

## Exceptional Spring

As we came out of winter, the natural harbingers of spring suggested that everything was on track. But half way through April, temperatures went into reverse and we had a record month for low average temperature. While temperatures have improved, even at the end of May, they are still lagging the norm by two or three degrees. And the result of this - flowers, blossoms and leaves have been appearing anything up to three weeks late. As if this wasn't enough, April also boasted record low rainfall ... while May did its best to make up the deficit!

On the surface, the consequences of this may not seem significant, but the creepy crawlies may have hatched out to find that their expected food was not ready. In turn, insect eating birds may not find enough to eat, while blossoms may not have been effectively pollinated, leading to a lack of fruit later in the year. We may not see the full effect until some time in the future.

But we have still been treated to wonderful displays of colour: like the yellow carpet of celandine and primrose in Section H ...



... or not far away, but a bit later, in the same section, bluebells ...



In a more shaded location close to the Allensbank Road boundary, the violets put on a fine display ...



... while tulips were welcoming just inside the main entrance...



Blossoms, too, have not let us down. This is the magnolia in Section K (yes, the same one that had a den under it in our last issue!) ...





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Some bright red flower buds (left in the image below) in Section S were too high off the ground to identify easily. The tree was half hidden by a blooming cherry tree and its trunk and crown were enveloped in ivy. When the buds opened, virtually all of the colour drained away, but the five petalled flowers were easier to see (right in the image below).



So, what is it? We think it is a crab apple, but hope to see some fruit later in the year to confirm this. The tree is currently hemmed in by bigger trees, but clearly has something to offer in view of its potential attractiveness so, hopefully, future workday attention can clear the choking ivy and cut back adjacent trees to give it more light.

While on the subject of conjectural identification, there is a tree on the west side of Section T that looks resplendent when the blossom is out, as the picture below shows.



Marker block G on the Council Tree Trail is at the nearby junction and the text for this location refers to a field maple and an almond tree. Almond and cherry trees are related, so

some have assumed that this tree is the almond referred to, but close examination of the blossom shows it to be identical to other cherry trees, so it seems unlikely that this is the almond. Of course, the definitive answer would be the fruit that it bears, but this one seems to be barren. There is another contender closer to the junction and the marker - the tall ivy covered stump pictured below!



If anyone can clear up this mystery, please get in touch.

Strong winds experienced in the middle of March brought a few bigger trees down. Perhaps the most spectacular was that in Section P, shown on the next page.





This one caused one side of the "heart" to be closed for a while, but it wasn't long before it was converted into ...



... or, briefly and as a contender for the natural sculptures discussed in our last issue, a dinosaur!



Something else, looking like a row of toy soldiers, that appeared and was quickly removed (by strimming) were the shoots of horsetail that came up through the crack between a path and its kerb. No doubt this persistent weed will be back.



*Horsetail soldiers*

A few years ago, a buzzard was a regular and welcome visitor to the Old Cemetery, so we are delighted that one has been seen again. We are grateful to Neil Edwards for the picture of the camera shy bird below.



Also spotted by a few people, though not captured on camera, is a rabbit. While the Cemetery may seem suitable habitat for rabbits, none have been reported before. Is this a wild rabbit that has found its way here from further afield, or could it be an escaped pet? If you are in the Cemetery, keep your eyes open for something hopping around.

### *Winter Miscellany*

Covid 19 has certainly left a mark. It has forced us to look at other ways of doing things, but at least there are events to report on ... and look forward to, as the Events section of this issue shows. And this includes our first 'live' event, a workday at the end of May.



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If you missed the dramatised story-telling that has been a feature of summer in the Cemetery over the last few years, you will be pleased to see that the writers of Living Lines and the actors of the A48 Theatre Company have produced "Stories from the Cemetery at Cathays, Cardiff", which is available at [STORIES FROM THE CEMETERY AT CATHAYS, CARDIFF. STRAEON O FYNWENT CATHAYS - YouTube](#)

The filming was made possible by a grant from The National Heritage Lottery Wales and CADW. The dozen tales are excellent - but we also look forward their live performances in the Cemetery at the end of June/start of July.

The gradual deterioration of memorials continues to be a concern and we are reminded of this as we stroll around the Cemetery. In the lawn conversion sections, there are now a number of replacement headstones that have had to be laid flat for safety reasons. Slowly, they will settle into the ground and disappear. Even stone has a finite life and these replacement stones are now more than fifty years old. They were not provided by the families of the deceased, but by the local authority. Should there not be a plan for their maintenance, including replacement? And, if these stones can be replaced, it would be nice to see the original inscriptions, which are retained in the National Archive, on them.

Another example of the problem, this time in the Conservation Area, in Section L, is shown below.



The composite image shows a side view and a face on one. Some of the inscription has been lost already, while most of the rest is on a sliver that is only being held up, it seems, by an ants' nest! This just shows the importance of the work being done by our volunteers who are working their way through the Cemetery photographing memorials and recording the inscriptions. But this is a huge task and new volunteers would be most welcome.

We were pleased to see that the anniversary of the Zeebrugge raid, April 22/23 1918, was remembered by Jim Lister and David Hughes at the memorial to stoker John Cleal, who postponed his wedding to volunteer to go on the raid, serving on HMS Iphigenia, but was mortally wounded.



*John Cleal remembered (courtesy Jim Lister)*

The City Nature Challenge started in 2016 as a competition between San Francisco and Los Angeles, but has now grown into an international annual event. It is run by the Community Science teams at the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of

Los Angeles County over four days around the end of April. This year in the UK, it sat conveniently over the Early Spring Bank Holiday.

The App based project aims to find and document wildlife in cities and may be specific to parks, open spaces and, even, cemeteries. In this Covid 19 year, it was presented not so much as a competition but as an opportunity to embrace the healing power of nature. Unfortunately, the Friends became aware of this event too late to try to coordinate a response, but the idea sits comfortably within our aims. The collective results from Cardiff and Newport show that 65 people submitted 702 observations, covering 324 species. We would love to hear from anyone who submitted natural observations from the Cemetery. Maybe next year we can do better!

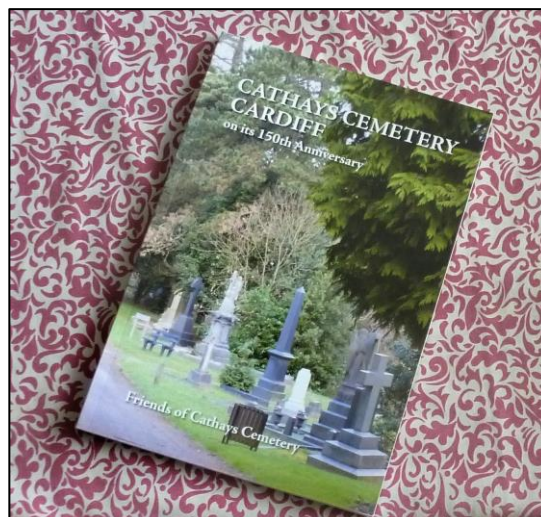
The week commencing 21st May was designated War Graves Week and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission ran a series of events across the UK to discover and learn about the work of CWGC in the UK and around the world. As part of this series, a contingent of CWGC representatives were on hand in the New Cemetery on Wednesday 26th May, explaining how the organisation began, what its role is today and how it fulfils this, including working with local volunteers. The very informative sessions included a re-enactment soldier, practical demonstrations on the maintenance of headstones and an insight into the very special horticultural aspects of remembrance garden maintenance. Also during the same week, war grave themed Cemetery walks were undertaken for bespoke groups.

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### **Balloon Girl - The Road to Cardiff**

The tragedy of Louisa Maude Evans' balloon flight has been well told but, if you are unfamiliar with the tale, it can be found in

Chapter 10 of our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book.



This article looks at Louisa's life, leading up to her appearance in Cardiff.

Louisa was born in Bristol on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1881, the first child of Mary Ann and Andrew Evans, who had married 10 months earlier. Mary was just eighteen, while Andrew was three years older. Andrew had signed on as a naval cadet on his sixteenth birthday, so was already an experienced sailor in the Royal Navy, which involved often long tours at sea, interspersed with relatively short periods of home leave. While it appears that he was on leave at the time of Louisa's birth, he was soon away at sea again.

But, in Bristol, a complicated situation developed. Mary Ann moved in with friends, the Crinks family, which included a seventeen year old son. Following an affair, she became pregnant and Victorian attitudes to her predicament could well have seen her in the workhouse. It is thought that Mary Ann also hankered to return to the touring theatre where she had worked prior to her marriage. The convenient solution was that William and Mary Crinks adopted Louisa, although this was not an official arrangement.

The cover story to justify this action, which was fabricated by the Crinks and Mary Ann, was that Andrew had deserted his family. There seems no evidence to support this but, Andrew was on the other side of the world and wouldn't



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find out what was going on until it was too late. By the 1891 census, there is no sign of Andrew (who would have left the navy after 12 years of service) in that part of Bristol, while our ten year old is now known as Louie Crinks.

Louisa's formal education would have ended in July 1895 and she obtained a gruelling and poorly paid job at Todd's Clothing Factory. Any money earned would have gone into the Crink's meagre family budget. But the Crinks were friends of the Hancock family, who were successful travelling show people operating in the West Country and had been a source of casual employment for the Crinks. This led to Louisa becoming a domestic helper to spinster Sophie Hancock (very much part of the showground business) and companion to two nieces of the Hancocks. The work would not have been as onerous as at the factory, leaving Louisa time to explore and enjoy a new and exciting world.

Louisa joined the Hancocks early in 1886 and would have travelled with the fair as it worked its way across Somerset and Devon, with principal stops in places like Taunton and Exeter. In early June, the fair arrived in Redruth, in Cornwall, where they were introducing a new attraction with sensational elements of danger, an aeronaut. The Hancocks had engaged Auguste Gaudron, a debonair and charismatic balloonist, who had performed all across Europe. Because female balloonists were more of a draw, Gaudron arrived in Redruth with a long time assistant, Alma Beaumont.

Redruth's Grand Fete and Gala opened on 17<sup>th</sup> June. It was sponsored by the Hancocks and was a fundraiser for local hospitals. The evening balloon flight was the highlight of the day and Alma and Gaudron took turns to be the aeronaut. Louisa was introduced to the pair early on and volunteered to watch over the wagon which held the valuable balloon and parachute after they had been retrieved each evening. Another deception comes to light at this time: it is apparent that Louisa is known

around the fair (and introduced to Gaudron) as Grace Parry. It may not be a coincidence that this was the name of a niece of Mary Crinks. Gaudron thought that Louisa was eighteen and this may have been a further deliberate deception.

By the end of June, the fair and balloonists had visited sites in Truro and Falmouth and were heading to Torquay, where Gaudron's contract with the Hancocks would end on 10<sup>th</sup> July. By this time, Louisa would have observed many flights and have gained an understanding how the balloon and parachute operated. While Gaudron headed by train with his equipment and to meet up with his wife in Cardiff, Alma was terminating her arrangement with Gaudron and heading to London to get married. Louisa would have been aware of all this and also that Gaudron was contracted to perform at the big exhibition that was being held in Cardiff.

The Gaudrons arrived in Cardiff over the weekend of 11-12<sup>th</sup> July and settled into comfortable lodgings in Edward Street, conveniently placed close to the town centre, the exhibition site and the railway station. Gaudron's first balloon flight was scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> July. Louisa arrived in Cardiff on 12<sup>th</sup> July and appears to have struggled to find lodgings, eventually being taken in late in the evening in Pearson Street, just off Castle (now City) Road. Here, she introduced herself as Grace Parry, sister of the famous balloonist, Gaudron. The following day, she made contact with Gaudron at the Exhibition ground, but was also given notice to vacate her room. At midnight on 15<sup>th</sup> July, she presented herself on the doorstep of Gaudron's lodgings, where a bed was made up for her on the sofa. The following day she was found a room in a house just across the street. This was used for sleeping but, otherwise, she lived and ate with the Gaudrons.

If the meeting of the Gaudron's and Louisa in Cardiff was planned, it doesn't seem to have been very well planned. From the Gaudron's

viewpoint, it clearly wasn't unwelcome, but it was Louisa who made sure that she got to Cardiff and that they did get together. From their time in the West Country, Louisa had glimpsed an opportunity to change her life to find independence, fame and, what must have seemed to her, fortune. But how much had Auguste Gaudron encouraged Louisa in her dreams and to run away from the Hancocks?

Gaudron was contracted to be at the Exhibition for a week and to undertake three balloon flights during this time. The publicity posters indicated that there would be a female balloonist, even though Gaudron knew that Alma would not be with him. It seems that he hoped to get away with this deception and intended to do all three flights himself, so he would not have needed Louisa. But things did not go well. Although the flight on 13<sup>th</sup> was successful, the balloon was damaged on landing. On 15<sup>th</sup> he deployed a spare balloon, but it failed to inflate enough to provide sufficient lift to clear nearby trees. But, when he alighted from the webbing seat, the partially inflated balloon broke away and created a major disturbance when it landed in a busy Queen Street. On 18<sup>th</sup>, the flight looked good ... until Gaudron realised that he was heading for the glowing furnaces of the Dowlais Steel Works and had to take a softer option - the Bute East Dock.

The balloon flights, especially with the added drama had boosted crowds and profits for concessionaires at the Exhibition. The organising committee approached Gaudron and came to an agreement for him to stay another week. This would not only compensate for the abortive flight, but also allow for five further flights in addition. But the committee also wanted alternate flights, as contracted and advertised, by a female balloonist. In announcing the extra flights, the Western Mail named the female aeronaut as Alma Beaumont! At the end of the month, Gaudron was contracted to appear in Glasgow, again with a lady parachutist. His reputation hinged on finding a solution ... and there was only one!

Gaudron briefed that Louisa had had training ascents in a static balloon and at least one full flight. Indeed, Louisa endorsed this on the one occasion when the inquisitive reporters managed to get close to her. For a girl whose whole life had been a catalogue of deceit, what was one more lie, if it led to her achieving her ambition. There is no evidence of training flights and, indeed, the short timescale and rapid rate of developments shows that they could not have occurred. It may be that Gaudron fully intended to train Louisa, ready to appear for the first time in Glasgow. But the spare week or so for this had now gone. Reputation and reward were more important to Gaudron than the risk to Louisa.

And so Louisa, now billed as Mademoiselle Albertina, made her first, and last, balloon ascent on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July.

*Having plugged our own book at the outset, it is even more important to acknowledge the painstaking research of Rosemary Chaloner and the result of this in her book "The Balloon Girl", without which this article would not have been possible*

## Recent Events

### Talks

On Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> April, Dr Ahmed gave an illustrated lecture on Zoom entitled "**A History of Muslim Settlement in Wales**". Dr Abdul Azim Ahmed is a research associate in British Muslim Studies at Cardiff University School of History Archaeology and Religion.

He completed his doctorate in 2016, "an ethnographic study of a British Mosque" and has since continued his work and research in British Muslim Congregational studies, but with a longstanding interest in the history of Muslims in Wales. He has a passion for the public communication of religion, and is a founder and editor of "On Religion", a magazine that explores faith and society.

He is also deputy director for the centre of Islam in the UK. Dr Ahmed is currently working

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towards publication of a book telling the story of Britain's nearly 2,000 mosques.

Dr Ahmed explained that he had researched the topic for some time and this was very clear from the interesting detail that he presented.

As an early illustration of the links between the UK and the Moslem world, he presented a gold coin of King Offa, who ruled the Saxon kingdom of Mercia from 757 to 796. While the front of the coin depicted the king with his name, the obverse had an Islamic declaration of faith. In 12C, Sir Richard de Granville founded Neath Abbey, where architectural advice came from a Moslem captive brought from Palestine. This cultural exchange between Islam and Wales continued long after the Crusades for, in 1671, we hear of a Welsh sailor who is referred to as 'runagado', a term used at that time for someone who converted to Islam.

Moving forward to the Victorian era, we find Henry John Stanley, 3rd Baron Stanley of Alderley (1827-1903) converting to Islam, in 1869, to become the first Muslim member of the House of Lords. Baron Alderley, who changed his name to Abdul Rahman Stanley, had interests in Anglesey and retained a love and respect for churches and Christianity. Because of this, he funded the restoration of Llanbadrig Church in the northern part of Anglesey, in 1884. However, acknowledging his Muslim faith, subtle Islamic features were included in the architecture such as geometric patterns on the stained-glass windows. These features can still be seen today, alongside the more traditional Celtic Christian architecture of the building. He also had a mosque built at nearby Talybolion.

Closer to home, you can find a dragon and crescent paired in the carvings on City Hall, perhaps a gesture to the growing Moslem community in Tiger Bay, particularly Somali lascars involved in the shipping trade at the beginning of the 20C. Between the two world wars, Muslim immigrants came from countries like Yemen while, after World War 2, it was predominately countries of the former empire,

like Pakistan and Bangladesh that were the source. However, by the early 21C, the majority of Moslems in Wales were born here.

Dr Ahmed outlined the history of mosques in Wales, including some in Cardiff, like the Peel Street Mosque, which was rebuilt in 1947, after bomb damage. The opening ceremony was attended by the Iraqi king (who had donated to the cost) and the local MP, James Callaghan. The Crwys Road Mosque, in a former Methodist chapel, indicated a strange link. The chapel had once sent missionaries to Bangladesh, while the population served by the Mosque is mainly of Bangladeshi origin.

A reference to Mohammed Abdullah, who died in race riots in 1919 and is thought to be the only Moslem buried in Cathays Cemetery, provoked some interesting discussion at the end of the meeting about where Muslims were buried up to 1936, when Cardiff Western Cemetery was opened with a designated section for Muslims. Interestingly, nobody was sure of the answer.

With an attendance of more than 30, the Friends' first online talk can be seen as a success, although this view must be tempered by the fact that digital gremlins were at work and several other people failed to connect into the meeting. We apologise to those who were disappointed.

The second Zoom lecture was held on **Tuesday 18th May, Richard Frame**, Newport historian and author, gave an illustrated lecture on "**St Woolos' Cemetery, Newport**". Richard Frame came to Newport in the early 1970's to attend the local art college. It didn't take long before he became immersed in Newport's history and, in 1983, jointly founded the local history society. Shortly after, he discovered the final resting place of John Frost in Horfield, Bristol. He went on to write *Haunted Holy Ground*, with Mike Buckingham, and they continued their partnership in producing *Through the Centuries Eye Pictures of Newport 1850 to 1939*. In 1999, they published the biography *Alexander Cordell*,



shortly after the subject's death. Richard is an active member of The Chartist Anniversary Committee, he regularly gives talks on such subjects as "Britain's Secret Army", St Woolos Cemetery, John Frost and the prehistoric monuments of Gwent.

The highly entertaining lecture presented us with a tour of Newport history and folklore. Starting with a brief history of Newport and its amazing expansion in the late 1800s to the Newport Blitz in the Second World War. St Woolos Cemetery has around 170 war graves from the First World War. Albert Hood was the first soldier to be buried in the Cemetery in January 1915, and the whole town turned out to line the streets from the family home. But, if this wasn't bad enough for the family to bear, by the end of the year his two brothers had been killed - with no graves to visit just names on two memorials. At one time, the Cemetery included several German airmen before they were reburied at Cannock Chase. He illustrated Newport's colourful history with Margaret Haig Thomas, 2nd Viscountess Rhondda, a leading local suffragette, who placed a chemical device with the intention of destroying the mail at a letter box in the wall in Risca Road.

Richard also pointed us to two dock-building disasters commemorated at the Cemetery. On 2nd July 1907, during the construction of the new lock entrance, the massive trench, in which 46 men had been working, collapsed, trapping them under massive baulks of timber. Seven men were rescued almost immediately but there was little hope for the others. However, a young lad of 17, Toyah Lewis, bravely crawled in amongst the timbers taking cigarettes and attempting to pull out some of the men but, as the tide began to rise and concern grew about his safety, he was called out. 23 bodies were eventually recovered whilst 16 remain entombed in the Usk's mud and gravel. A large obelisk was erected to remember the lives of 39 men that perished.



*James Mullock, clerk to the burial board and a local artist - photo: Paul Jones*

With numerous other interesting stories about people buried in the Cemetery, Richard filled the talk with an eloquent dialogue to accompany his presentation. One could not help but notice the similarity between Cathays Cemetery and its sister Cemetery in Newport.

We are pleased to report that the technical gremlins that caused problems with our first Zoom lecture stayed away on this occasion. This was just as well as we had had to close the virtual doors, with an attendance of 64.

## Our Regular Events

### Monthly Workdays

After an 18 month break, it was a pleasure to get back to business - though not quite as normal, with restrictions on numbers, no sharing of tools and the need to observe social distancing. The last Saturday in May turned out to be the best day of the year so far, and, a bit later than normal, the wild flower garden was re-seeded and a bare area of section H was also sown with a wild flower mixture.

**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, as the

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next dates are **26<sup>th</sup> June, 31<sup>st</sup> July, 25<sup>th</sup> September** (note no workday in August). Why not join us for a couple of hours sociable exercise? You can work at your own pace and tools and gloves or materials for recording memorial inscriptions are provided.

For the time being, numbers have to be restricted, so pre-booking on a first come basis is essential. Please check our website for the latest information, as Covid 19 rules may change.

### Weekly Health Walks

These walks are currently suspended, but keep an eye on our website for the latest information. When they resume, all will be welcome. The walks, which last about an hour, start just inside the gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning. These walks concentrate on the history, fauna & flora around the Cemetery.

### Future Events

#### Walks

The following walks start from the chapels, just inside the main entrance in Fair Oak Road and will last for about 1½ hours. Because of Covid 19 restrictions, all of these walks have a limit on attendance numbers and now fully booked.

The Friends' Midsummer Walk, led by Gordon Hindess, will take place on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June at 7.00 p.m. As usual, this walk will aim to highlight some of the more recent research discoveries relating to the Cemetery.

On successive Tuesdays, 29<sup>th</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30 pm, Roger Swan of Bereavement Services and the A48 Theatre Company will present Heritage Trails and Trails "Graveyard Voices". There will be a £5 charge for these walks, to be taken at the gate.

While the pandemic situation looks a little more optimistic, it remains essential to ...

### CHECK WITH THE FRIEND'S WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA SITES FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION

### Publications

**Books** (about 100 pages, full colour) - £5:

Cathays Cemetery on its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Hidden Histories: Tales from Cathays Cemetery

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 029 2061 2164  
or email <[gordon.hindess@uwclub.net](mailto: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).