

All Change

It seems no time since we were writing about summer, yet here we are anticipating winter, having experienced the first frosts and even seeing a dusting of snow. If you blinked, you may have missed autumn. Yet, from the Cemetery's viewpoint, it has been a good one. The autumn colours have been vibrant but, as usual, the best prospect has skipped around to suit the different timetables of the trees, rewarding those who pop in regularly.



Tree in its autumn finery

In March, we reported on the planting of the new foxglove tree in section W. With the trauma of the move and the need to re-establish a healthy root system, this year's growth has not matched that of the previous year and the leaves have looked a bit sickly. But it has provided a surprise - it has produced a handful of flower buds in readiness for next year. This is perhaps 4-5 years earlier than would normally be expected and may be nature's response to feeling endangered, as a consequence of the move.



Foxglove tree flower buds

While the pedunculate oaks in the Cemetery have produced few acorns this year, the holm oaks, which are far more abundant, have more than compensated. While we are all familiar with the fruit of our deciduous oaks, we may not appreciate that the holm oak produces a very similar acorn.



Holm oak acorn

This is good news for the squirrels, which are much more in evidence through the autumn as they busily scavenge for food to sustain themselves through the coming winter. They also relish the seeds of the fir trees, efficiently stripping the cones down to the central stalks. At least one squirrel decided that one of the marker posts for the self-guided Heritage Trail, made the ideal table for undertaking this work.

Friends TOPICAL



Squirrel's table

A common theme, as you watch the changing face of the Cemetery, is that something spotted for the first time may be a genuine 'first' ... or just a reminder that you have not been very observant in the past! An example of this is a multi-storey fungus, found along the northern edge of section L and pictured below. As yet, we have not confidently identified it, so if anyone can put a name to it, please let us know.



Multi-storey fungus

Less welcome in the Cemetery is Japanese knotweed. Bereavement Services are efficient at spotting this and treating it, but it sometimes requires successive treatments, while new isolated infestations seem to appear each year. A particular concern is the boundary with the Rhymney Railway, beside section L. A

large infestation within the railway land is not tackled by the railway authorities and keeps encroaching into the Cemetery, despite the best endeavours of Bereavement Services.



Isolated early stage Japanese knotweed in Section O

Despite this being an increasing problem nationally, there seems to be a reluctance, at all levels, to escalate action above localised hard-pressed budgets. Legally, you don't have to remove these plants or control them on your land but you could be prosecuted or given a community protection notice for causing a nuisance if you allow Japanese knotweed to grow on anyone else's property. There is scant evidence of authorities taking action under the Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981 or under the Anti-social Behaviour Act. In the absence of this, landowners have to resort to civil action, bringing with it considerations of the cost of this and the risk of failure. Typically, local authority legal departments will take a narrow view based on their time and budget, even though, as in this case, another council department may be repeatedly consuming its budget in treating repeated invasions from the same core source on adjacent property: ultimately, the cost to council tax payers will a lot more!

There is an important intermediate step, probably better taken by the legal

professionals, of writing to the offending landowner and pointing out his responsibility. If nothing else, if this doesn't result in action, it will greatly assist the successful pursuit of legal action subsequently. Another important point is to keep evidence, especially photographs, from as early a stage as possible: when it first spreads across a boundary, it will be pretty obvious. Conversely, if you wait several years before initiating action, it may be far less obvious which side of the boundary it started on.

Another sighting this autumn, though not unwelcome, did require caution to be exercised. Some ground nesting wasps were spotted in section R, fortunately a little way off a little used path. If you should see a lot of wasp activity around a hole in the ground, don't panic, just leave them a bit of space, then they shouldn't bother you.



Ground nesting wasps

Tunnel Vision

There may be a recurring theme in this newsletter that any visit to the Cemetery has the potential to show you something new or, more likely, something that has always been there, but which you have not consciously taken on board before. Sometimes these things are peculiar to a season, time of day, or contrasting light. An example of this is the 'tunnels' seen behind the chapels recently.



Tunnel Vision

If you have visited the Cemetery recently, you will have noticed the activity in and around the chapels. For much of the autumn, there was scaffolding around the bell tower, to enable restoration work to be undertaken. The whole of the central tower section has been cleaned, patched up and fitted with new doors and windows. But there is still much to be done here, as and when funds become available. No bell tower would be complete without a bell and we understand that there is a bell in the tower.



Refurbished Bell Tower

The chapels themselves have been fitted with air-conditioning, enabling them to provide a more comfortable environment for people using them ... all the year round. The air-conditioning units are quite large and necessarily located outside the buildings and this has prompted adverse comment. But please be patient. As

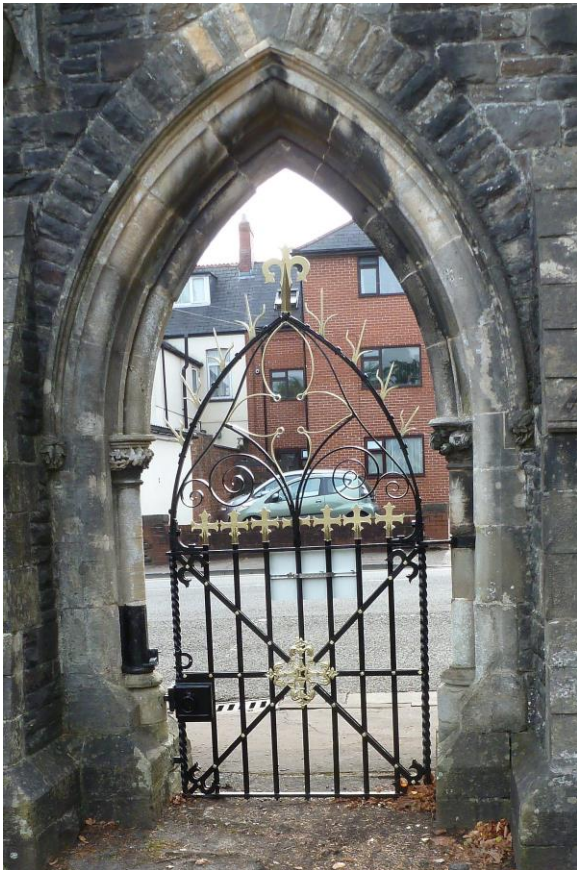
Friends TOPICAL

part of the vision to try to re-create the 19C appearance, it is planned to carry out planting of shrubs in front of the chapels, as shown in contemporary photographs. This will help to mask the heating equipment.



Air-conditioning unit at front of Non-conformist Chapel

The porches to both chapels have had their ceilings lined with wood, greatly enhancing their appearance. While it has taken longer than we originally anticipated to get the Non-conformist Chapel to an acceptable standard for funerary use, it is now hoped that the first service will be held there in the next few weeks.



Refurbished pedestrian gate

The fitting out of the other chapel as a Visitor Centre has been seen as a lower priority and progress is constrained by availability of time and the need to bid for, and get, further grant funding. In the meantime, it will continue to be offered for hire for wedding receptions, etc. As the pedestrian gates at the main entrance by the chapels are not normally used, you may not have noticed that they disappeared for a while and temporary barriers were put in place. These gates needed repair and the opportunity was taken to completely refurbish them. They are now back in place.

Returning to our 'not previously noted' theme, have you seen the "Funny Irish Man" close to the Allensbank Road boundary, in Section R? And, in Section L, close to the drive that once led to the New Cemetery, there is an ash tree with a collar of sun faces. It has obviously been there for some time and was undertaken with some thought and care. But can anyone explain why it was done?



Sun face collar

We are pleased to announce that our new book, "Hidden Histories - Tales from Cathays Cemetery" is now out, currently available direct from the Friends for £10. This worthy companion to the 150th anniversary book in your library, would make an excellent Christmas present. You will find more about its launch in the Events section of this newsletter on page 9.

The Rifleman Explosion

In the latter part of the 19C, tugboats were the work-horses of the docks. One such tug was The Rifleman, built at North Shields, on the River Tyne, in 1860. The wooden hulled vessel was powered by side paddles driven by a steam engine. The job of this powerful and highly manoeuvrable vessel was to assist ships around the harbour and in and out of the docks. With a limited high tide window, tugs were essential to the efficient use of time for traffic in and out of the docks.

Over more than 25 years, The Rifleman worked in Cardiff (though with a variety of owners), although it is reported to have sunk in the harbour in 1878, but it had been raised and repaired. In 1886 it was owned by Mrs Elizabeth Spear, of 19, South William Street.

On Monday 8 March 1886, the tug had started the day by towing a vessel, the RJG, from the canal to a temporary mooring on the mud of the harbour. It then moved to the Pierhead and was made fast. Steam was kept up, in anticipation of an early order to back into the West Bute Dock to tow out the schooner Edith Eleanor. It was reported that most of the men on board were sitting on the boiler dome in order to keep themselves warm.

About nine o'clock, there was a tremendous explosion accompanied by a great cloud of steam and the air was filled with falling debris. The boiler had burst, tearing the upper parts of the vessel apart and throwing pieces, and most of the crew, high into the air. The body of the captain, James Pill, was picked up on the pier some sixty yards from where the tug was moored, and that of the engineer, John Lovell, a few yards further off on a heap of tiles and other building materials. Eyewitness accounts described these two men as having been shot at least thirty feet over the clock tower on the Pierhead.

In the case of the engineer, it seems that the tragedy was compounded by dire family

circumstances, as the South Wales Echo reported:

When the body of John Lovell, the driver, was picked up, the bearers were about to convey it to his residence, but on second consideration it was taken to 19, South William Street, the public-house where Mrs Spear lives. It appears that Lovell's wife is dangerously ill, and his daughter is also reported to be at the point of death, so that fatal consequences were feared from the shock should the corpse of the husband and father, who had left home that morning alive and well, be brought back a shattered and bruised mass.

The only member of the crew of five not killed more or less instantly was a young apprentice, George Phillips. William Owen, a pilot, was on board the tugboat at the time of the catastrophe, but was fortunately in the cabin and escaped the full force of the explosion. However, he was blown into the water, and two men rowed out and rescued him in an exhausted state, suffering more from nervous shock than serious injury. Both Owen and Phillips were taken to the Hamadryad Hospital Ship, but the latter died of his injuries early the following day.

Some 300 yards away, the dome and part of the shell of the boiler landed on the Italian barque, Clotilde B, which was just mooring in the East Basin, being newly arrived from Bordeaux. The boiler parts, weighing more than four tons, dropped on the aft part of the vessel, taking out the top of the stern and the steering apparatus. They then fell over onto William Hunt, killing him instantly. Hunt was a seaman on the tug boat Windsor, which had just towed the Clotilde B from its low tide mooring in the Cardiff and Penarth Roads into the dock. He had only just boarded the Clotilde B to release a tow rope.

The other two crew members who were killed more or less instantly were William Gerrish, a mariner whose body was recovered from the

Friends FEATURES

sunken wreck at low tide, and George Clare, who was described as a firemen (stoker).

Debris from the explosion was showered over a large area and it was reported that the funnel was blown into the West Basin. Captain John Brown, the owner of several steam-tugs, was struck by a large object while he was standing on the paddle-box of his tug Pleiades, also in the West Basin. The unconscious Brown was picked up and taken to his house in Dudley Terrace, where he was examined by a doctor and found to have several broken ribs and severe contusions to his face and arms. Many other people sustained slight injuries but it appears that, generally, they did not seek medical attention.

The docks would have been a hive of activity at the time, crowded with people working or just watching. It was considered almost miraculous that the consequences in terms of death and injury were not far greater.

The Rifleman itself was pretty well gutted and sank almost immediately. However, the hull was clearly visible at low tide and we have the benefit of photographs taken at the time to testify to its state and position. It had sunk at what we know today as the bay entrance to Roald Dahl Plass. Copies of these photographs were sold, with 20% of the money realised being donated to the relief fund. The wreckage was purchased by an Adam Willis, but the tug did not re-enter service as a registered vessel, so was presumably acquired for scrap value only.

As indicated above, a relief fund was established for the benefit of the families of the men killed by the explosion. The committee appointed to manage the fund organised a series of entertainments at venues as diverse as the Royal Hotel, Park Hall, the Theatre Royal and Andrew's Hall, Penarth. The master of the Severn Road Board School organised a concert by the school choir, with the proceeds being devoted to the fund. There were also donations, although it was pointedly recorded that, with the exception of money from Lord Bute and a Mr Llewellyn, these had come entirely from the

docks, while nothing had come from the prosperous tradesmen in the town. The total raised for the families would be the equivalent today of £40 - 50,000. This would have been very welcome to the families, particularly those of the captain, who left a wife and five or six children, the engineer, who left "a widow and several children", and Gerrish who left a wife and one or two children.

All of those killed in the explosion were buried in Cathays Cemetery (then known as the New Cemetery). The burial register records the following:

11.3.1886: John Lovell, Engineer, age 36, of South William Street - Plot T48a

12.3.1886: William Hunt, Seaman, age 24, of 44 Kent Street - U177

12.3.1886: George Arthur Clare, Fireman, age 19, of Louisa Street - L1591

12.3.1886: William Henry Gerrish, Mariner, age 22, of George Street - T967

13.3.1886 George Emmanuel Phillips, Apprentice, age 14, of Ludlow Street and Capt James Henry Pili, Master Mariner, age 32, of Ludlow Street - interred together T978 (the young apprentice was understood to be the captain's brother-in-law)



Headstone on Gerrish grave

The only grave to be marked by a headstone is that of William Gerrish, which records the fact that he died in The Rifleman explosion. The inscription also tells us that he was joined by his 10 month old son, also called William, 5 weeks later. His wife, Henrietta, not only survived these tragedies, but must have lived to quite a good age, as her death and burial here occurred in 1939. You can find this headstone about twelve metres from the drive in the most westerly corner of Section T.

The coroner's court conducted the inquiry into the deaths of the six men, calling on eye-witnesses to the explosion, local people experienced in the operation of tugboats and experts from the ship and boiler manufacturers. It was also assisted by Board of Trade officials who made an examination of the wreckage. Inevitably, there was an element of speculation about events immediately preceding the explosion and normal operating practice on The Rifleman, because all key witnesses that could have thrown light on this were dead. The coroner's inquiry was held in the Town Hall, before a jury.

The boiler had been replaced about 16 years earlier, but it was considered that the ordinary working life on a steam tug would be about 12 - 14 years. Evidence about the maintenance and repair history of the boiler was sketchy. When new, the boiler would have had a maximum operating pressure of 30 psi (pounds per square inch) and would have been tested to about 50% above this. But the Board of Trade inspectors' evidence was that the boiler was in a defective state, and unfit to be worked at more than about 12 psi, while a gauge indicated that it had been set to work at about double this.

More damning evidence related to two valves which should have controlled the boiler pressure. While these had been recovered an appreciable distance from the tug, they were pretty well in tact and indicative of their states at the time of the explosion. A regulating, or working, valve had a lever which would have

performed a similar function to the accelerator peddle in a car - press down on the lever and you would get a higher pressure and more power. There was inconclusive evidence that this lever may have had weights hung on it. The second control was a governing, or safety, valve, intended to 'blow off' if the boiler pressure reached its intended working maximum. This should have been fool proof, with a precise weight being pushed up a cylinder, opening the valve to release steam. On examination, however, it was found that a thick iron pin had been inserted into the cylinder where the large weight should rise. This pin prevented the proper working of the valve. While this was clearly foolhardy in the extreme, there was some disputed evidence that it was fairly common practice on the tugboats in Cardiff.

The jury delivered the following verdict:

That the explosion was caused by over-pressure of steam, which was caused by a pin or stud that was in the cover of the governing valve, this being screwed down to prevent the escape of steam and we also believe that the lever valve was overloaded. We, as a jury strongly recommend that tugboats should be periodically surveyed and examined like all other steamers.

It had been noted during the proceedings that passenger steamers were regularly surveyed by the Board of Trade, but no similar procedure applied to tugboats. The Coroner remarked that:

... if the engineer in charge had been alive, he would have been committed for trial for manslaughter, as, whether he put in the pin or not, it most certainly was his business to detect its presence and take it out.

One cannot but wonder if the engineer would have been a convenient scapegoat. In the same situation today, the Health and Safety Executive would set their sights much higher, to those who should have known what was going on and, perhaps, had turned a blind eye in the interest of increased profit!

Friends EVENTS

The Graveyard



Covered by flowers, my gravestone bed
"Why did that car make me dead?"
Once a little girl, now a little ghost
Never hungering for tea or toast
Remembering my pink Barbie room
As I jump across from tomb to tomb
All alone, just need a friend
But nobody's here so I just pretend
Can't get wet when I splash in a puddle
No soft teddies for me to cuddle
"Whose there?" I fade into a tree
"Is someone around to play with me?"
Many sad faces, tears flowing
I yearn to feel that cold wind blowing
No laughter here - grief each day
A circular wreath and rose bouquet
My grave is so very small
Didn't have the chance to grow up tall
Counting crosses, don't walk but float
Reaching a girl in a long black coat
I try to touch her tearstained face
Wishing I could take her place
Unable to text, no mobile phone
If only I could call my home
I'd say "hello mummy" but I'd make no noise
"Don't bring me flowers, just bring my toys"

Lorraine Gray

We are grateful to Lorraine for allowing us to print her poem. Please note that the image used

and the subject of the poem are unrelated. Cathays Cemetery has many child graves and this poem is evocative of the pain and loss associated with each one.

We would take the opportunity to remind readers that we are always happy to receive poems or short stories with appropriate themes, to add diversity to the content of the newsletter.

Recent Events

Walks

On **Sunday September 18th**, **Ivor Ippett** led a walk in the New Cemetery for **Open Doors**. Helped perhaps by favourable weather, it was nevertheless very gratifying to have what was possibly a record breaking attendance of 56, to be regaled with anecdotes from the 20th century.

On **Sunday October 23rd**, **Roger Swan**, of Bereavement Services, led an **Autumn Walk** in the Old Cemetery. This was a new style walk, replacing the former Insignia Walk and, taking advantage of the facilities now offered by the chapels, started with a short illustrated talk.

Talks

Another contribution to the **Open Doors** programme, on **Tuesday September 13th** was the **Illustrated Talk by Simon Morgan**, of Mossfords and Morgans Consult, entitled "**Memorial Symbolism Within Cathays Cemetery**". By using illustrations drawn entirely from Cathays, the talk was especially pertinent for the audience. It was also eye-opening, in the sense that it highlighted things that, no matter how familiar you think you are with the Cemetery, there will always be something that you had not noticed before. For example, a Celtic pattern that at first glance looks typically symmetrical, proves to be largely composed of individually carved serpents, some of which are double-headed.

Symbolism was often reinforced, as in the case of the octagonal base, which was not only decorative, but utilised the number eight as a

symbol of renewal or eternal life. The importance of older memorials as works of art and examples of the stonemason's skill was also emphasized. That sphere perched on a pedestal, may be symbolic of the world, a person's position within his family or faith, but it was also the opportunity for the mason to exhibit the highest skill. As we have come to expect from Simon, this was a thoroughly researched and enjoyable lecture.



Serpents

On Thursday September 15th, the prolific local writer and television presenter, Lionel Fanthorpe, read excerpts from the book, "Padfoot: A Supernatural History" by Lionel & Patricia Fanthorpe.

The Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture, on Tuesday November 15th, was given by Jeff Childs, the author of "Roath, Splott and Adamsdown - One Thousand Years of History". His talk was based primarily on the ecclesiastical parish of Roath, the area roughly bounded by City Road, Fairoak Road, the River Rhymney and the Severn Estuary. With the aid of archive maps and images, plus many photographs which he had taken himself, often in the nick of time, before the subject disappeared. We were shown how farms of the Tredegar, Bute and Williams estates, became the urban development so

familiar today, with many road names remembering family members. The transition took place quite rapidly - over some sixty years, the parish population increased from around 300 to about 60,000! The questions which ensued from his audience of about 30 was indicative of the interest in the subject and the appreciation of those attending.

10th Anniversary Celebration

This was held on **Sunday November 27th**, using **both chapels**. As a preliminary to the celebration, there was a formal raising of the Green Flag, to record that the Cemetery has won this prestigious honour for another year. The assembled guests were then treated to a splendid concert by the Cardiff Arms Park Male Choir, in the Non-conformist Chapel, admirably demonstrating the suitability of the acoustics for this sort of use.

With the arrival and welcome of the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Georgina Phillips, the proceedings moved to the Anglican Chapel for:

- An introduction to the event by Paul Nicholson, describing the history of the Friends, from its founding members through to the present time and summarising the group's achievements and activities. He gave special thanks to hard-working members of the group, to Bereavement Services for their unstinting support and to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their financial backing for the production of a new book and the day's event.
- The donation of a model of the former Catholic Chapel to the Friends by Roger Martin and the model maker, Michael Ashcroft. This excellent model was the subject of many complimentary comments and will go on display in the chapels in due course.
- The launch of the Friends' new book, "**Hidden Histories - Tales from Cathays Cemetery**", by Gordon Hindess.

Friends EVENTS

Priced at £10, this companion to the 150th Anniversary book, is available direct from the Friends ... and would make an excellent stocking filler.

- A copy of the book was presented to the Deputy Lord Mayor, who then cut the ceremonial cake.
- Over refreshments, actors from the University of South Wales presented some of their 'graveside tales' and ended the formal proceedings with a poignant and personal story about the Cemetery.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

A full programme of workdays through the autumn has seen a variety of tasks tackled. As well as the staple 'bush whacking', we have sown yellow rattle seeds alongside the main path into section L and hope to see a striking avenue of yellow next summer. For the latter, we joined forces with people doing community service, a team that can often be seen doing sterling work around the Cemetery. On our last workday, we combined with members of Keep Cathays Tidy to conduct a litter pick in the Old Cemetery. This proved very successful, with the place looking tidier than it has been for a long time. Let's hope that users recognise this and respect the achievement.

We will be taking a winter break, resuming workdays on **25th February**, then continuing on the last Saturday of the month - **25th March and 29th April**. 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. Why not join us for some gentle exercise in sociable company?

Weekly Health Walks

Our walks during the autumn included what is now a standard part of the annual programme, joining the Remembrance Service at the First World War plot in the New Cemetery. Once again, this featured a roll call by the children

from Ysgol Mynydd Bychan and Allensbank Primary School, assisted by members of the walking group. Our normal leisurely walks take place regardless of the weather and last for about an hour. They are intended to be social occasions, exercising body and mind, with anecdotes about the Cemetery and discussion of the natural history. All are welcome on these walks and afterwards, when we adjourn to a local hostel for a chat over tea or coffee. There will be no walk on 27th December but, otherwise, we meet just inside the **gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning**,

Future Events

The AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends will be held on **Saturday 28th January** in the **chapels at Cathays Cemetery, starting at 10.30 am**. If you haven't seen the inside of the chapels recently, this will be a chance to catch up on the progress that has been made and experience the comfortable temperature produced by the new heating system. Of course, this is also your opportunity to raise any issues and have a say in the direction which the Friends take in the future. We look forward to seeing you there.

Full details of the AGM will be circulated to members in the new year.

And finally...

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

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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