

### Autumn Excels



It has been a wonderful autumn for the range and continuity of colours. On any single tree changes to leaf colour can occur quite quickly and be at their best for just a few days, before they become a carpet on the ground. But different varieties of tree go through this process at different times, so regular visitors are most likely to appreciate the display. Since most of our pictures are taken in the Old Cemetery, our opening image was taken in the New Cemetery, Section E-H.

But to do the season justice, takes more than one picture and the next one features the New Cemetery, but is taken from outside, in Fairoak Road, in order to gain advantage of optimum lighting conditions.



From left to right, we see an oak (hardly showing any sign of autumn), yellow tupelo, maroon liquidamber and an evergreen. The liquid amber warrants special mention: it changes colour from the top down, green leaves give way to yellow, followed by orange and deepening shades of red. If there are strong winds, the top may be bare before the bottom of the tree has reached maroon. But catch the tree during the colour transition, with sun shining through the branches and a gentle breeze flickering the leaves, and you can see where the tree gets its name - as the picture below shows.



While the Cemetery is short of our native oaks, it does have a few more exotic varieties, for example, the Hungarian oak, of which there is a good example towards the centre of Section Y. The Hungarian oak is more upright and has much larger dark green leaves, which turn chocolate brown in the autumn. The pictures on the following page show the tree in Section Y (in the summer) and a close up of the leaves, with a 50 pence piece (near the top) to give an idea of scale.



## Friends TOPICAL

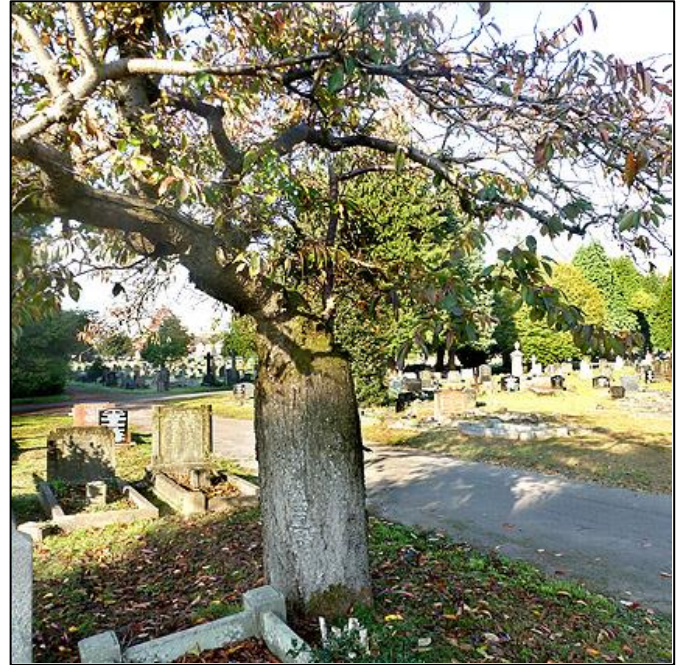


It is a mystery why we haven't noticed the apple tree in the Cemetery before - it is close to a well-used path and too big to miss. Maybe it hasn't fruited before. A couple of our Tuesday walkers volunteered to be guinea pigs and tried the apples, so we can report that it is an eating variety and quite tasty - which is why we are not giving away its precise location now!



*Branches laden with deep maroon apples*

Another tree that has escaped notice until now is a cherry in Section E-B, which, from the size of the trunk, may be almost as old as the New Cemetery itself. But what makes it distinctive is that it has been decapitated sometime in the past. This may have been deliberate pollarding, because it was getting too big for its location, or the result of a natural accident. Either way, its upper structure is completely out of proportion to the main trunk.



When the dry weather caused developing flowers on our yucca in Section L to wither, we despaired of seeing a good display this year, so were surprised to see some blooms, for the first time, in Section M. It is thought that these only got here as a result of someone dumping them over the nearby fence alongside Fair oak Road, but their appearance was, nevertheless, welcome. A few weeks later the main bed of yuccas in Section L decided to try again ... and produced a good crop of blooms about three months later than usual, emphasizing what an extraordinary year this has been.



*Section M yucca*



A quite magnificent fungus made an appearance this year. A giant polypore appeared as a circle of clumps around the stump of what had been the largest holm oak in the Cemetery, in Section O. The picture below shows just one clump and, if you look carefully, you will see a 50p coin on the largest front lobe, to indicate scale.



The appearance of these fruiting bodies is the result of a mycorrhizal partnership with the tree's roots. This is a symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationship, which would have existed when the tree was alive, with cell-to-cell contact between the plant and the fungus, allowing nutrient transfer to take place. The complex relationship may extend to the fungus helping the host tree to resist pests and diseases. However, it is within the realms of possibility that the fungus was instrumental in the demise of this tree, by invasion of the weak bark inclusions between its several trunks. What we normally think of as the fungus is only the fruiting body which will produce spores that will enable it to spread. But it is the vast network of fungal threads, called the mycelium, that carry out their essential work in wood and soil. Over time, the mycelium may spread over vast distances so, in this case, may well be interacting with other trees in the Cemetery. Another fruiting body was found at the base of a tree in Section G and it is possible that it was all part of the same fungus.

Not all the natural history news is good. Three sizeable clumps of Japanese knotweed have appeared, two towards the top of the "flower" shaped Section B and one in the middle of Section A. The one pictured below was the easiest to photograph, but by no means the biggest.



But we cannot finish on a sour note: instead we have a festive flourish. The holly this year is well-berried and plentiful and the image below is another example from the New Cemetery, in Section E-G.



### **Seasonal Miscellany**

We are always pleased to see the Cemetery being used as a study resource and were pleased to tag along with a fungi walk arranged by Poppy Nicol of the Global Gardens Project, which focused on facts in the fungi kingdom and species diversity. The walk around the Cemetery was guided by fungi expert, Rich Wright of the Glamorgan Fungi Group, and



## Friends TOPICAL

Maria Golightly (Grow Wild Wales/Kew). If you have delved into our website recently, you may have seen a new section dealing with fungi (and also specimen trees). We realise that this information is far from comprehensive, but if there are any experts out there who could help expand on this, please get in touch.

HTV Wales accompanied one of our Tuesday Health Walks and, a few weeks later, members of the group, the walk leader, Gordon Hindess, and Memorials Manager, Roger Swan, appeared on Coast & Country, in an episode entitled Saving Wales. With the day of filming blessed with sunshine, the enjoyment that can be gained in the Cemetery, the importance of looking after its heritage and the role of Bereavement Services and the Friends came across well, in a 10 minute slot.

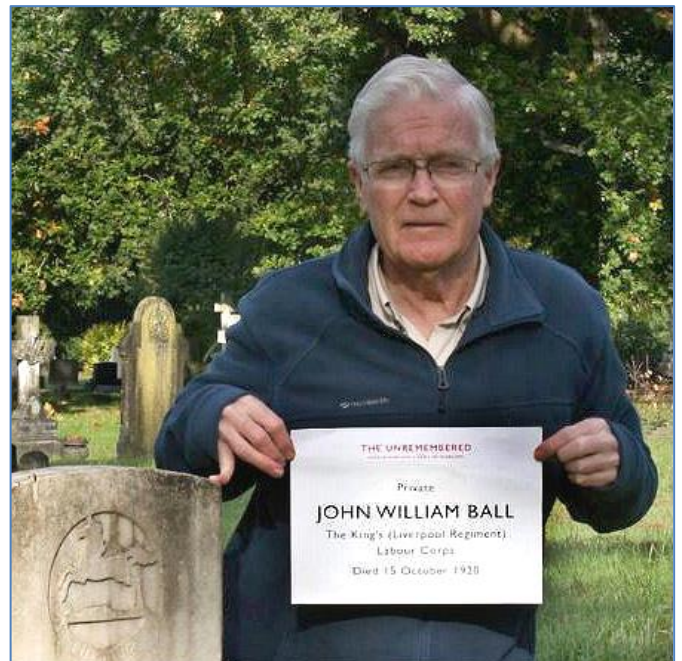
As an alternative to having visitors come to the Cemetery, we can also take it to interested groups, like the Rhiwbina Civic Society, to whom Gordon Hindess gave an illustrated talk recently, about the Cemetery and the role of the Friends. The talk was well received and provoked plenty of interesting questions at the end.

In general, we are pleased with anything that encourages visitors and the release of Pokemon Go characters in the Cemetery recently has certainly done that. However, it is disappointing that most of these people are so entranced by the virtual creatures that they seem oblivious to their real surroundings, quite frequently not even getting out of their cars. Surely it is unhealthy to prefer an imaginary environment to the real one?

During November, Big Ideas, in collaboration with the advertising company Clear Channel, ran a project to ensure that the contribution of the Labour Corps was remembered, as part of the national commemoration of Armistice100. It was entitled "The Unremembered: World War One's Army of Workers" and commemorated 100 individuals representing the global story of

the Labour Corps by showing 100 photo tributes, some of which were selected for display across digital advertising sites throughout the month of November.

When it was discovered that one of the 100 was private John William Ball, who is buried in the New Cemetery, Section E-H, we had to get involved. Private Ball served in the 21st Labour Battalion, The King's (Liverpool Regiment) and later transferred to the 257th Area Employment Company. He died on 15 October 1920. The standard requirement was for a photograph of someone holding a small card giving the person's name and details of their service. It seemed appropriate to do this beside private Ball's Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone, resulting in the image below.



Most of the submitted images do not appear to use any association with the person or place, so ours seems to be something of an exception. This may be why it made it into the selection on the Big Ideas website. We do not know if it also appeared on a digital advertising site.

It doesn't seem long ago when we were proud to talk about Samuel Chivers' severed leg as if it were the only one in the Cemetery. When we

thought we had discovered all of the buried limbs, we produced a booklet telling the stories of all five. Wouldn't you know it - within months, a sixth leg was discovered lurking in the burial records! The leg of master mariner Thomas Halbert, of Grange Gardens, was buried in Section J on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1911. But he did not long survive the loss of his leg and was interred in Section H on 25<sup>th</sup> May, at the age of 61. There is no grave marker for the leg, but a memorial cross stands on the grave in Section H.

It is not always appreciated that the majority of the older memorials were made from Carrara marble and were dazzlingly white when new. Years of atmospheric pollution and lichen growth have left them looking quite dingy and grey. While it is possible to clean them, the process is abrasive and tends to open the surface and encourage more rapid deterioration, while the improvement is short-lived. Recently, one of these old memorials had become unstable and was accidentally broken in the process of making it safe. While this is unfortunate, the new clean break, pictured below, provides an example of the vivid whiteness that these memorials originally displayed.



### *In Search of Raddy*

There was something missing when we related the story of Paulo Radmilovic (Issue 10, May 2012) - there was no picture of his final resting place. While he was born in Cardiff and his parents, brother and sister-in-law are in the family vault in Cathays Cemetery, he was buried in Weston Super Mare, his home for most of his adult life.



*Paulo Radmilovic - courtesy of Cathays Library  
Local Studies Section*

With his four gold medals and appearances at six games, Raddy is arguably Wales' greatest olympian. With his versatility over a wide range of distances, he probably considered that he was never more than a good swim from his home city.

With a visit to Weston necessitated for other reasons, it seemed opportune to call in at Milton Road Cemetery. A last minute online check failed to reveal a plot number, but a picture of the headstone was found. While Raddy's memorial was not distinctive, two adjacent memorials behind it, one a white Commonwealth War Graves' headstone and the other in black marble, were to prove crucial.



## Friends FEATURES

In many respects, the Milton Road Cemetery is similar to Cathays: it is Victorian, opened in 1856, three years before Cathays, and it is similar in size to the Old Cemetery. It has a garden style and includes an arboretum of native and exotic trees. It's Anglican and nonconformist chapels stood side by side, but were not conjoined, because the Diocese of Bath and Wells insisted on separate chapels, with at least a 6" gap between them. As at Cathays, the bell tower had to be aligned centrally with the gate, but it was an integral part of the Anglican chapel only. Both chapels were built in the English Gothic style, using pink limestone quarried from the site although, as with the Cathays chapels, more durable Bath stone was used for wall bases, corners, reveals etc.

Again like Cathays, usage of the chapels declined and they fell into disrepair, resulting in one being lost completely in the 1980s. At Weston, the nonconformist chapel was demolished. A friends group was formed about 10 years ago, not long after the ownership of the cemetery passed to the Town Council, and this led to restoration of the remaining chapel and its bell tower. The latter has a working bell cast in 1766, which was originally housed in the Charlotte Chapel in London. The chapel now houses small exhibitions and is open to the public every second Saturday of the month and for special events.



*Restored Anglican Chapel*

Another parallel with Cathays is that Milton Road Cemetery was developed in stages as the

population and demand for burial space increased. There was a major extension during World War 1, incorporating the Gate Lodge of Ashcombe House as the Milton Road entrance. In the 1960s, an adjacent quarry site was added to the cemetery.

While the two cemeteries have much in common, there is one striking difference - Milton Road Cemetery has a much more challenging landscape. There is around 100 foot level difference from one end to the other, with relatively flat plateau areas and steep slopes between them. Many paths are stepped and graves on some of the steeper slopes look like a giant staircase. Earlier quarrying and mining activity mean that rock is close to the surface, although this only seems to have restricted burials in a relatively small area.

But what of our quest? It was a fair bet that, as Raddy died in the 1960s, his grave would be in the last phase of cemetery development. The topography of the site meant that it was possible to look over this area easily.



*View over last phase of cemetery development*

With some relief, it was apparent that there were few War Graves Commission headstones in the relevant sections. Heading down to the nearest of these, one with a black marble neighbour stood out ... and there was Raddy's grave in front of them.

## ***A Brief History of the Victorian Cemetery***

Cathays Cemetery opened in 1859 but, to discover why it did, we need to go back several decades before that and to London.

At that time, the increase in nonconformity and rejection of the established Church of England ceremonies led to the establishment of small private burial grounds, which operated along with the already overcrowded church yards.

It was virtually impossible to dig a grave for burial without disturbing or digging up parts of bodies that had not yet decayed. Little wonder that the relatives rarely attended the burial as it was all far too distressing.

As early as 1720, concerns were raised about public health, with reports of decaying matter getting into the water supplies and calls for burial grounds to be sited outside of urban areas.

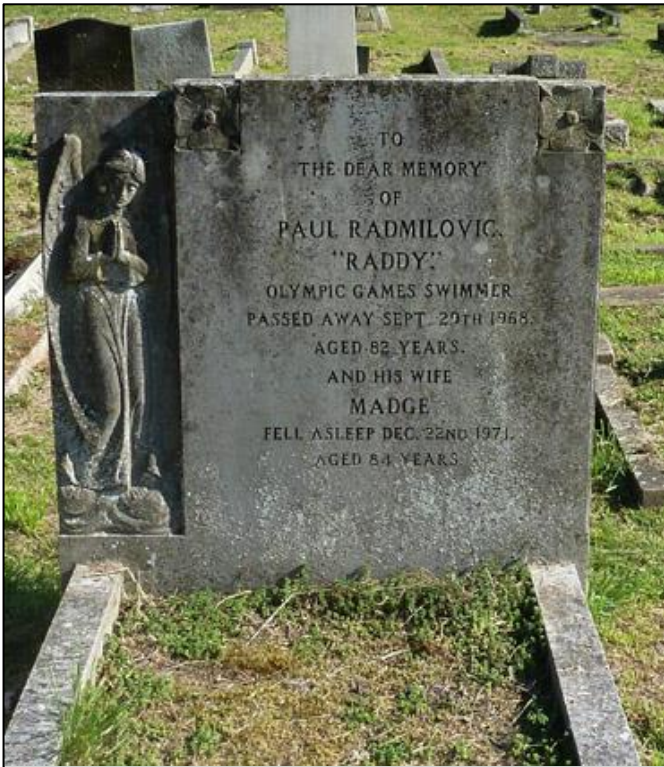
Not only were bodies disturbed by grave diggers, but also by rats and scavenging dogs and worse still, from around 1750 to the time of the Anatomy Act of 1832, the feared "Resurrection Men" or body snatchers were active, gaining money for obtaining the recently buried bodies for dissection

Undertakers as a profession also flourished during this time and they could provide all that the family required. To begin with it was strong, reinforced coffins, like the ...

***"Brigman's Patent Wrought Iron Coffin  
Capable of deflecting  
the Resurrectionists' crowbar!"***

Or perhaps one would indulge in an iron cage fitted over the grave.

This demand soon led to the undertaker also providing all the frills and pomp to the growing middle and upper class purses; the black horses with feather plumes, attendants, ornate hearse and carriages. The grandeur of the funeral gradually coming to suggest the social status



*Radmilovic headstone*

The inscription on the headstone reads:

*To the dear memory of  
Paul Radmilovic  
"Raddy"  
Olympic Games Swimmer  
Passed away Sept 20<sup>th</sup> 1968, aged 82 years  
and his wife Madge  
Fell asleep Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> 1971, aged 84 years*

If you find yourself in Weston Super Mare, why not visit this interesting cemetery and, perhaps, say hello to Raddy. His grave is in Section N, beside and about halfway along the path between sections M and N.

---

*Roger Swan, Memorial Manager for Cardiff Council led the October Heritage Walk in the Cemetery. His introductory talk deserves to reach a wider audience and he has kindly agreed for it to appear in the newsletter. The following is the first instalment.*



## Friends EVENTS

and worldly success of the deceased or their family, by the extravagance on show at the funeral and by the large memorial that followed.

In the first 50 years of the 19th century, the population of London more than doubled from 1 million to 2.3 million. Churchyards and burial grounds in London, together with vaults under churches and chapels, became full to literally bursting point, with the smell so bad that congregation members held a handkerchief to their faces as they sang hymns.

This so called "Vault Burial" was frequently offered, especially in nonconformist chapels, which were often buildings with large basements, converted into places of worship and places to pile up the dead! They claimed to offer a secure place and families paid dearly for this. But dishonesty ruled the day: coffins were taken back and re-used by undertakers, bodies disposed of by any means - by axe, saw, and even in a furnace.

The burning of bones was common practice, if a very old grave was disturbed the bones were often burnt and crushed for fertilizer. But now the same method was being applied to the more recently buried. And certain Parishes were just as likely to indulge in such practices at times.

There was, at this time, a widespread belief that "miasma" caused diseases - that the very smell of these "graveyard gasses" could cause illness and even death. Enter onto the scene George Frederick Carden, a young ambitious barrister who, in the early 1820s, was one of the first to widely publicise the supposed "danger of graveyard gases".

In 1818, he had visited Père Lachaise Garden Cemetery, in Paris, a non-denominational cemetery of 110 acres that had opened in 1804. Not only was it located beyond city precincts, but it was landscaped and planted with many trees and shrubs and had many artistic and classical memorials and buildings - a stark contrast indeed to the "narrow, close, filthy and almost indecent churchyards of London". Carden spied a business opportunity ...

To be continued.....

*We are pleased to acknowledge the guidance obtained from "Dirty Old London. The Victorian Fight Against Filth", by Lee Jackson, and "London Cemeteries. An Illustrated Guide and Gazetteer", by Hugh Mellor.*

## Recent Events

### Walks

The **Open Doors Guided Walk in the New Cemetery on Sunday September 16th** was led by Ivor Lippett. In good weather, another excellent attendance enjoyed a tour of selected graves in this part of the Cemetery and the heritage related to them. Ivor also charted the relationship between the growth of Cardiff and the development of the Cemetery.

On **Sunday October 21<sup>st</sup>**, Roger Swan of Bereavement Services presented **A Brief History of the Victorian Cemetery**. While the core of this revised format event was an abbreviated version of the Heritage Walk, it commenced with a talk, in the nonconformist chapel, which reflected the title of the event. For those unable to partake in events at the Cemetery, we are presenting the talk, in instalments, in this newsletter, starting with this issue. In pleasant weather, 47 people enjoyed the walk around the Cemetery, then refreshments were available in the Anglican chapel, with the opportunity to buy some of the Cathays Cemetery honey.



*Roger delivering his talk*



## Talk

We were pleased to welcome back **Gary Williams**, of the Western Front Association, to deliver the **Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture** on **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November**. His **illustrated talk** was entitled "**November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918 - The End of the Great War**". Gary was able to show, with one of his own pictures, where the first and last British soldiers to be killed in the Great War died. Again in one image, he showed us where they were buried - ten paces apart, one for each million killed during the conflict. Germany had offered a chance of a ceasefire three days before the armistice became official, but a combination of a bloodthirsty United States policy and French duplicity meant that attacks were pursued in earnest right up to the last minute. Artillery batteries, not wishing to be left with the task of moving loads of unused ordnance, endeavoured to use up every last shell. The result was that losses on the final day were higher than the average for the whole war. This fascinating and well - researched talk was thoroughly enjoyed by an audience of 33.

## Our Regular Events

### Monthly Workdays

With one workday cancelled to avoid a clash with a wedding, efforts have concentrated on the cedar of Lebanon roundabout, clearing out brambles and self-seeded trees and shrubs, cutting back vegetation encroaching on the driveway and generally tidying up the area. In addition, a select group helped weeding and trimming the lawns around the First World War graves plot.

Because of Christmas, New Year and the **AGM**, our next workdays will be on **25<sup>th</sup> February** and **25<sup>th</sup> March**, as usual, the **last Saturday of the month**. If you fancy some gentle exercise in sociable company, why not join us? We **meet by the chapels at 10.00 am** and work until noon, with a break for elevenses. Tools and gloves are provided and you can work at your own pace.

## Weekly Health Walks

All are welcome on our leisurely walks, which normally take place **every Tuesday morning**, regardless of the weather, and last for about an hour. But, sorry, we won't be walking on Christmas Day or New Years Day. These are social occasions, exercising body and mind, interspersed with anecdotes about the Cemetery and discussion of the natural history. We meet just inside the **gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am** and, afterwards, we adjourn to a local hostelry for a chat over tea or coffee.

As usual, our walk on 13th November combined with the Remembrance Day commemoration in the New Cemetery. The Director of Music, RAF St Athan, was the bugler for "The Last Post" and "Reveille". The service was conducted by Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe and several wreaths were laid, including ones by the Lord Mayor, Royal Regiment of Wales and the Friends. Finally, members of the walking group assisted with the reading of the roll of honour and the placing of small crosses at the graves by local school children.



*Cross of Sacrifice and war graves plot*



## Friends EVENTS

It is refreshing to learn that our health walkers continue the practice when on holiday especially if, like Carole Bennett, they incorporate a cemetery and exotic trees in the route. The proof is in the following pictures, taken, believe it or not, in December.



The style of interment here is quite different from Cathays - note, as bus conductors of yore used to say, there's room for one more on top! And the bean tree is of a variety that needs a warmer climate than here. If you find yourself on holiday in Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, why not take a stroll to the Cementerio El Pedrazo?"

## Future Events

### AGM

The **Friends Annual General Meeting** will be held in the **Cathays Cemetery Chapels** on **Saturday 26th January at 10.00 am**. This is 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.

### Talk

On **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March at 7pm**, **John F Wake** will present "**The Cruel & Savage Streets**", in **Room 2.01** in the **John Percival Building**, Cardiff University, in **Colum Drive** (behind Colum Road). John is a local author, whose books include works about the seamier and darker side of Cardiff, based on his own research in the police archives. - and many of his subjects now rest in Cathays Cemetery!

## Publications

**Books** (about 100 pages, full colour):

Cathays Cemetery on its 150<sup>th</sup> 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  
Builders & Architects - £1.00  
Cardiff Blitz - £1.00  
First World War Soldiers - £1.00  
Five Legs of Cathays - £1.00  
Memorial symbolism - £1.00  
Railway Connection - £1.00  
Tragedy at sea - £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.

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