

### A Pheasant Surprise

We are getting used to surprises resulting from unusual weather, but you couldn't blame the weather for the unusual sighting of a pheasant near the back of the library. We are grateful to Michael Fairclough for this confirmatory picture, proving the visit.



This handsome male may have been disappointed at the absence of any females, but we hope he moved on safely and was luckier elsewhere. 150 years or so ago, when the Cemetery was first opened, such appearances may have been more common, as the area was predominately farmland.



After a cold Spring, it was hardly a surprise to find blossoms appearing behind schedule. A good example of this was the hawthorn: it is noted for its pleasantly fragrant May blossom but, this year, it was at its best in June, as the image at the foot of the previous column shows.

If the hawthorn epitomises rural hedges and scattered self-seeded trees in upland areas, the mainstay of urban hedges used to be the privet, usually kept closely trimmed and not allowed to flower. However, if left to grow naturally and allowed to flower, it, too, has a fragrant blossom. Possibly the only example of privet in the Old Cemetery, which can be found in Section R, is pictured in blossom below.



One of the summer joys of the Cemetery is the unexpected displays put on by roses, often ancient plants that have had to fend for themselves for years. The example shown below was also spotted in Section R.



Despite the vagaries of the weather, the yucca display in Section K continues to improve each year ...

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We mentioned the sighting of a rabbit in our last issue, but it made an appearance at the three evening events in June/July, so there are now quite a few witnesses to its existence. However, if you need more proof, here's a picture of it ...



But it is still a shy creature and tends to forage when the Cemetery is quiet, so don't expect to see it every time you visit. You may have to be

satisfied with the more abundant small mammal, the squirrel ...



### *Summer Miscellany*

We mentioned the War Graves Week events at the end of May in our last issue. One of the preparatory steps taken by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in readiness for this was to replace the information boards at the First World War plot in the New Cemetery.



*New information boards*

The two boards, one in Welsh and the other in English, cleverly combine information about the CWGC, with specific reference to the local context. If you are in the Cemetery, check them out and, if you are into modern technology, you can use the QR code in the bottom right corner to get more information.

Several of the Friends have volunteered for the Eyes on Hands on (EOHO) project run by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The

volunteers inspect and photograph headstones which are under the care of the CWGC throughout the UK. Any damage or other issues with the headstones are reported to the CWGC. The volunteers have also been trained to clean headstones. Recently, two of our volunteers, Des and Jean Sanford, cleaned the headstone of Ronald Vincent Penn, which was in a sorry state. The before and after images are below.



Ronald Vincent Penn was born in Cardiff in 1909, the son of a postman. He joined the Royal Marines, where he was a bandmaster, and saw service in the Second World War on HMS Birmingham, a light cruiser which on 6th May 1945 accepted the surrender of the German warships Prinz Eugen and Nurnberg, two days before the end of the war in Europe. Sadly, Ronald died in the Royal Navy Hospital, Plymouth, on 26th September 1945. He is buried in Plot EP2452 at the northern end of the New Cemetery.

Readers may be interested to know that the CWGC specification for cleaning headstones is clean water (plenty of it) and natural bristle scrubbing brush, using repeated but not too vigorous rubbing. Proprietary stone cleaning fluids are not used, as they can react chemically with the stone, dissolving some of it and hastening further deterioration, despite usually seeming to make a magical improvement in appearance.

In March this year, during their EOHO activities, Des and Jean discovered the unmarked war grave of L W Williams, in Section S. This has been confirmed by a CWGC field officer, who is seeking the necessary permissions for a headstone to be put in place. Attempts will be made to find any family members and it is hoped that a re-dedication ceremony will be possible.

Regular readers will recall that Ionicera hedging was planted to screen the air conditioning equipment a few years ago. After a recent trim, it was clear that it is now doing its job, as the picture below shows.



Anyone lucky enough to have been on the July Graveyard Voices walks, will have seen that the memorial to John Rogers has been cleaned up. This memorial, close to the chapels, shows off many examples of symbolism, so has long been used on Heritage Walks for this reason. Not for the first time, we are grateful to Simon Morgan and Architectural Stone for undertaking this renovation.

People could be forgiven for thinking that the awarding of a Green Flag each year was a formality after the first year. But each year, the adjudication team are looking for more innovation and improvements in the way in which biodiversity is encouraged. An example of this is the introduction of "sky-high bug hotels". You may have noticed that one or two felled trees have been left with tall stumps. It may not be quite as obvious that holes have been drilled into these at various places, right up to the top.

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It is hoped that this may encourage use by creepy-crawlies that might otherwise be deterred by ground level predators. We'll see! The composite image below shows one such tall stump and some of the holes drilled into it.



In the middle of July, we were pleased to welcome visitors from Roath Local History Society to the Cemetery for a guided walk. We were surprised by the unexpectedly large turnout and, with Covid restrictions still in place, had to split the party into two groups, one following the route as planned and the other completing it in reverse. We are especially grateful to Carmel Thomas of Bereavement Services for leading one of the groups. Helped by some glorious weather, we were able to undertake a route that concentrated on graves with links to the visitors' area of interest.



The carving of memorials is normally seen as an artisan trade, but many go way beyond the skills of, say a building mason. They have genuine artistic merit, though the artist is usually forgotten, even if the person buried under it is not. An example of this artistry is the angel in Section S picture at the foot of the previous column (even if it has lost its right hand).

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

Louisa Maude Evans' life, leading up to the tragic flight on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July was recounted in our last issue. But she had to get back to Cardiff to be buried in Cathays Cemetery.

Three days later, Mary Baggett, a girl of similar age to Maude and the daughter of a local ferryman, went out in the evening to collect driftwood for the fire in her family's cottage near Nash, in the vicinity of today's wetland centre. She made her way across the levels and up onto the sea wall close to the East Usk Lighthouse. Descending to the edge of the salt marsh, she headed east towards Goldcliff, following the strand line. There was plenty of wood to be found, but she was surprised and upset when she spotted the body of what she took to be a sailor, because of the blue clothing and a cork life jacket around the shoulders. The body was being rolled about by the waves lapping at the foreshore.

Mary hastened back across the fields, where she met a farmer cutting hay. At his request, she led him back to the body which, by this time, had been deposited over large stones by the receding tide. On close inspection, the hay cutter confirmed that the body was that of a young lady ... and probably guessed who it was. While he stayed to watch over the body, which he knew should not be disturbed, he told Mary to hasten home, to tell her parents. Mary's mother dispatched her to the public house in Nash, to explain what had been found and to ask them to contact the local policeman, PC

Boucher.

Constable Boucher had to be fetched from Goldcliff, travelling by trap along rough and twisting lanes. It would have been past 10 o'clock and dark by the time they reached the Baggett's house, where some volunteers from the village had assembled to help with the recovery of the body. At the constable's request and with her mother's blessing, Mary was soon leading the local bobby across the fields and, critically, via the small bridges that crossed the reens. Finding the way in the dark, with lanterns the only source of light, would have been a problem without someone like Mary.

At the foreshore, PC Boucher quickly examined the body, particularly the distinctive clothing and lifebelt, and told the waiting helpers to find something to use as a makeshift stretcher. A hurdle found nearby fitted the bill and Louisa's body was soon placed on it. A grim procession, led by Mary and with four men carrying the stretcher at the centre, made its way slowly back across the fields to Nash village. It was after midnight when the group reached St Mary's Church, where the belfry served as an improvised mortuary.

Although the constable was probably confident of the identity of the body, there were still formal procedures to be followed for an official identification and the body needed to be treated respectfully. He approached Sarah Jones, the landlady of the village pub, The Waterloo Inn, and she readily agreed to "do my Christian duty by the young lady." It must have required a good deal of fortitude to go to the church in the middle of the night, to help the constable cut off the lifebelt and remove distinctive items of the Balloon Girl's clothing, including the shoulder hooks to which the parachute had been attached, a gold braided cuff from the sailor blouse and the ankle boot and black stocking from one leg. Once this had been done, the landlady cleaned and tidied the body ready for a dignified burial.

But PC Boucher's day was not done. He had a

three mile walk back to Goldcliff, then wrote a report on the evening's events, while the details were still fresh in his memory. It must have been about 3 o'clock on the morning of Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July before he got to bed. Still, later the same morning, he presented his report, together with the evidence of identification, to his superiors in Newport Police Station. He was then dispatched to the coroner's office in Cardiff, to initiate arrangements for an inquest.

The disappearance of the Balloon Girl had led to searching enquiries by the press, much speculation and apportioning of blame ... and revelation of the true identity of the lost aeronaut. If the story had smouldered for three days, discovery of the body fanned the embers into a raging fire. There were special editions of local papers while, by Saturday afternoon, Gaudron had visited the police in Newport and been to see the body lying in St Mary's Church, ostensibly to assist in confirming the identity of the body. Gaudron also visited the Waggetts and they took him to the site where the body had been found.

Only the day before, when Gaudron himself had just learned that Louisa was the 'daughter' of the Crinks, he had visited them in Bristol to acquaint them with the tragic events. Now the Crinks received a visit from the local police with even sadder news. William Crinks made immediate arrangements to travel to Cardiff, while Mary Crinks hastened to find Louisa's true mother. William arrived in Cardiff on the Saturday afternoon, while the two ladies travelled to Nash, via Newport, arriving on the afternoon of Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July.

They were not the only people to travel to Nash that day, as notices in the Saturday papers declared that the inquest into the death of the Balloon Girl was to be held in the Waterloo Inn, commencing at 10:15 a.m. that Monday. Sarah Jones would have had an early start, preparing the saloon bar for use as a coroner's court. By 10:00, a thirteen man jury had been appointed,

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and the principal witnesses were ready. Their first task was to take the short walk to the church to see the body. Two representatives of the exhibition concessionaires, closely followed by Gaudron, were the last of the summoned witnesses to arrive, although the proceedings had to commence before any family representatives were present.

Mary Baggett was the first witness, followed by PC Boucher. Their evidence was clear and straightforward. The same could not be said of the third witness, Auguste Gaudron, who contradicted himself several times, changing his story to best deflect blame from himself. By now, family members had arrived and William Crinks gave evidence, but Mary Evans was too distressed and was excused from a formal appearance. More straightforward again was the evidence of Dr. Brooks, who lived at East Moors and witnessed the descent, and Mr Webster, representing the show concessionaires. The results of the post mortem examination were delivered by Dr Hurley, then the coroner summed up, inferring that although Gaudron's evidence was not entirely reliable, he had not known how young Louisa was and, because of this, she had to be apportioned much of the blame for the way in which events had unfolded. Of course, the one person who could have enlightened proceedings was lying in the church and there was no one else to present her side of the story.

At the jury's request, the coroner censured Gaudron for displaying "great carelessness and want of judgement in allowing so young and inexperienced a person to make such a perilous ascent in such weather". But the final verdict was accidental drowning.

Gaudron left for London shortly after the end of the inquest, leaving £5 with the concessionaires representative, for the Crinks "to cover their expenses." About the same time, an undertaker, acting for the relatives and the exhibition authorities, was placing Louisa's body in the shell of an elm tree and loading this onto

a trap for transport to his premises, in Newport.

There was a very public outpouring of anger and indignation but, amongst this, the Western Mail set up a public subscription, which was generously supported, and the exhibition concessionaires tried to deflect some of the opprobrium heaped on them by underwriting the funeral expenses. Among the contributions to the press was a tribute composed by C T Whitmell, suggesting that it be used on the headstone on Louisa's grave. The initials CTW on the bottom right of the memorial show that the suggestion was adopted.

Despite the rain, several hundred people watched outside the funeral parlour, at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July, to see the oak coffin carried out to and placed in the horse-drawn hearse. The hearse was followed by two mourning coaches, the first carrying the Crinks, Mary Ann Evans, her second husband, Stephen, and their child Albert. Other relatives and family friends occupied the second coach. People came out of their houses to pay their respects as the cortège passed through Tredegar Park, Castleton, St Mellons and Rumney. The crowds increased steadily through the outskirts of Cardiff and, at Roath Court, the cortège was joined by exhibition officials and dignitaries in carriages.

For the last mile of the journey, mounted police headed the procession which now included thousands on foot. The cortège passed Pearson Street (off City Road) where Louisa had sought lodgings on her arrival in Cardiff, just 18 days earlier. The band which played regularly at the exhibition joined the procession in Crwys Road. The streets were now packed with people wanting to pay their last respects to this brave girl and the hearse was laden with floral tributes. At about 5.00 p.m., Louisa was laid to rest at this spot we know so well.



This was not quite the end of the matter. Several letters were written to MPs, one of whom raised a question in the House of Commons for the Home Secretary, Sir Matthew White-Ridley. He instituted an enquiry into the events in Cardiff and, just over a year later, the Dangerous Performances Act of 1897 was passed, raising the age at which female children could take part in such performances from 14 to 18. So, perhaps, one good thing came out of this tragic affair.

*As before, we must acknowledge the research of Rosemary Chaloner and her book "The Balloon Girl", without which this article would not have been possible.*

### **JOHN HENRY HARDING, CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE SURVIVOR**

*Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.*

These lines from Tennyson's famous poem 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' are relevant as we have a survivor of this infamous engagement of

the Crimean War buried in Cathays Cemetery, Private John Henry Harding of the 13th Light Dragoons.



*Wooden cross on the grave of John Henry Harding*

John was born in Somerset in 1833. He joined the army on 15th December 1850, giving his trade as a servant, and the regimental records show that he was 5' 7" tall, a reasonable height for the time.

The Crimean War was fought by an alliance of Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire, against Russia, and was an attempt to curtail Russia's expansion and influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. It was the first media war: the invention of the electric telegraph enabled journalists, like William Howard Russell of The Times, to send dispatches from the front line to London. When his eyewitness accounts appeared in British newspapers the public became aware of the horrors of the war. This in turn led to nurses like Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole travelling to the Crimea to set up field hospitals. The Crimean War certainly gripped the imagination of the British public. Streets were named after the battles, as here in Cardiff we have Alma Road and Balaclava Road, and in his TV comedy series Eric Sykes

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lived at 24 Sebastopol Terrace. Strangely for modern sensibilities, even children were named after Crimean battles, in my family tree I have Great Great Uncle Inkerman and a Great Great Aunt Alma.

The Charge of the Light Brigade was essentially a mistake, a breakdown in communications which led to the Light Brigade being sent on a suicide mission down a narrow valley, straight into heavy Russian cannon fire. Of the 670 troopers who charged down the valley that day (in his poem Tennyson has 600 as this scans rather better) figures vary but over 110 were killed and over 120 were wounded. John Henry Harding survived.

Less than a year later, in July 1855, while in a camp near Balaclava, John was accused of robbing a French soldier of the sum of 75 francs. The French soldier, one Alexie Merland, could add little to his accusation as he had been robbed while sleeping after consuming a rather large amount of alcohol. When arrested John was found to have about his person a total of 33 shillings in coins of various denominations and currencies. He was able to account for the 33 shillings in some detail, including 6 shillings he had received for a spare pair of overalls he had sold to the Canteen Keeper of the 10th Hussars, and 2/6d from the Interpreter for trenching his hut. I imagine few of us today would be able to account for the coins in our purses or wallets in such detail! It does not appear that any charge was actually made against John.

John was discharged from the army in February 1863, having served 12 years and 53 days, and with a Good Conduct badge. He was awarded the Crimean medal, with clasps for Alma, Balaclava Inkerman and Sebastopol, denoting his participation in those battles. He did not want to forget his army service; he attended the first Balaclava Banquet at the Alexandra Palace in 1875, and joined the Balaclava Commemoration Society.

Now a civilian, John joined his younger brother

Robert at 173 Bute Street, as a local manager for the London and Lancashire Fire Insurance Company. Robert Harding had also been in the 13th Light Dragoons and may well have taken part in the Charge of the Light Brigade. He had been promoted from Private to Corporal in June 1858 but was reduced back to Private by Regimental Court-martial just over 7 months later.

By 1871 John had become a publican; the licensee of the Gardener's Arms at 1 Plucca Lane. The street name was later changed to Castle Road, and is now City Road. The Gardener's Arms also had a name change, to the Military Canteen, probably because of its proximity to Longcross Barracks at the corner of Plucca Lane and Newport Road. Unfortunately for John, the barracks then moved to its present site at Maindy, thus depriving him of many of his customers. By 1886, John was running a drinking establishment called the Alexandra at 37 Upper George Street, which is now known as Wyverne Road. The Welsh Licensing Act of 1881 closed public houses on Sunday, which in turn led to the opening of many unregulated private drinking clubs, which had a detrimental effect on trade in legal public houses. This may have been the reason for the downturn in John's finances, as, whatever the reason, he was near destitute at his death on 3rd September 1886. He had had the foresight in July 1875, however, to purchase two adjoining graves in Cathays Cemetery, plot L982 where he is buried, and Plot L1006.

The Western Mail of 6th September 1886 carried a small article on 'The funeral of a Crimean hero', part of which read as follows:

*'The funeral cortège had left the residence of the late deceased about four o'clock in the afternoon, by which time there was a very large gathering of spectators. The procession was headed by about seventy men of the Welch Regiment stationed at Cardiff. At the cemetery the service was most impressively conducted by*



the Revd. J. Wolfe, curate of St John's, Cardiff.'

So it would seem that in death John Henry Harding was given the recognition he deserved as a hero of the Crimea and a survivor of the infamous Charge of the Light Brigade.

At present the grave is marked by a wooden cross with an inscription on a metal plaque which is hard to read, so is reproduced below:

R.I.P  
JOHN HENRY HARDING  
1382 - 13<sup>TH</sup> LIGHT  
DRAGOONS  
A B I S  
RODE IN THE CHARGE  
DIED 4<sup>TH</sup>. SEPTEMBER 1866

It is thought that the letters under the word 'Dragoons' signify the Crimean medal clasps for Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman and Sevastopol. It is hoped that a more permanent memorial will be erected, as a more fitting tribute to this Crimean survivor.

*Jean Sanford*

## Recent Events

### Walks

It's wonderful to be able to report on some live events in the Cemetery again!

The **Friends' Midsummer Walk**, led by **Gordon Hindess** on **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June** was fully subscribed to the limit imposed by Covid restrictions. The walk highlighted some of the more recent research discoveries relating to the Cemetery, including William Frame (who implemented the construction of the animal wall at Cardiff Castle), Mary Edmund (who lived to 105 and talked to King Edward VII at her garden gate in Newport Road), a construction accident on the Rhymney Valley line which killed six workers and two tragic unrelated deaths in Helen Street, Splott, where the punishment hardly seemed to fit the crime.

On successive **Tuesdays, 29<sup>th</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup>**

**July, Roger Swan** of Bereavement Services and the **A48 Theatre Company** presented **Heritage Trails and Tails "Graveyard Voices"**. Again, these walks were fully subscribed and thoroughly enjoyed by those lucky enough to make the cut. The actors brought to life characters from Cardiff's past using the excellent scripts from the writers of Living Lines.



The first performance enjoyed a balmy evening, but rain began soon after the start on the second evening ... and got steadily heavier as the walk progressed. It speaks volumes for the quality of the acting and the fortitude of both actors and audience that the programme was completed without anyone cutting and running.

## Our Regular Events

### Monthly Workdays



The weather was benign for our June and July workdays and there was a gratifying turnout for both of these. One day was devoted to tidying up the area around the chapels, particularly the

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trimming of lawn edges and weeding. The images above on the previous page show before and after pictures of the area around one of the buttresses.

The second workday concentrated on that staple of our workdays, clearing unwanted natural growth, in this case in Section L, where these workdays began. Much of the vegetation removed was sweet bay, which is remarkably persistent and continues to send up shoots which obscure and endanger monuments.

Why not join us for a couple of hours sociable exercise? We **meet by the chapels at 10 am** and work until noon, with a break for elevenses, but you need to bring your own refreshments while Covid restrictions are in force. Put the last Saturday of the month in your diary, as the next dates are **25<sup>th</sup> September, October 30<sup>th</sup> and November 27<sup>th</sup>** (note - there will be no workdays in December or January). You can work at your own pace and tools and gloves are provided.

Some Covid restrictions remain, such as keeping contact details for track and trace and observing social distancing. Please check our website for the latest information.

### Weekly Health Walks

We are very pleased to announce the re-commencement of these walks, as from **7<sup>th</sup> September**, although some Covid restrictions continue to apply. Please check our website for the latest information.

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. They are not gruelling walks and aim to be informative and sociable.

### Future Events

#### Walks

On **Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> October at 11.00 am**, Bereavement Services will lead their ever popular **Heritage Trail**.

### Open Doors

We regret that this event has been cancelled due to the continued Covid restrictions.

### Talk

On **Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> November at 7.00 pm**, the annual Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture - **The Cemetery Year** - will be delivered by **Gordon Hindess** of the Friends of Cathays Cemetery. There is a £5 entry charge for this illustrated talk.

At the present time, we are yet to secure a suitable venue, compatible with our needs and Covid restrictions, so please check our website 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>

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).