

Wonderful Weather?

Looking back on the last few months, the overall impression might be that it was wetter than normal and lacking in sunshine. What looked like being a bumper crop of blackberries, went mildewy and mouldy. There was little or no fruit on our varieties of apple and plum. But there is always something that responds favourably to the conditions. For one, it has been an exceptionally good year for berries on trees that the birds appreciate. As the picture below shows, the rowan trees have been laden with fruit.



It was interesting to see a family of magpies taking ownership of the 'golden wonder' rowan, stripping it of its yellow fruit over 2-3 weeks. This still left plenty of the more common red rowan berries for the other birds, which included the redwing: this winter visitor was spotted around mid November.

The wet, but mild, autumn also suited fungi. We

have seen numerous "fairy rings", some of which are large, though often broken at marked graves and dense clumps of vegetation.



Segment of fairy ring in Section S

The variety of fungi has been impressive. Just three examples are shown below.



For the conservation areas, the whole growing season has been to their liking. The result has been an abundance of healthy grass, brambles, rosebay willowherb, etc, with plenty of flower and seed. Ash saplings have shot up to over six feet high, with some areas looking like a young woodland. The annual strim this winter is going to be more demanding than usual.



New forest in Section B

Friends TOPICAL

Staying in the conservation areas, their ant population continues to thrive. While usually lost in the vegetation, the clearance of one patch for access revealed some in their full glory. That pictured below is in Section L.



The autumn colours have been as good as any in recent years. This isn't a spectacle that can be fully appreciated at one visit, because the trees do not work to a common timetable. Visiting once a week through October and November will ensure that each species is seen at its best. The pictures below were taken a few weeks apart in Section U, showing (from left to right) field maple, tulip tree and cherry.



Don't worry if you can't visit frequently. A well-timed single visit can still witness the range of colours ... as a carpet of leaves, as the picture at the top of the next column shows.



Carpet of leaves from liquidamber, tupelo, tulip, cherry and maple trees

With Christmas approaching, it is opportune to return to our initial subject, berries. Perhaps the best example of the abundance of fruit has been on the holly, as the pictures below show.



Autumn Miscellany

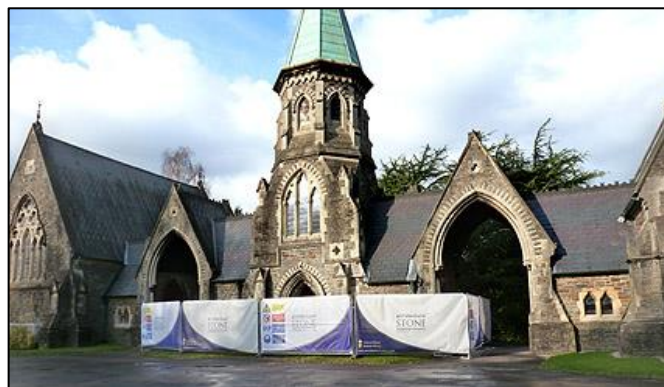
Following the re-award of the Green Flag, as reported in our last issue, the formal raising of the flag took place on 17th September. The task was undertaken in unison by Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment, and the Friends Chair, Paul Jones. The picture at the top of the next page shows the pair in action, watched by Martin Birch, Operational Manager for Bereavement Services.



It is nearly three years since the Ionicera shrubs were planted, to create a screen for the air-conditioning units outside the chapels. The screen is now well established and effective, as the picture below shows.



In case the arrival of safety fencing around the tower and vestry portion of the chapels caused alarm, we are pleased to clarify that this is good news. The fencing is to secure what is temporarily a building site. As the next stage in the restoration of the chapels, the vestries are being made habitable. This involves the removal of flaking plaster and the cleaning, repairing and re-pointing of the stonework. The objective is to provide private space for participants in and conductors of weddings, funerals, etc.



Safety fencing around belltower and vestries

The drive that splits Section R had become so overgrown as to prevent maintenance vehicles from passing along it. A concerted effort by Bereavement Services and the Probation Service team has re-opened the route for traffic. The following picture shows the cleared drive, with the piles of removed vegetation giving an indication of the amount of material that had to be cut out.



Another beneficiary of this work was the exposure of a grave that had not seen daylight for some time. Two substantial self-seeded holly trees are growing up through the grave of Luisa del Guerra, who died in 1895. The headstone is leaning at a precarious angle, but firmly held between the tree trunks. Unusually, the perimeter of the plot is marked by six dwarf pillars, rather than a kerb.



Luisa del Guerra grave in Section R

Following on from this, we make no apology for again drawing attention to the plight of memorials in the Cemetery. The picture below is yet another example of delaminating stone: this headstone in Section Q has already lost much of its inscription although, strangely, it has left an impression of the writing on the underlying stone.



Once again, this emphasizes the importance of the recording of memorial inscriptions while they are still there. This is a vast task and volunteers are welcome. Please get in touch if you can spare a few hours.

A more dramatic example of the deterioration of the fabric of the Cemetery has been apparent in Section C recently - a collapsed vault. Legally, responsibility for maintaining the vault rests with the plot owner but, in the case

of vaults that have not seen an interment for possibly 100 years or more, pinpointing liability is difficult. The Council have fulfilled their obligation to make the area safe.



Collapsed vault in Section C plated over for safety

The Cemetery has featured twice on television recently. The episode of "Who Do You Think You Are?" featuring Paul Merton found him in the New Cemetery, in the rain, looking rather sadly at the unmarked grave of his grandfather. Slightly more cheerful was the scene from "Tourist Trap" which was shot in Section M, although the storyline in this case was not directly related to Cathays.

This pumpkin was found in the Old Cemetery, close to the Allensbank Road fence and complete with nightlight, shortly after Halloween.



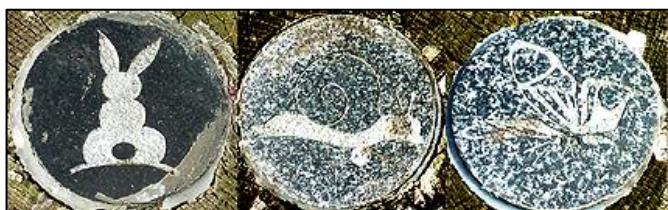
Was this the relict of some ghoulish prank? Did it scare the pants off anyone walking along Allensbank Road on the last evening of October? This was not the only pumpkin found in the Cemetery, but there could be an innocent explanation: with a lot of redundant pumpkins after Halloween, it had been suggested that they could be left for squirrels to eat ... and the Cemetery does have plenty of squirrels.

The "Tree Trail" in the Old Cemetery has lost some of its marker posts ... and some of its trees! In Section Q, it refers to the Log Pile thus:

It is important to create a natural ecological environment in the cemetery and this has been achieved by selective planting, the adoption of different grass cutting schemes and by encouraging features such as this log pile.

Healthy and rotting wood provides habitats for a variety of 'mini beasts' and fungi which, in turn, attract birds to the cemetery. Some of the species to look out for are shown on the accompanying check sheet. Please feel free to turn the logs over to look for insects, but remember to carefully return them to their original position.

To help with the search, a ring of posts was provided around the log pile with images of 'mini beasts' on plaques on the top. Examples of these are shown below.



Mini beast plaques for rabbit, snail and butterfly

As can be seen, these are showing their age - and most of the others are in worse condition! Sadly, also, the log pile has been enveloped in brambles and shrubs.

With the aim of making the interesting natural

history of the Cemetery more accessible, there would be merit in revamping the Tree Trail, including the log pile and its mini beast posts.

Sharp-eyed visitors to the cemetery recently may have spotted some new arrivals, designed to encourage birds. If you look carefully at the bird boxes, you will see variations in hole size, to attract different species.



New bird box

The seat that was conveniently close to one of our more important memorials, that of Bishop Hedley, had fallen into disrepair and had to be removed. We are pleased to have been able to fund its replacement, made from recycled plastic, which has recently been installed.



New seat in Section D

The Friends were pleased to welcome the Chairman of the Friends of Wrexham Cemetery, when he visited Cardiff at the end of November. Wrexham Cemetery is also Victorian, laid out as a park and with listed chapels. It is younger (by about 17 years) and smaller than Cathays, but, thanks to an extension in the 1970s, still has spare capacity.

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A £1.1million Heritage Lottery Fund grant has allowed significant restoration to be undertaken in the last few years. The Friends group was formed two or three years ago and enjoys good support from the Wrexham council.

Glorious Finale - Aftermath

In our last issue, we saw how, in less than two hours from commencement of firing, HMS Glorious and her destroyer escorts, Argent and Acasta, had all been sunk, leaving carley floats and rafts with around 900 survivors on the sea.

The German pocket battleships Gneisenau and Scharnhorst had left the area without rescuing British survivors, reasonably believing that Glorious's radio report at the start of the battle, which they had picked up, would have resulted in additional ships being dispatched to the area and that their arrival was imminent.

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 an 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 instigated a practice with its main guns. But Devonshire had an important cargo - 461 passengers, among whom were the King of Norway, 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. Devonshire's log described the radio message as garbled and unintelligible. Devonshire's orders included keeping radio silence, but this order was broken nine hours after the signal from Glorious, to ask for an escort.

There was never a conclusive explanation as to why the message from Glorious, which was transmitted more than once, was not received by anyone other than the Devonshire and the

two German battleships. It was assumed that the two destroyers hadn't made similar transmissions because they knew that Glorious had done so. There was some evidence that abnormal atmospheric conditions may have adversely affected the range of transmissions. There was also a suggestion that the message had gone out on the wrong frequency, because Glorious had not received the latest order changing it.

The consequence of this was that no immediate help came from Royal Navy ships, although two destroyers, HMS Vanoc and HMS Veteran had been detached to join Glorious from a convoy. Without knowing the fate of the carrier, they sailed through the area without noticing anything strange. On the morning of 9th June, the hospital ship Atlantis reported having met the two German pocket battleships the previous morning. This was the first time that the Admiralty became aware that Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were at sea in the area and this started suspicions as to 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.

On the afternoon of 10th June, two days after Glorious, Ardent and Acasta were lost, five men from Glorious were rescued by the Norwegian ship Svalbard II, which was forced to return to Norway by German forces. One of those rescued died later, leaving the remaining four to become POWs. Late on 10th and early on 11th June, a further 38 men (36 Glorious & two Acasta) were rescued by the Norwegian ship Borgund, on route to the Faroes. Three of those picked up were to die in the next few days. Finally, on June 13th, two men from Ardent were rescued by a German seaplane and became POWs., although one of these sailors was to die in hospital three weeks later.

So about 1500 lost their lives, more than 800

only because they weren't rescued in time. One of those who died, James Radclift, is remembered on his parents headstone, which can be found in Section G, close to the main drive.



Radclift family headstone

The bare facts on this headstone tell us that Thomas Henry (Harry) Radclift died in 1926 at the relatively young age of 37. Also interred here is his wife Eva Norman, who outlived him by more than forty years. Their son James would have been eleven when his father died. A closer look at the inscription tells us that James was a Lieutenant on HMS Glorious.



Radclift headstone detail

At the court martial at Scapa Flow, Commander Heath was cleared of all charges and continued to give distinguished service, finishing as Commanding Officer of HMS Heron at

Yeovilton. One wonders if the instigator of this court martial, might have faced his own, had he survived.

The German pocket battleships withdrew to Trondheim, where Scharnhorst underwent emergency repairs over the next fortnight. During this time, two bombing raids were made, meeting fierce resistance. Only one bomb hit the ship, but failed to explode, while eight planes were lost. Scharnhorst then headed for Kiel, being subject to two more air attacks and having to take refuge in Stavanger for two days on the journey. 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. The cruisers HMS Sheffield, Belfast, and Norfolk were positioned to block Scharnhorst, which was heading to intercept a Russia bound convoy. A short skirmish resulted in some damage to the pocket battleship, which used her 4-6 knot speed advantage to break off the engagement and resume searching for the convoy. The cruisers continued to track Scharnhorst and re-engaged a couple of times, the second time, being joined by the battleship Duke of York. While all ships suffered damage, the added firepower of the Duke of York proved significant, with at least 13 hits, taking out most of the Scharnhorst's armament and causing significant damage to the engine room. By now, more British destroyers had joined the fight and launched torpedoes, causing major damage. While Scharnhorst continued to fight back, from its one remaining operational turret, it lacked speed and manoeuvrability and was being pounded by torpedoes and shells. At 19:45, on Christmas Day 1943, the ship capsized to starboard 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

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bombing raid on the night of 26-27 February 1942. It was estimated that it would take two years to make the ship ready for service. But, changing priorities meant that materials that had been allocated for her repair were diverted to other projects. The ship was disarmed and all but abandoned. When the Soviet army approached in early 1945, the ship was towed into the outer harbour and sunk as a block ship. A Polish salvage firm raised the wreck in 1951 and broke it up for scrap. "C" Turret remains in Trondheim, while the 150 mm 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.

If you want more information about the loss of HMS Glorious and surrounding events, it is worth looking at the following website:

<http://www.glarac.co.uk/>

Absent but Remembered

Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery lies in the flatlands of Belgium between the towns of Ieper and Poperinge. The second largest Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in the world, it has 10784 graves, all casualties of the First World War, apart from three from the 1939-45 conflict.

Soon after hostilities began in August 1914, casualty clearing stations and hospitals were set up behind the lines all along the Western Front, in Belgium and France. The hospital complex at Lijssenthoek grew to be the largest in the area and the makeshift burial ground alongside grew too. Interestingly there is one woman buried in Lijssenthoek. She is Nellie Spindler, a nurse with Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service. She was killed on 21st August 1917 when a German shell, intended for the nearby railway and munitions dump, landed on the hospital.

But what is the connection between Lijssenthoek and Cathays? Well, apart from

magnificent cedar trees and the work of our dedicated team of gardeners who tend the Commonwealth War Graves plot in the New Cemetery, the link is Phillip Charles Wyatt.

In the seldom visited north eastern corner of the Old Cemetery lies the grave of Sarah Wyatt, who died on 29th June 1922, aged 52.



Recumbent headstone on Wyatt grave

However, Sarah's inscription on the headstone is overshadowed by a second inscription, which is difficult to decipher, but reads:

In
loving memory
of
PHILLIP CHARLES
beloved son of L & S Wyatt
killed in action on
31st October 1917
aged 22 years.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Phillip was working in Cardiff for the Great Western Railway. He enlisted with the Royal Engineers and was assigned to the 262nd Railway Construction Company, whose job was to build and repair the miles of light railways, which transported men and materials to the front

lines. During the Battle of Passchendaele, Phillip was wounded and taken to the 3rd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, within the hospital complex at Lijssenthoek. He had suffered shrapnel wounds to the head and died on 31st October 1917. He is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.

In August this year we visited Lijssenthoek and, on behalf of the Friends of Cathays Cemetery, placed a British Legion poppy cross on Phillip's grave.



CWGC headstone and poppy cross

We are grateful to Jean and Des Sanford, two of our dedicated memorial inscription recorders, for spending part of their holiday finding the war grave and recording the link. The story of Phillip and 11 other First World War soldiers not buried in Cathays Cemetery, but remembered on family graves here, can be found in the booklet, 'First World War Soldiers, absent but remembered', which can be purchased from the Friends for £1.00

Recent Events

Open Doors

On **Sunday September 15th**, the **restored chapels were opened to the public from 11 am to 4 pm**. In addition, **Roger Swan** of Bereavement Services led a short guided walk to start the event, while **Ivor Lippett** conducted some impromptu walks in the afternoon. It was gratifying to have a steady flow of visitors (about 70 in total) all genuinely

interested in the Cemetery and the restoration of the chapels. An added bonus was the opportunity to see the new time line display board for the first time.



Open Doors banner

Talk and Walk

On **Sunday October 20th**, **Roger Swan** of Bereavement Services presented "**A Brief History of the Victorian Cemetery**" in the nonconformist chapel, followed by a short walk in the Cemetery, highlighting some of the Cemetery's heritage. Coincidentally, there was an interesting display of fungi on route and, at the end, Cathays cemetery honey was on sale. As usual, there was strong demand for this.

Annual Remembrance Event

On **Tuesday November 12th**, the Friends and health walkers joined in the Remembrance Event, organised by Bereavement Services. After the Director of Music, RAF St Athan, played "The Last Post", Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe led the service. Wreaths were laid by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Cllr Daniel De'Ath, Captain A J Richards of the 3rd Battalion the Royal Welsh, Cllr Sarah Merry, Cabinet Minister for Education, Employment and Skills on behalf of the Council, Allensbank Primary School & Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, Sandra Evans, on behalf of Bereavement Services, Mr & Mrs Birch on behalf of the Royal Marines Association, Mr Alan Barter, at the plaque for Capt Frederick Barter VC, and by Jean Sanford, for the Friends and the walking group. Jean also read the traditional "They shall grow not old..."

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Finally, members of the walking group assisted with the reading of the roll of honour and the placing of small crosses at the graves in the First World War plot by the local school children.

Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture

This was given by **Roger Swan** on **Tuesday November 19th** and entitled "**The History of the Cemetery Movement**". The excellently researched and illustrated talk was well received by a good audience of over thirty people, which included many new faces, several of whom were inspired to get actively involved with the Cemetery and the Friends.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

For the first time ever, appalling weather forced the late cancellation of the October workday, but our other days were well attended and the difference made was easy to see, at the Cedar of Lebanon roundabout and in Section O.

We meet by the chapels at 10 am and work until noon, with a break for elevenses. Tools and gloves are provided. The company is friendly, so come along and give it a try. If you prefer, you can help with the recording of memorial inscriptions, for which materials will be provided. With no workdays in December and January, our next sessions will be on **29th February and 28th March**, the last Saturdays of the months.

Weekly Health Walks

The walks start just inside the gates adjacent to **Cathays Library** at **10.30 am every Tuesday morning**, except for the last Tuesday in December and the first in January. All are welcome on these gentle walks, which last for about an hour and take place regardless of the weather. These social occasions include anecdotes related to the Cemetery, discussion

of the flora and fauna that presents itself and, at the end of the walk, we adjourn to a local hostelry for a chat over tea or coffee.



Health walkers by time line display board

Future Events

AGM

The **Friends Annual General Meeting** will be held in the **Cathays Cemetery Chapels** on **Saturday January 25th at 10 am**. Have a say in the direction which the Friends take in the future and raise any issues you may have. We look forward to seeing you there.

Talk

On **Tuesday March 3rd at 7 pm**, **Norman Briggs - Sportsman**, by **Ted Richards** of the **Roath Local History Society**.

The lecture will be given in **Room 5.24** of the **John Percival Building, Cardiff University**, in **Colum Drive** (behind the buildings on the east side of Colum Road).

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