

Another Unusual Season

Apart from one light and short lived dusting, we have seen no snow. Rather, it has been fairly mild, with February heading for a record average temperature. As those of you waiting for some dry weather to give their lawn a first cut will recognise, it has been pretty wet, with February setting a record for rainfall with a week to spare! Mild and moist is just what fungi like, so there have been fairy rings to see ...



Knowing that Winter sometimes has a sting in its tail, we hope that we are not tempting providence by saying that it has been more like Spring. Certainly the response of nature would support this view.

We mentioned the first primrose in our last issue but, by early January, lots of individual plants could be found scattered all over the Cemetery and, by early February, the first "carpets" could be seen. Part of one is pictured below.



By the end of January, the first crocuses were appearing and giving a wonderful display in the most westerly corner of Section N. This patch has expanded year on year and has jumped

across the paths into the adjacent sections.



Crocuses in Section N

While it is not clear how these crocuses got started here, other flowers clearly owe their existence to deliberate planting on individual graves, as in the case of the snowdrops, near the Allensbank Road perimeter, shown below.



Bulb planting by schoolchildren explains this clump of daffodils by the chapels ...



And it is not just the flowers that make it seem like Spring. In the first week of February, you could find blossom on the many bird cherry trees and on one of the ornamental cherry trees.

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Bird cherry and ornamental cherry blossom

Early signs of Spring can also be seen on deciduous shrubs in the form of budbreak and the development of new leaves, as in the elder close to the site of the former Catholic chapel. Budbreak occurred here in late January, while fully formed leaves were visible by mid February, when the picture below was taken.



The natural environment does not always bring good news! What is probably the largest sweet bay in the Cemetery, a multi-trunked specimen, shed a couple of those trunks, as shown below.



Closer inspection of the stump showed that this was not the first trunk to fall, but part of a long term regeneration process on quite an old stump. Because of the nature of multi-trunked

trees, there are bark inclusions where adjacent trunks touch at the base. There is no bond but the joint comes under increasing pressure as the limbs expand. These inclusions also attract debris which rots and encourages disease. Both of these factors were evident in the present case. The final straw in this case was probably the weight of water on the branches, following prolonged heavy rain. Of course, if you are looking for fragrant leaves for culinary purposes, the fallen limbs make them easy to collect for a while.

A couple of issues ago, we reported on a clump of fir trees that had quite suddenly started to die. On diagnosis of the problem, it was considered prudent to remove the sick plants, so now we are left with a pair of big stumps ...



Winter Miscellany

On 29th January, about fifteen members of the Friends accepted an invitation from the Cardiff University Library to find out more about the Barbier Archive and its archive service in general. The Friends have a particular interest in the Barbier Archive, having made early contact with members of the family and in being a catalyst for bringing the holders of the family documents/artefacts and the library together. The university archive is not for the exclusive use of the university and the library works continually to make its contents more accessible generally.

Before the National Library was established at Aberystwyth, Cardiff Council had ambitions for it to be sited in the city and had built up a

collection of rare books. These now have a home in the university library. It has also taken in many private collections with important historical and research value. The Barbier Archive, having been carefully and comprehensively collected by the family, fitted well into the university archive criteria for acceptance. On the family side, the size of the archive and the expanding family tree were creating problems and there was a desire to ensure that it was kept together, in a professional manner, and more readily available for research. The university library was able to meet this objective.

If you have been on one of the Cemetery Heritage Walks, you will have visited the Barbier plot in Section I, but primarily to see the CWGC headstone of Jacques de Guelis, the SOE hero. Jacques is buried here because he was a grandchild of Paul Barbier, the head of the family in Cardiff. A Frenchman, Paul was the first Professor of French at the newly established University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, in 1883. His own life was colourful and he had a large family, most of whom have interesting life stories. Because of this, the archive should prove a ripe source of material for anyone looking for a research project or just an interesting story to relate.



De Guelis headstone in Barbier plot

The members of the Friends who visited the archive are very grateful for the warm

welcome, the interesting talks by Alan Hughes (Head of Special Collections and Archives) and Hanna Diamond (Professor of French History, School of Modern Languages) and the opportunity to browse a selection of the archive material.

No matter how often you visit the Cemetery, it can still surprise you with something that hasn't caught your attention before. For example, this sculpture graces the top of the memorial to the Mathias family in Section M:



This is a particularly fine carving and, somewhat unusually now, still has all of its fingers! Current rules on the style and size of memorials means that we will not see the like again. Such memorials are, therefore, an important historic record and the finest examples deserve to be looked after. Being in a relatively open location, this one has attracted less lichen than many. Once grime from polluted air seemed to be the enemy but, now, lichen is a bigger concern. Could it be that this is perversely encouraged by cleaner air?

And what of the Mathias family? This is one of the many stories waiting to be researched, but the memorial speaks of wealth, as does its proximity to a main drive, so there must be something of interest here.

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There was some discussion at the AGM of a developing problem due to people getting older. Much of what the Friends do - guided walks and talks, the Tuesday walks and this newsletter rely heavily on people in their eighties. Unless this changes, with the introduction of some younger blood, with the time and inclination to help with these tasks, it must be anticipated that they will disappear within the next few years. Taking the Tuesday walks as an example, when they started there were about four regular leaders taking turns, providing cover for emergencies and ensuring that there was what was then deemed an essential minimum of two leaders on any walk. We now operate with two regular leaders in their eighties and fairly often with only one on any particular walk. The billed "every Tuesday" is an increasingly precarious claim. But once it becomes an unreliable offering, it will fail.

Even if you feel unqualified to help, be assured that no previous experience is necessary: there is plenty of help available and you can ease yourself into it. As the saying goes, 'any fool can do it' - the proof being the two people currently doing it! The main qualification is a willingness to give it a go, coupled with some spare time ... and, hopefully, a few more active years in the bank!

Spiridion

Part 1 – Beginnings and The Family

We are grateful to Alison Botterill whose enquiries into the possible mounting of a blue plaque unearthed an English translation of the incredible story of the person best known in Cardiff as Spiridion. His legacy in Cardiff can still be seen today.



Clock on tower of former St David's Hospital, in Wellington Street, Canton

The first parts of this serial story are based on the handwritten biography of his early life, written in the 1880s. This was subsequently translated, restructured and edited by his grandson in 1911, still in hand-written form. At some later date it was typed and may have been modified at this stage too. The document has many footnotes, which were added by the grandson and subsequent hands, that clarify the historical context, etc.

Wladyslaw Antony Kliszczewski was born on the 26th December, 1819, in the village of Winiary, in south-east Poland, in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. While he was still too young to remember, the family moved to an estate, which his father purchased, at Naglowice, some 50 miles north of Krakow. However, they were not there long before a disastrous fire resulted in a heavy financial loss and forced them to move again, to rented property at Ilza, midway between Krakow and Warsaw. Wladyslaw was saved from the fire at Naglowice by being thrown from a window into the thick snow lying on the ground at the time. It was Ilza that he remembered best as his generally happy childhood home.

His grandfather was Felix Kliszczewski,

renowned to have been a crack shot with the pistol, a skill reinforced by the tale that, at a dance, he would shoot the high red heels from his wife's shoes while she was dancing. His wife, Christina, was noted for her courage and stern resolution and came from Galicia, a region that straddled today's Poland/Ukraine border. Felix saved the life of a Polish hero, General Kosciuszko, by hiding him on his farm from the Russian cavalry. Despite being tortured, he refused to disclose where the General was hiding. The torture method is described thus - "the soldiers removed the flints from their pistols and inserted his thumbs in the jaws of the pistol lock and screwed the jaws together until the thumbs were crushed out of all shape." Not long after this event, General Kosciuszko's reassembled army routed a much bigger Russian force.

Wladyslaw's father, Peter, born in 1788, is described as "a Pole of noble birth" - but there is no indication of a title or of how or when ennoblement occurred. But there is no doubt that he inherited his father's patriotism. While he was good-hearted and generous, he also had a short temper. His mother, Ludwika, by contrast, had a gentle and pious disposition. Her brother had been an officer in the Polish Lancers and had served under Napoleon and, later, accompanied him to exile in Elba.

Wladyslaw had three brothers and three sisters. His eldest brother, Josef, was born in 1811, reputedly of similar temperament to his father, but inclined to be lazy. He married the daughter of a French officer who had been in Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

Wladyslaw's eldest sister, Louisa, was born during the winter of 1812-13 when the French were retreating from Moscow, and Poland was over-run by Cossacks. She was something of a psychic, making predictions and seeing visions, an ability attributed to a comet which appeared when she was born.

The second brother, Jakob was born in 1818.

Wladyslaw recalls a mock duel with his brother which resulted in a gash in his own thumb that left a permanent scar and blow to Jakob's head that left a permanent dent and a stammer. Jakob married the daughter of a colonel of the Polish National Army, and one of their children, came to Britain in 1868, dying in Newport in 1911.

The third and younger brother, Spiridion, was born two years after Wladyslaw, but died while still a baby.

Wladyslaw's second sister, Julia, must have been born around 1824, but we do not have a precise date. Although she married and had two children, she died when they were young. The youngest sibling, Eleonora, was born in 1827. She married, by special dispensation of Pope Pius IX, her sister Julia's widower. Together, they had one daughter.

Wladyslaw had a special affection for his baby sister, with whom he managed to keep in touch. He was very grateful that in 1883, he was able to travel to Krakow to meet Eleonora. He would have loved to have spent his final years in his homeland, but this was not to be.

The early part of 19C was a turbulent period in Poland's history. With the final defeat of Napoleon, the Treaty of Vienna in 1815 redrew the political boundaries in Europe. France gave up the territory it had gained, but the major powers also made some gains. Poland's cause had perhaps not been helped by the fact that many of its citizens had fought on Napoleon's side. Austria acquired a slice of Poland south of Krakow, Prussia absorbed north-eastern Poland, taking away access to the Baltic, and Russia acquired a large area north and east of Warsaw. There remained a Kingdom of Poland, centred on Warsaw and made up of an amalgam of self governing 'states'. Krakow, where the borders of Austria, Prussia and Poland met, was granted the status of independent city state. Poland's borders were constantly breached by its more powerful neighbours and, particularly, the area

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familiar to Wladyslaw was infiltrated by Russians, who occupied governing posts, abolished the free press and, in the form of Cossack soldiers, threatened the people and plundered the land.

By the end of 1830, the Poles had had enough of the broken pledges and the tyranny of the Russians and the Kliszczewski family had been forced to leave Ilza for another rented property at Bokrzyce, about 30 miles from Krakow. On the 29th November, the National Government reasserted its authority and, the following day, Russian troops were expelled from Warsaw. This news reached Bokrzyce, by courier, on 4th December, with a request to Peter Kliszczewski "to summon the village together and to announce to them the outbreak of the Revolution." Peter did just that, bidding them to do their duty as Poles and getting a strong patriotic response. A few days later, every man in the village filed through the house, past Peter dressed in full National costume, his sabre hanging at this side, to swear before God that they were ready to suffer and die for their country.

The following day, Peter, took several of the men, and surrounded the barn in which some Cossacks were billeted, demanding their surrender. The Russian Officer ordered his soldiers to open fire, but they failed to hit any of the Poles, who had taken good cover, and blazed away until all their ammunition had gone. The soldiers were left with no option but to surrender, and their weapons were distributed amongst the Poles. Similar actions soon cleared the country of dispersed small pockets of soldiers, while larger units withdrew to the east to join the main Russian army.

Josef, a promising art student in Warsaw, joined the 1st Polish Legion and, despite being wounded in February, continued to serve until the uprising was finally defeated. While the Poles were victorious in a number of engagements, both sides suffered significant losses, but the Russians had far greater

numbers so could replenish their forces, while the Poles could not. An epidemic of cholera between June and September, only hastened the inevitable defeat.

During this time, Peter was regularly engaged in skirmishes with the Russians. At one of these near their home, a Polish officer was killed and Wladyslaw and Jakob buried him in the forest near by, marking the spot with a cross. Some time later, the dead man's servant came looking for him and asked for the cross to be removed because he was a Moslem, though a loyal Pole. This indicates the influence that the Turks and Tartars once had in Poland. On another occasion, a drunken Cossack rode up to the house with a requisition for forage. On being refused, he drew his sabre and attacked Peter. The nearest thing to hand to defend himself with was a spit from the fire, with joints of meat on it. A resounding blow full in the face with a mutilated joint left the Cossack on his back and he was easily disarmed. He made a hasty, empty-handed retreat from the village.

Warsaw fell on the 8th September 1831 and the army retreated to lay down its arms in either Prussia or Austria - a better option than surrendering to the Russians. This was the end of the 1830-31 Revolution. For a while, the Kliszczewskis were obliged to put up with the insults and pillaging of the Russian detachments quartered in their district but, otherwise, left alone to lead their daily lives. Things were not helped by the death of Wladyslaw's mother around this time, while Wladyslaw contracted life threatening rheumatic fever. Though he recovered, he was left with a weak heart. The family's much reduced circumstances forced them to move again, this time to Zaleszyce, some 70 miles north-east of Krakow, a place that was to be Wladyslaw's last home in Poland.

Wladyslaw remembers the day he was playing near the house when a ragged, dirty and unshaven stranger, with his left arm in a sling approached. It was only after he asked of their mother that he realised that it was his eldest

brother, Jozef, who they had given up for dead. After the initial elation at his return, Jozef's stay did not increase harmony at home, as he was lazy and often quarrelling with his father. He made no attempt to pursue his talent as an artist.

Soon after this, Peter became anxious about the future of his two youngest sons - the reason for this and consequences that followed on from it is a story for another day ... and our next issue.

Recent Events

AGM

There was a pleasing attendance (who else expects a quarter of their membership in person at such events?) at the AGM, which was held in the Anglican Chapel at the Cemetery on Saturday 27th January, starting at 10.00 a.m. The chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. The papers for the AGM had been sent out by post and he hoped that everyone had received them. There were a few apologies for absence and these were recorded. After noting that the agenda item 3 should read Minutes of the 2023 AGM, these were accepted.

There were three matters arising, all of which were fielded by Carmel Thomas from Bereavement Services:

Strategy - for Bereavement Services, completed in draft. In relation to Cathays, the management plan is primarily determined by Green Flag requirements, which depend on June inspection and assessment

Litter bins - continued improvement or replacement planned

Dogs off leads - thought to have become less frequent, following visits by PCSOs, but Tuesday walkers still see during most walks. More obvious signage planned. It was clarified that the opening of the Cemetery to dogs was the result of Welsh Government directive.

The Chairman reported on another busy and successful year, highlighting:

- the joint workday with Wildlife Trust for South & West Wales and other local groups, installing bird boxes ready for the nesting season
- the Spring Heritage walk, led by Roger Swan, which attracted about 80 people
- the two excellent Spring talks, held in the chapels for the first time, by Rosemary Challoner and Peter Finch
- several guided walks or talks to meet requests from other groups, such as U3A and the WI, and the Midsummer Walk (attended by over fifty people) led by Gordon Hindess
- requests from around the world for information from our continually expanding archives
- three Graveyard Voices presentations, performed by the excellent A48 Theatre Company and scripted the Living Lines writers group, with refreshments served by the Friends
- restoration of the missing shield on the main entrance
- an attendance of some 100 people, pleasingly including about 20 children, at Open Doors, which allowed access to both chapels and vestries and a guided walk
- bird and bat walks
- Autumn Heritage walk, ending with the sale of Cathays Cemetery honey
- representation at the Remembrance Services in both Cathays and Western Cemetery
- an enlightening Bill Mosely Memorial Lecture by Amy Kitcher on the horticultural work of the CWGC

He thanked all those who had contributed to individual events and for the ongoing support of Bereavement Services and the committee and the behind the scenes work of his wife, Linda. He looked forward to another full programme

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of events this year, as outlined in the programme distributed with the AGM papers. In addition, he mentioned a talk to be given in the chapels in April by Nick Davey, Glamorgan Family History Society, which would be open to all.

In his report, the President endorsed the Chairman's report but, to avoid repetition, chose to highlight other aspects of what had been happening:

- thanking Paul Jones (the Chairman) and his wife Linda, John Farnhill and Gordon Hindess for their enormous input to the Friends' activities
- thanking Bereavement Services, particularly Denise Rogers, without whom workdays would be limited, and Carmel Thomas, who organises so much in relation to correspondence, administration, arranging access to the Cemetery, taking minutes, etc
- To Simon Morgan for both his personal support and through the organisations that he represents, notably this year for undertaking the replacement of the shield on the main entrance arch. He also commended the video (including drone footage) of this work on the company's website.
- With the successful completion of this venture, he suggested that attention should now turn to the restoration of the bier house, which he understood to be one of the last examples of its kind in Wales
- Cardiff University School of History, Archaeology and Religion, for the use of their lecture theatre
- the unstinting support of members, with a special mention for Linda Jones, for her behind the scenes support to the chairman

In presenting the audited accounts for the year ending 31st December 2023, the Treasurer noted that the balance on the account had decreased by a little over £4000. This was

largely explained by the cost of the new shield at the main entrance, although the purchase of projection equipment, to facilitate the holding of talks in the chapels, was another significant outgoing. Income from most of the usual sources (membership, donations, publication sales, etc) was down on the previous year - but still well above routine expenditure, within which insurance had increased to reflect a move to more comprehensive cover. The Treasurer noted that quite a few members were still to amend their standing orders to reflect the increase in subscriptions from 1st January 2024.

There was no competition for officer or member posts on the Trustees, all nominees were duly nominated and seconded and the new committee was elected unanimously. John Farnhill announced that he would not be standing for the post of Treasurer next year. Ruth Saunders, who had been a co-opted member, now becomes an elected one, so the trustees are now:

Chairman: Paul Jones

Treasurer: John Farnhill

Trustees: Sue Clancy, Jean Sanford, Ruth Saunders, Margaret Smith, Ivor Lippett, Paul Nicholson (Honorary President) and Des Sanford.

Carmel Thomas gave an update on behalf of Bereavement Services, thanking the Friends for their continued support. The Cemetery had again gained the Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards and applications for these awards for the current year have been submitted. It was noted that this year would see a more detailed review, including interviews with the Friends. The chapels continue to be used for weddings, and funerals, and more groups are using them for meetings and performances. They are now also used by the Council for meetings, training, etc. Particularly because of the latter, the possible provision of wifi is being investigated. Maintenance under the Community Payback scheme had resumed after the recent hiatus,

though currently at a lower level than before. She was pleased to note the involvement of local schools at the Remembrance Services both here and at Western Cemetery. Bereavement Services are continuing to look into improved temporary lighting around the main entrance and chapels, to facilitate meetings during the dark evenings. In response to a question about the possible impact of Council cut backs, Carmel confirmed that there has been no review of the position on maintenance at Cathays Cemetery.

The last two items on the agenda were taken together, the most significant points being:

- Concern was expressed about the degree of dependence on members in their eighties for many of the Friends' activities to function and that longevity needed to be recognised. While it was recognised as a common problem for small voluntary organisations, it was suggested that social media should be used and that there should be a drive for volunteers this year.
- An update on numbers using the Friends' social media sites was given - on X (Twitter) numbers fluctuated but were currently around 600; on Facebook numbers were up a bit to 653.
- There had recently been a problem in accessing the Friends' website, by people using Edge as their browser. This has now been resolved after the matter was taken up with Microsoft.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

There's just one workday to report on since our last issue. It was a day for saws, loppers and secateurs, cutting back shrubs that were encroaching onto paths, taking off the epicormic growth from a lime tree and clearing overgrown graves.



Workday action

Sometimes we uncover something unexpected - like the left over debris from a party ...



The bottles and cans were a relatively old style, so had been hiding for some time.

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. You can work at your own pace and tools and gloves are provided. So put the last Saturday of the month in your diary, as the next dates are **30th March, 27th April, 25th May and 29th June.**

Tuesday Walks

All are welcome on these weekly walks, which are not strenuous and concentrate on finding the seasonal highlights around the Cemetery, while being informative about the history of the Cemetery and those buried in it. These sociable walks, which last about an hour, start just inside the **gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning.** The socialising continues afterwards over tea or coffee in a local cafe.

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Future Events

Talks

The venue for our talks is the **Anglican chapel** - on the right when you enter the **main entrance to the Cemetery from Fair Oak Road**.

On **Tuesday March 19th at 7 pm**, **Martyn Swain** will present the fascinating story of **Moses White** and his family. You can get a flavour of the talk from the summarised tale on page 6 of our December newsletter.

On **Tuesday 21st May at 7.00 pm**, **Rob Pickford** will give a talk on **Reversing the Decline of Nature in Cardiff - the Approach of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales**. Rob takes a keen interest in the Cemetery, particularly its biodiversity, and he was instrumental in getting the bird boxes into the Cemetery a year ago. A fascinating talk is guaranteed.

Walks

The walks will start just inside the **main entrance in Fair Oak Road**.

On **Sunday April 21st at 11 am**, the **Heritage Walk** will be led by **Roger Swan**, on behalf of **Bereavement Services**. This walk will provide an excellent introduction to the Cemetery and some of those buried in it.

On **Tuesday June 18th at 7 pm**, **Gordon Hindess** of the Friends of Cathays Cemetery will lead the **Midsummer Walk**. The primary aim will be to present the results of more recent research into the residents of the Cemetery, so you can expect to hear something new.

Other Events

The **A48 Theatre Company** will again be performing to **new scripts by the writers of Living Lines** on a guided walk around the Cemetery on **Tuesday 2nd July at 7 pm**, **Thursday 4th July at 7 pm** and **Sunday 7th July at 2 pm**. There will be a small charge for these events. Further details, including online booking arrangements, will be available closer to

the time on the Bereavement Services' website, the Friends' website, social media and posters on the Cemetery gates. These events are very popular and, with a limit on numbers, early booking is recommended.

Publications

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

Cathays Cemetery on its 150th Anniversary
Hidden Histories: Tales from Cathays Cemetery

Themed guides

These booklets are sold at events:

Another batch of Murders at Cathays
Builders & Architects at Cathays Cemetery
The Five Legs of Cathays
Restoring the Chapels at Cathays Cemetery
Sportsmen in Cathays Cemetery
Doctors & Men of Medicine
Exotic Trees in Cathays Cemetery
Cathays Cemetery Tree Trail
Cardiff Mayors in Cathays Cemetery
More Mayors & Councillors in Cathays Cemetery
Circuses & Funfairs in Cathays Cemetery
Wild Flowers in Cathays Cemetery
Another Bunch of Wild Flowers
Men & Women of The Church
Mentioned In Stone - - Non-CWGC Graves
The Cemetery Gates
Queen Victoria's Wars in Cathays Cemetery
The Crimean War in Cathays Cemetery
The Boer War in Cathays Cemetery

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