. Because the Cemetery is locked at night, this action must have taken place in daylight and the vehicle must have been seen by someone. Unless it is clear what is being carried, the vehicle may not look out of place, but we would still repeat our request that, if you see anything that looks even a little suspicious, please let Bereavement Services know ... and note the registration number.



*The latest flytipping*

Because of increasing levels of abusive use, it has been reluctantly decided to close the information centre in the wooden hut, by the main gate.

Cathays is not unique in suffering from vandalism, in its widest sense. Indeed, the National Federation of Cemetery Friends held a seminar on the subject last year. Problems highlighted included graffiti, metal theft, damage to buildings and urban exploration. The last of these is a form of trespass by gaining access to areas where/when the general public is prohibited. Participants are not opportunists, they are equipped with bolt cutters and bump keys and often leave behind a marker as evidence or release images of themselves taken at the location: some take 'mementos', causing damage in the process. Advice was given on ways to counter the problems and it is pleasing to note that Bereavement Services seem to on the mark in this respect. Offenders could be pursued through criminal or civil law, local byelaws or the Public Health Acts - but, first, they need to be caught/identified. The NCFCF is considering producing guidance notes for dealing with potential security issues.

The Friends have submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, in the hope of obtaining support for a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, which will generate publicity to the facilities at the planned visitor centre. The grant obtained would also enable another book about the Cemetery to be published. We hope to have good news to report on this in our next issue.



*Chinese graves*

As usual, at the beginning of April, the Chinese Ching Ming festival was celebrated in the Cemetery. All graves in the Chinese section were cleaned and tokens of remembrance placed. These included joss paper, fruit and even mince pies. But perhaps the most striking effect was the abundance of flowers.

Perhaps the most important objective of the Friends is to increase awareness and appreciation of the Cemetery. In addition to programmed events, this newsletter, etc, we are always pleased to entertain groups in the cemetery or to go out and talk to people. In the last few months, Gordon Hindess has given a re-run of his "World Tour" talk for the Roath Local History Society, while parties from the Aviva Pensioners Group and the University Hospital of Wales have been guided around the Cemetery. If any other groups would be interested in something similar, please contact us.

We are entering the main holiday season, but you don't have to suffer cemetery withdrawal symptoms! You can find interesting cemeteries in the UK at <https://www.cemeteryfriends.com/> or, across Europe, at <http://www.significantcemeteries.org/>

### *Glorious Finale*

About 40 metres down the main drive from the north-west corner of Section G, you can find the grave of Thomas and Eva Radclift. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say, if you look closely, you will find the grave, because it is under a large tree, about four rows off the drive and not particularly distinguished.

The inscription will tell you that Thomas Henry (Harry) died in 1926, aged 37, while his wife, Eva Norman, survived him by more than forty years, dying in 1968, aged 85. She also outlived their son, as the headstone also remembers James Henry Radclift Lieut RN, who lost his life on HMS *Glorious* on June 8th 1940, aged 25.

It is the loss of HMS *Glorious*, in this month 76

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years ago, that makes a visit to this grave notable. We are fortunate that a painstaking collation of eyewitness interview statements and, particularly, the logs from the German



*Radcliff grave*

ships involved has provided a record of the engagement on almost a minute by minute basis, as well as the background circumstances that led to, in British terms, an enormous naval tragedy.

The aircraft carrier HMS *Glorious* was built in the late 1920s and, from the start of the Second World War, spent 1939 unsuccessfully hunting for the German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee in the Indian Ocean before returning to the Mediterranean, where the picture below was taken.

*Glorious* was recalled in April 1940 to support the evacuation from Norway, including the retrieval of British aircraft. While the Allies had initially supported the Norwegians in



*HMS Glorious*

resisting the German invasion, the need to concentrate forces further south in Europe and around the Mediterranean led to the reluctant decision to withdraw. At the beginning of June, the final stage of the evacuation had been reached and the plan had been for all ships, equipment and personnel to leave in a single convoy. *Glorious* had carried out the mission for which she had been despatched, the retrieval of RAF Hurricane and Gladiator fighters that were now on board, having landed for the first time on an aircraft carrier.

A last minute decision was then made for *Glorious* to leave early for Scapa Flow. While a number of reasons were used to justify this action, it appears that the dominant factor was to enable its captain to attend the court-martial of his commander (air). The court martial stemmed from the previous sortie of *Glorious* to Norway, when Captain D'Oyly-Hughes and his Commander (Air) Heath, supported by two Lieut. Commanders (Air), discussed a request from the Flag Officer Northern Norway to make a raid against an inland target. The three air officers advised against the raid on the grounds that the 5 Swordfish involved would have been placed at very high risk unless, possibly, *Glorious* moved closer to the target. D'Oyly-Hughes had considered the advice as verging on mutiny, so Heath had been put ashore at Scarpa, pending court martial.

*Glorious* and her two destroyers *Ardent* and *Acasta* set out just before 4.00 a.m. on 8th June. At 4.00 p.m., *Glorious* was cruising at 17 knots, with only 12 of her 18 boilers fired up. No aircraft were in readiness on deck, nor were any in the air. None of the ships was fitted with radar and the carrier, the tallest of the three vessels, had no lookout in her crow's nest. The sea was calm and visibility excellent. The state of readiness might be described as surprisingly relaxed.

When *Glorious* and her escorts were detached, there was no intelligence advice from the Admiralty that a powerful German squadron might be in the area. In the event, two pocket battleships, *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*, with four destroyers and a cruiser had been at sea since 4th June and operations in the North Sea had already resulted in the sinking of several British transports. The pocket battleships were on their own on 8th June because the other ships had detached to refuel in occupied Norway. However, it appears that the analysts at Bletchley Park had sent repeated warnings to the Admiralty about German ships at sea, based on increased wireless telegraphy activity, but the Admiralty had remained sceptical. It should be remembered that this was relatively early in the life of Bletchley Park and before the ability to crack Enigma coded messages had been achieved.

The German ships spotted the British ones 15 minutes before the British ships saw them, at around 5.00 p.m. *Ardent* closed to identify the approaching ships, oblivious to the fact that the Germans had already satisfied themselves that they had chanced upon three British warships and had identified them by type. *Glorious* belatedly started to get its 5 *Swordfish* up to the flight deck. Around 5.30, the German ships opened fire on *Ardent*, which was engaging them in the hope of giving *Glorious* and *Acasta* more time. *Ardent* was hit by the first salvo, while *Scharnhorst* hit *Glorious* with its third try, at a range of over 24 km - thought to be the greatest distance for a hit from a warship at

that time. The two aircraft that had just been readied on the deck of *Glorious* were blown overboard, while the big hole in the middle of its flight deck made it impossible to launch any other aircraft.

The *Gneisenau* saw its main role as to finish off *Glorious*, while the *Scharnhorst* concentrated on *Ardent* which was being well manoeuvred by her commander, zig-zagging and dodging in and out of her own smoke, while firing her 120 mm guns and launching salvos of torpedoes. But the British destroyer continued to receive hits on board due to extremely accurate fire from *Scharnhorst*. The calm sea meant that the German ship could spot the track of torpedoes early and it successfully took avoiding action, preventing all 28 torpedoes fired by *Ardent* from hitting.



*HMS Glorious just before it sank: picture taken from Pocket Battleship Scharnhorst*

Despite suffering increasing damage, *Ardent* continued to fire and launch torpedoes, until she capsized and sank around 6.20 pm. By this time, *Glorious* had taken further hits to the bridge and main engine room and was effectively doomed from this time.

Up to this point, *Acasta* had been making a smoke screen to try to shield *Glorious* from its attackers, but it now turned to attack the German ships with torpedoes - but this meant closing to about 7 km. As the only real remaining threat to the German ships, it attracted their concentrated firepower. *Acasta* adopted similar tactics to *Ardent* and her second set of torpedoes resulted in a hit on *Scharnhorst*, putting its starboard engine out of action,

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taking out a gun turret and flooding magazines. Soon, *Acasta* was burning, listing heavily and unable to manoeuvre, but she was still firing her guns and, even as the end neared, scored a hit on the *Scharnhorst's* "B" turret.

Around 7.10 pm, *Glorious* disappeared beneath the surface. A couple of minutes later, the order to abandon ship was given on *Acasta*. On board *Gneisenau*, orders were given to put the war flag at half mast and for the crew to stand to attention on deck, to honour the brave crew of the *Acasta*. In less than 2 hours from commencement of firing, all 3 British ships had been sunk and only carley-floats and rafts with around 900 survivors were on the sea.

The German ships left the area without picking up British survivors. They quite reasonably believed that the *Glorious's* radio reports at the start of the battle and subsequently (which they had picked up) would have resulted in additional ships being dispatched to the area and that their arrival would be imminent. In addition, *Scharnhorst* was sufficiently disabled as to need to avoid further action and to make for a safe port for repair.

The radio message had in fact been picked up by the heavy cruiser *HMS Devonshire* which, at the time, was a little over 20 km (less than 1 hour's cruising) from the German ships, though further from the British ones. However, *Devonshire* maintained a course heading away from *Glorious*, increased speed and considered it prudent to instigate a practice with its main guns. But *Devonshire* had an important cargo - 461 passengers, among whom were the King of Norway, his family and the Norwegian Cabinet and their families. It may well have been under orders to do nothing that might have jeopardised its mission to get its cargo safely to Britain.

In the event, no immediate help came from Royal Navy ships, although two destroyers had been detached to join *Glorious* from a convoy and, without knowing the fate of the carrier, sailed through the area without noticing anything strange. On the morning of 9th June, a

hospital ship, on passing one of these destroyers, reported having met the two German pocket battleships the previous morning and this was the first time that the Admiralty became aware that *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were at sea in the area ... and began to suspect the fate of *Glorious*. Also on the 9th, H.M.S. *Southampton* sighted four bodies in the sea and the Norwegian SS *Marita* sighted empty rafts, rafts with dead bodies and heavy oil. Both of these sightings were in the vicinity of the action. It was not until the early hours of 11th June that a merchant ship sighted 21 rafts and rescued three officers and 35 sailors from *Glorious* and one from *Acasta*. Five *Glorious* sailors were rescued by another ship and two *Ardent* sailors were rescued by a German seaplane. These 7 were taken to Norway and became prisoners of war. So about 1500, of whom James Radcliff was one, lost their lives, more than 800 only because they weren't rescued in time. Although this was summer, the sea temperature was 1°C and the life rafts and floats would have had no shelter and minimal provisions. Most of those that made it to the rafts would have been wet and many may also have been injured.

On the German ships, there were 48 casualties, all on *Scharnhorst*, which underwent emergency repairs over the next fortnight in Trondheim.

She then headed for Kiel, where permanent repairs were effected over the following six months. *Scharnhorst* enjoyed a lot of success over the next 2½ years, but the British fleet gained a significant advantage when they were able to decrypt German naval codes and anticipate movements. In December 1943, three British cruisers lay in wait as *Scharnhorst*, headed to intercept a Russia bound convoy. A series of skirmishes reached a climax when a battleship and two destroyers joined the attack and, eventually, on Christmas Day, 1943, *Scharnhorst* capsized and sank. Of the crew of 1,968 officers and men, only 36 survived to be picked up by the British ships and taken back to Scapa Flow.

Gneisenau suffered heavy damage during a bombing raid in February 1942 and never returned to service. A Polish salvage firm raised the wreck in 1951 and broke it up for scrap. "C" Turret remains in Trondheim, while its 15 cm guns are at Stevnsfort, in Denmark, and continued to be fired during annual training until 2000, after which the fortress was turned into a museum.

At the Court Martial at Scapa Flow, Commander Heath was cleared of all charges and went on to give distinguished service. He ended his career as Commanding Officer of HMS Heron, at Yeovilton.

### Recent Events

#### Talks

On **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March**, **Gordon Hindess** picked up where he had ended last year's World Tour for the sequel, "**Cathays Cemetery - European Tour**". A wobbly anticlockwise spiral ended in France at Père Lachaise Cemetery and included stops in the Italian Tyrol, on a church wall in Montenegro, at the Ukrainian city founded by a Welshman and the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. The Second World War was represented by naval battles, SAS operations, the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, a Czech airman and a retired Norwegian sailor. In amongst these tales, there was time to fit in stories about a German showman, a Polish jeweller and an Irish doctor. This diverse presentation was enjoyed by about 20 people.

On **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May**, **Gary Williams** of the Western Front Association, making a return visit, treated an audience of about 30 to some "**Somme Stories**", a talk which he had prepared especially for the occasion. With the centenary of the Battle of the Somme being remembered on 1<sup>st</sup> July, Gary reminded us that this was just the date of the opening round, the Battle of Albert. He went on to illustrate the horrific scale of the battle with pictures of incident locations and many of the war cemeteries and memorials. His anecdotes about individuals

included the award ceremony for a posthumous VC, where the soldier's sister threw his medals in the Queen's face, the captain who led his men by kicking footballs across No Man's Land, a memorial recording a soldier "shot at dawn" and the first victim of the Red Baron.

#### Walks

On a gloomy day, there was a fairly small turnout for the **Heritage Walk**, on **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April**, led by **Roger Swan** for Bereavement Services. The visitors, for most of whom this was an introductory visit, enjoyed the history of the Cemetery, the description of its current role as a community resource and environmental oasis, and the stories of some of its residents. There was one surprise, when somebody on the walk, while passing a family grave, questioned the presence of two names which had been added to the memorial and who they were confident were not members of the family. Exactly how and when the erroneous addition was made is unclear, but it must have happened a considerable time ago and must be a unique mistake among the 300,000 or so graves in the Cemetery.

### Our Regular Events

#### Monthly Workdays

We have had three productive workdays, largely spent on our staple task of clearing rampant vegetation, although this has to be curtailed during the nesting season. We have ventured into locations not previously tackled by the Friends, such as Sections P, Q and S. We have also carried out litter picking and helped with the new planting mentioned on page 1.

If you want to join our happy band, the last opportunity before our summer break is on **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June**. We meet by the chapels at 10 am and work for a couple of hours, including a half time refreshment break. Tools and gloves are provided and you can work at your own pace. After the summer our workdays will resume the usual last Saturday of the month schedule, starting with **24<sup>th</sup> September**.

## Friends EVENTS



*Getting down to plug planting*

### Weekly Health Walks

These walks last between 40 minutes and an hour and are taken at a leisurely pace, with pauses to provide anecdotes about the Cemetery, including the results of recent research. You don't need to book or come regularly - all you have to do is turn up. Our very friendly group meets just inside the **gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning**, regardless of the weather. Everyone is welcome both on the walk and afterwards, when we adjourn to a cosy local café for a chat over tea or coffee.

### Future Events

#### Dramatised Walks

These variations on the normal Heritage Walk include brief scenes acted by university students and go under the title **Trails & Tales - Bringing the Past to Life**. In response to their popularity, the opportunities to join these walks have been doubled this year. On successive **Tuesdays, June 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>**, the walks will **start from the chapels, just inside the main entrance in Fair oak Road, at 6:30pm & 7:00pm**. Places are limited and there is a charge of £5 to cover expenses. Tickets can be obtained from the Crematorium Office at Thornhill and you can check availability by telephoning Bereavement Services on 02920 544820.

### Walks

On **Tuesday 21st June at 7 pm**, the Friends will lead a **Midsummer Walk**, visiting a variety of graves that prompt interesting tales, mainly reflecting our most recent discoveries and research. The walk will last about **1½ hours**, **starting just inside the main entrance in Fair oak Road**.

On **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July at 2 pm**, there will be another chance to catch the **Heritage Walk**, led by Bereavement Services. This walk will **start from the chapels, just inside the main entrance in Fair oak Road**.

On **Sunday September 18th at 2.30pm**, there will be an **Open Doors Guided Walk** led by the Friends of Cathays Cemetery. Please note especially that this walk is in the **New Cemetery, north of Eastern Avenue**, and **starts from just inside the Allensbank Road entrance**.

### Talks

Another contribution to the **Open Doors** programme, on **Tuesday September 13th at 7 pm**, will be an **Illustrated Talk by Simon Morgan**. Many of you will remember Simon's previous talks for the Friends and know that this is an opportunity not to be missed. The venue for this talk will be **Room 4.45 in the John Percival Building, Cardiff University, in Colum Drive** (behind Colum Road). The talk is free to members of the Friends, but there will be an entry fee to **non members of £2**.

### And finally...

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

*Contact the editorial team on 029 2061 2164  
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You can find past Newsletters, the latest news of events and lots of other information about the Cemetery on our website at [www.friendsofcathayscemetery.co.uk](http://www.friendsofcathayscemetery.co.uk)