

Nondescript Winter until ...

Just when it looked as if the 2017-18 winter would be notable for having not a lot of sunshine, not much rain and little freezing weather, the "Beast from the East" blew in, starting with plenty of sunshine, increasingly low temperatures reinforced by strong wind and rounded off with a blizzard. But, as always, the weather gives us something to talk about and, in this case turned the Cemetery into a winter wonderland, albeit for just a few days.



But even in a generally bland winter, there are always things that catch the eye. Even bare deciduous trees can have a majestic grace, like that pictured below in Section L.



While the conifers in the Cemetery ensure that some parts remain green all the year round, another plant that helps to provide this greenness, right up to the top of the tallest trees is ivy. The pictures below of the trunk and canopy of a tree in Section G demonstrate this.



Ivy growing on trees is often thought to endanger the health of even large trees. But its presence on the trunk is not damaging. However, if it grows into the crown, it may be a sign that a tree is already in decline or is diseased. Ivy is not a parasite and does not penetrate a tree's bark or roots. The short, root-like growths which form along climbing stems are for support only. It has its own root system which is unlikely to be strongly competitive with that of a tree on which it is growing. Ivy provides hiding, roosting, hibernating and nesting places for various animals, birds and insects (including butterflies), and can be an invaluable late nectar source for many pollinating insects.

That is not to say that it is all good news. If the branch canopy becomes thin, more light will reach the ivy, which may then develop into a denser arboreal form and suffocate its host. The ivy may mask cavities or areas of decay and its additional weight in the canopy could affect the stability of the tree.

It's surprising how often a plant that has not been noticed previously makes an appearance. One of the more recent discoveries was a patch

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of chives in Section Q, as pictured below.



Despite being in an area that is regularly mown, they seem to be thriving, although we are unlikely to witness its purple flowers or be able to use them to brighten up a salad because of the cutting regime.

We reported the first Spring events in our last newsletter and, despite the lack of encouragement from the weather, it has been possible to enjoy continuing progress. The areas of primrose and celandine have expanded, snowdrops, daffodils and crocuses have appeared and the earliest blossoms were on the trees before the end of February.



Crocuses in Section N

Redwings, members of the thrush family, come from Iceland, Russia and Scandinavia to winter in the UK and further south in Europe. Arriving from October, they spend the autumn feeding on berries. As winter draws on, and the fruit is used up, they move onto open areas in search of earthworms. Some clearly like our Cemetery, as several have been seen skipping between trees or scavenging on the ground - but they can be difficult to spot without binoculars and seem reluctant to pose for pictures! Around March they will return to their more northern breeding grounds.



Redwing in tree

And with the hours of daylight expanding rapidly, warmer days cannot be far away.

Winter Miscellany

Some of our latest news is given in the report on the AGM on page 7. In addition, the Friends Project to restore the Victorian tiling in the Episcopalian Chapel is the subject of a feature article on page 3. But there are other things to mention.

More in hope than in expectation, the Friends made a bid for a grant from the Cardiff Community Fund, which, amongst other things, offers funds to build stronger communities and to preserve heritage and culture. The application, for the provision of new interpretation boards, was successful, but depended upon meeting a tight timescale for installation. At the time of writing, the new boards are on order, so keep an eye out for their arrival shortly, at the site of the Catholic Chapel, by the Conservation Area and one by James Howell's grave. It is thought that this sort of interpretive panel is particularly helpful for casual visitors to the Cemetery, so it is hoped that this initiative can be built on in the future.

As mentioned in our last issue, the information hut will be open for business again when events are taking place at the Cemetery. If you come to any of the programmed guided walks during the Spring and Summer, please pop in to see the new displays and information.

The Friends have embarked upon the task of recording all monumental inscriptions, to try to safeguard information that is slowly being lost. Jean and Des Sanford have made excellent progress on this in Section L in the last few months, but this is a mammoth task. If you can spare a few hours and would like to help, please let us know. And it doesn't have to be done in the winter - why not wait for the better weather, bring a picnic and have a relaxing time in a pleasant environment. All these additional records are quickly made available on the Friends' website and already it is clear that this is valued by people researching their family histories.

Cathays Library held a Heritage Day on Saturday 20th January, to introduce people to its new role as the main Cardiff library for heritage and family history research. The Friends maintained a presence during the event and had a steady stream of visitors.

Two years ago, the NCF instigated a National Cemeteries Week, under the umbrella of the UK Heritage Weekends. It has now been decided that the NCF should have its own dedicated week, which, this year will be 12th to 20th May. Our contribution to this national event will be the talk by Professor Bill Jones on the Tuesday evening.

Had you seen in the news that a new word has been added to the burial dictionary - promession, which is claimed to be the most eco-friendly form of burial ever devised. Developed in Sweden, the promession process consists of five distinct parts. The first step is placing the body into the fully-automated "Promator" machine. Then the body is cryogenically frozen using liquid nitrogen, turning it into one big, brittle block of frozen flesh, at a target temperature of -196°C . The Promator proceeds to shake the frozen body into millimeter-sized particles, which are then freeze dried to remove any excess liquid. At this point, the remains have only about 30

percent of their initial weight, bear no resemblance to human tissue and undergo a process that removes any metals or harmful minerals (like tooth fillings, prosthetics or stents). The remains are placed in a biodegradable container made of corn or potato starch, which is then buried in a grave just 30-50 cms deep, where it is still in contact with the top soil. Within six to 18 months, the remains will have turned into fresh new soil. Will it catch on here? It may sound like something out of science fiction but, if you had described cremation to someone 150 years ago, their reaction would probably have been similar. The first official cremation in the UK was in 1885: the following year there were ten: now about three quarters of burials are cremations.

Walking around the Cemetery one day, the scene below suggested that one of the residents was in the habit of taking afternoon tea!



Victorian Tiling Restoration

It was a few years ago that Bereavement Services had suspended wooden floors installed into the Victorian Chapels. While this was a tremendous improvement, there was a noticeable flaw in the Conformist Chapel, where the long neglected Victorian geometric tiling on the dais was damaged, with some unsightly

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stains. There were also a few tiles missing from the wall frieze.



Before the Restoration

Committee member Ivor Lippett proposed that the Friends should fund a restoration project to return the tiles to their former glory. Honorary President Paul Nicholson undertook to find a suitably qualified company and obtain a quote for the work. Pontcanna (Victorian) Tiling & Restoration, a local company, was selected.

To replace missing or broken tiles new ones had to be manufactured by specialist tile makers, Craven Dunnill, who were one of the suppliers of the original tiles. They are based at the Jackfield museum, at Ironbridge, Shropshire, and now specialise in producing matching products for unique historic restorations such as this.



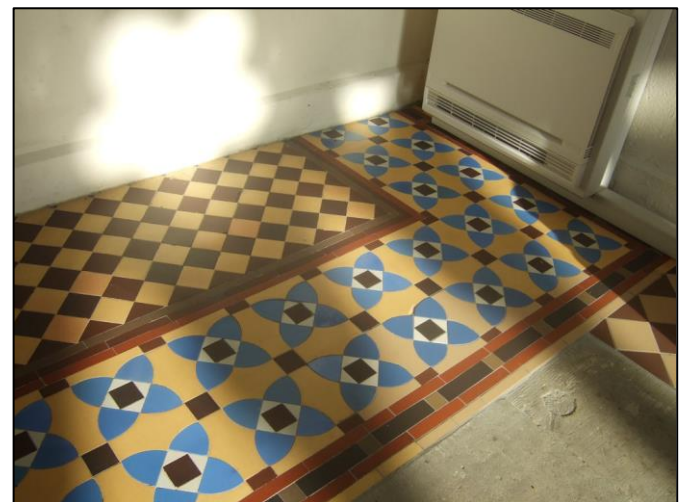
The manufactured tiles

The maker's mark "Maw & Co - Broseley" appears on the surface of two of the dark brown centre tiles, as well as on the reverse of the old damaged tiles. A Pontcanna Tiling expert stated that few of their tiles can be found in Cardiff today.



Makers Mark

Eagle-eyed members of the Friends may have also spotted the upside down tiles in the main body floor pattern. This is thought to be deliberate as we have learnt of a craftsman who did this as his "signature". Pontcanna Tiling has left them in place as a mark of respect to the original tiler



After the Restoration

The wall frieze on the two longer walls of the Chapel has different tiles to those in the floor. This floral glazed tile pattern in brown and cream is called *Godwin*, after their manufacturer. The linear patterning depends on alternate tiles being 90 degrees out of phase. At first, it was thought that the replacement tiles had been incorrectly cut, but checking confirmed that Craven Dunnill had manufactured them faithfully to the patent book design. This gave rise to a pattern continuity issue to which the solution was to cut some tiles in half, thereby maintaining the momentum in the pattern. While not the perfect solution, most observers would probably not be able to spot the difference. It is thought that the original tiles, purchased 125 years ago, may have been "seconds" with reverse patterns, bought to keep the price of the frieze down.



Wall Frieze

Details of Victorian tile manufacturers can be difficult to obtain, but remain interesting all the same, so brief histories of both companies are outlined below.

John Hornby Maw (1800 - 1885), had made his fortune as a manufacturing chemist in London, selling out at the age of only 34. He retired to Brighton and then moved to Worcester in the 1840s. He felt that the tile industry would be a good business opportunity for his sons as it combined their artistic talents with their entrepreneurial skills. In 1849 he bought the Encaustic Tile Works in Worcester which had been established by the Worcester Porcelain Company. The two sons *George* and *Arthur* Maw

established *Maw & Co* in 1850.



Maw and Co's Benthall Works

Wikipedia Media - geograph.org.uk

They quickly gained a high reputation for their 'mock-mediaeval' encaustic floor tiles. The local clays were unsuitable and clay from Shropshire was brought in at great expense. In 1862, the company moved to Broseley, Shropshire, in the Ironbridge Gorge to take advantage of the good-quality local clay. Until full commercial production was reached in 1857, the company barely covered its expenses but, within a few years, encaustic tiles became the height of fashion and the company prospered. By 1861, *Maw & Co* employed a work force of 83 (45 men, 17 women and 21 boys). The company continued to prosper and, by 1880, had grown to be the largest producer of ceramic tiles in the world, making more than 20 million pieces a year. By 1882 their manufacturing techniques had improved so much that they were able to produce the *Majolica*-tiled corridor in Cardiff Old Library.

In May 1883 they moved to the Benthall Works at Jackfield. The new purpose-built factory covered an area of 5 acres (2.0 ha) and was the largest tile works in the world. The firm went on to become serious competitors to *Minton & Co*.

Maw & Co have supplied ceramic wall and floor tiles to some of the world's most prestigious buildings. In *Maw's* printed catalogues the 'Lists

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of persons and establishments supplied' ran to five pages and included the British Royal Family, Alexander II of Russia, maharajahs, dukes, earls, railway companies, cathedrals, hospitals, public buildings, schools and colleges, and even warships. Maw and Co won many awards at international exhibitions including those in London (1862), Paris (1867), Philadelphia (1876) and Adelaide (1887).

In the recession that followed World War I, building restrictions and railway closures were all detrimental to the tile industry. In 1960, Maw & Co merged with Campbell Tiles and in 1968 the Campbell-Maw Company was absorbed into the H & R Johnson group. Maw & Co closed down in January 1970.

But Maw & Co Limited was re-established as a private company on 27 June 2001. In March 2008, the company was acquired by new management. Encaustic and geometric floor tiles, and replica Victorian decorative wall tiles, are produced using traditional craft skills. Replica tiles of other leading 19th century makers, such as Minton, Campbell, and Malkin, are also produced.

The earthenware encaustic and geometric floor tiles, that Maw & Co are best known for, have always been produced. In addition, mosaic tiles (from 1862), transfer printed tiles, hand painted picture tiles and relief tiles were also made, including Art Nouveau and Art Deco geometric designs. In the 1890s, Maw & Co started making high quality art pottery and employed artists, such as Lewis Foreman Day and Walter Crane, to design both art pottery and tiles.

The frieze tile manufacturing firm was founded by William Godwin, a brick maker of Lugwardine, Herefordshire, in 1852, aided by his brother, Henry, who had two years' experience of making inlaid tiles at the Maw factory in Worcester. At first they manufactured tiles with either an unglazed finish or ones with a highly glazed smooth surface, as we have on the Chapel walls.

In 1857, the firm received a prestigious order for tiles to pave the eastern part of Hereford Cathedral. By 1860, a randomly dented surface giving an antique look, makes Godwin tiles easily identifiable. Gilbert Scott and G E Street especially favoured Godwin tiles.



The complete restoration

A fantastic restoration by Pontcanna Tiling has produced a legacy for the Chapels that we hope will endure for another 150 years.

Sukkur - Where's That?

Sometimes, it is the name of a place, rather than a person, that jumps out at you. The memorial shown below was discovered on a workday, when the Friends cleared an overgrown area in Section I, close to the "heart" path, opposite the path to the Balloon Girl. While it marks the grave of Harriet and John Williams of Woodville Road (and their daughter and son-in-law), it also remembers their son, Trevor.



Williams memorial

The inscription records that Trevor was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 30th Punjabis. He died at Sukkur, India, on June 7th 1918, aged 20 years and was interred at Cantonment Cemetery, Sukkur. A newspaper report of his death tells us more: he "died of fever and heart failure in the train to Karachi. He was educated at Cardiff and Taunton School, afterwards proceeding to Queen's College, where he intended taking holy orders after the war. He belonged to the Officer Training Corps at Taunton and Oxford; joined the Inn's of Court Officers Training Corp, and the Cadet School at Netherfield, Berkhamstead, Herts."

While Sukkur was in British India, it became part of Pakistan on partition. It was sufficiently close to the border for a significant exchange of residents, non Moslems moving into India, with Moslems on the Indian side of the border taking their places. It was a process marred by barbaric acts on both sides. Sukkur may be a place that you have never heard of, but it is larger than Cardiff and at the centre of a major agricultural area, where the flat lands of

the Indus valley are served by a relict of colonial days, a huge dam serving a network of seven irrigation canals.

Recent Events

There is, of course, only one event to report:

The AGM

The Annual General Meeting was held in the Episcopalian Chapel on Saturday 27th January 2018, with about twenty members in attendance. The Chairman welcomed everyone and apologies for absence were taken.

The minutes of last year's AGM were accepted and there were no matters arising, so proceedings moved quickly on to the Chairman's report. It had been another busy year, with a full programme of lectures and guided walks, plus specially arranged walks for the Victorian Society and Canton Local History Society and, of course the weekly Health Walks, which continue to be popular. Once again, the Friends were participants in the Remembrance Service and have continued to help with various aspects of the maintenance of the Cemetery through its workdays. In respect of the latter, special thanks were due to Denise Rogers for her guidance, as well as all her other initiatives to enhance the appearance of the Cemetery, such as the yellow rattle and screening hedging for the air conditioning equipment.

The newsletter continues to be well received and more and more people are visiting the Friends' website, with more extensive information being made available. For example, many more memorial inscriptions have been recorded and placed on it. Agreement has recently been received from Glamorgan Archives to put their burial archives on the site - another enhancement to look forward to. The Friends' list of publications has grown, with more booklets being produced, and the Friends had a well visited stall at the Cathays Street Fair.

Looking ahead, the Friends are funding the restoration of the tiling in the chapel used for

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the AGM and, as a result of a recent grant, more information boards will be placed around the Cemetery. Both of these actions were expected soon. There was the usual programme of events (made available to attendees at the AGM) to look forward to. Throughout his report, the Chairman named the people to whom credit was due for particular things, but he rounded off his presentation by thanking his committee and all members of the Friends for their continued generous support.

While the Chairman's report had largely stolen his thunder, the President added a few things to it. The Friends now have a presence on Facebook. He drew attention to Ivor Lippett's role in organising volunteers on workdays and noted that it was surprising how much of a difference was made by the volunteers' efforts. A special mention was made of Gordon Hindess for his input to guided walks, talks and the newsletter. He also welcomed the contribution of new committee members, Jean and Des Sanford, particularly their recording of memorial inscriptions. He again emphasized the close liaison with Bereavement Services, which was the envy of many other Friends groups. He also emphasized that the tiles in the chapel were quite rare, but that he was confident that the restored tiling would look as good as new when we meet for next year's AGM.

In presenting the Statement of Accounts for 2017, the Treasurer explained that the Friends' general insurance was provided under the BALH subscription, while the Insurance item was specific to workday activity. It was considered that splitting the indemnity this way was still a good deal. The main income items continue to be membership subscriptions and publication sales, together with generous donations. There was some discussion about the valuation of stock (mainly books) which perhaps needs review. Attention was drawn to the tremendous amount of goodwill (time input of members, support from Bereavement Services, lecture room facilities at the university, etc) which is not reflected in the financial figures,

but contributes to the healthy overall position.

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

Chairman: Paul Jones

Treasurer: John Farnhill

Trustees: Jean Sanford, Margaret Smith, Ivor Lippett, Paul Nicholson (Honorary President), Hugh Payne and Des Sanford

The committee could accommodate more members and anyone who was interested would be welcome to attend committee meetings to find out more about what was involved.

Martin Birch, Operational Manager for Bereavement Services, thanked the Friends for their fantastic input and acknowledged that many of the things which the Council had done would not have happened but for the existence of the Friends. The last year had seen the Council tackle the tower gates, vestry doors and external lighting around the chapels. Future plans include internal work on the vestry and outer gate repairs. Martin noted the tremendous amount of work undertaken by the Community Payback team, while credit should go to Denise for the excellent state of the Cemetery. In the longer term, it is still the aim to make the Anglican chapel an office and information centre. The green flag submission for this year was to be submitted shortly. Martin closed his update by saying that collaboration between the Council and voluntary groups was now embedded in its culture.

Questions and discussion covered:

Data protection law changes: although the new law takes effect in April, there still seemed to be a lack of clarity about what action was required. However, it was not expected to be a serious problem, the Chairman was shortly to attend a course on the subject and Martin Birch undertook to check with the Council's legal section.

Toilet facilities: it was acknowledged that, because of persistent misuse, the non radar key operated toilet had had to be kept locked, except when the area was attended (e.g. when events were held in the chapels or guided walks were taking place). With regard to the particular case of the weekly walking for health group, Carmel Thomas undertook to let the leaders have a key.

There being no Other Business, the meeting closed after about an hour, although informal discussion continued for some time afterwards.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

With the Winter break, there is just one workday to report on. With a good turnout, efforts were concentrated on clearing saplings and brambles in a number of clumps on the Allensbank Road side of Section D. In particular, one of the oldest graves in the Cemetery with an elaborate design and still contained within its original cast iron railings (quite unusual now) was targeted. The improvement here should be apparent from the before and after pictures below.



The grave is that of Thomas and June Watkins who died in 1867 and 1868, respectively. While it is a future task to find out more about them, their home (inscribed on the memorial) was Elmsfield, one of the grand houses that used to occupy the south side of Newport Road.

Mentioned earlier in this newsletter (page 2) was the aim to record all memorial inscriptions. It is appreciated that there may be volunteers who do not relish the physical work that is normally done on workdays, so consideration is being given to having recording sessions on

workdays. Initially, instruction would be given on what is required, hints about dealing with those inscriptions that are difficult to read, etc. Any materials required for recording would be provided. The task would probably be reserved for the better weather. If you think you would be interested in doing this, please let us know.

We meet by the chapels at 10 am and work until noon, with a break for elevenses. Put the last Saturday of the month in your diary. With an uninterrupted programme, that means the next dates are 24th March, 28th April, 26th May and 30th June. You can work at your own pace and tools and gloves are provided. So, if you fancy some gentle exercise in sociable company, why not join us?

Weekly Health Walks

We meet just inside the gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning. All are welcome on these walks and afterwards, when we adjourn to a local hostelry for a chat over tea or coffee. There is always something new to see and talk about, as the Cemetery aims to please. Our 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.

Future Events

Talks

On Tuesday 20 March at 7:00 pm, Gordon Hindess will talk about the "Ladies of Cathays Cemetery". The Victorian era was a far cry from today's sexual equality, so men tend to dominate the history of the period. But they didn't have it all to themselves and, using examples from the Cemetery, this illustrated talk, covering the period from the opening of the Cemetery to relatively modern times, will aim to show that women were also newsworthy.

On Tuesday 17th April at 7:00 pm, Peter Finch will present "Real Cardiff the Flourishing

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City". Perhaps best known for his declamatory poetry readings, based on Cardiff, his native city, Peter is a full-time poet, critic, author, rock fan and literary entrepreneur. He is the author of a trilogy of "Real Cardiff" books, while one of his most recent works is "The Roots of Rock from Cardiff to Mississippi and Back Again". You won't want to miss his knowledgeable and lively talk.

On **Tuesday 15th May at 7:00 pm**, **Professor Bill Jones** will tell us about "**Ballarat and the 19th century Australian Gold Rushes**". Bill is emeritus professor in modern Welsh history at Cardiff University, with research interests that include 19th and early 20th century Welsh emigration, Welsh communities outside Wales and Australian and American immigration history. Some of our cemetery research has unearthed links with the Australian gold rushes, so we look forward to what will be a knowledgeable and informative talk.

The venue for all of these talks will be **Room 2.03** in the **John Percival Building, Cardiff University, in Colum Drive** (behind Colum Road). The talks are free.

Walks

The following walks **start from the chapels, just inside the main entrance in Fair oak Road.**

On **Sunday April 22nd at 2.00pm**, Bereavement Services will lead their ever popular **Heritage Walk**.

On **Tuesday June 5th at 7pm** the Friends will lead a **Midsummer Walk**. As usual, this walk will showpiece some of the more recent discoveries relating to the Cemetery.

Publications

Books (about 100 pages, full colour):

Cathays Cemetery on its 150th Anniversary - £5
Hidden Histories: Tales from Cathays Cemetery - £10

Themed guides (12 - 20 pages, black and white, unless indicated otherwise):

Another Batch of Murders - £1.00
Cardiff Blitz - £1.00
Memorial symbolism - £1.00
Railway Connection - £1.00
Shipowners - £1.00
Tree Tale Trail (colour) - £2.00

The books are also available by post, with an additional shipping cost of £3: in the UK, by sending your name & address and a cheque payable to "Friends of Cathays Cemetery" for the book price plus postage and packing to:-

Friends of Cathays Cemetery
c/o Bereavement Services
Thornhill Cemetery
Cardiff CF14 9UA

For orders from outside the UK please email us for a costing.

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

Facebook

Do you have a Facebook account ?

The Friends have recently launched a Facebook page in order to raise awareness of the Cemetery and the Friends Group. Please visit it and let us know what you think. We already have more than 140 followers and have 'reached' more than 40 countries. It's at <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfCathaysCemetery/>

Feel free to 'Like', share, comment and contribute.

And 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