

Seasonal Surprises

Through July, we were all wondering when we were going to see proper summer weather. While the general impression was of a cool period, it actually turned out to be warmer than average, because night time temperatures were elevated above the norm. There has been no parched grass - the lawned areas have remained a lush green throughout. New leafy growth on trees being fed by an abundance of sap, resulted in branches bending low, in at least one case, pictured below, touching the ground and reducing the effective width of a drive. This was quickly rectified by Bereavement Services.



Elsewhere, headroom was restricted and this provided plenty of work for the last workday before the summer break.

It seems that whatever the weather, some plants will always thrive. For example, this year, we have seen nice patches of oxeye daisy...



... and valerian, in a range of shades from white, through pink to red:



The Conservation Areas were not to be left out, with ragwort and rosebay willowherb (which you might know as fire weed) providing splashes of colour - sometimes, side by side, as here in Section H:



In some cases, the intervention of human hands helps the floral display. There are always roses to be found during the summer, like these in Section W ...



... while, on the next page, the wildflower beds on the Fair oak Road side of Section V, responded well to the damp weather:

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The two beds had slightly different seed mixes and this is apparent in the photographs. Sadly, a week after these pictures were taken, some mindless individual thought it was a good idea to track down the middle of the beds from end to end!

The blossom season is surprisingly long, with one of the last trees, *atalpa erubescens purpurea*, giving its best well into July, 6-8 weeks after its cousin, *farges catalpa*, which is already displaying its seed pods. *Erubescens purpurea* is a cross between the Southern *catalpa* (sometimes called the American or Indian bean tree, reflecting its discovery in Indian territory in North America) and the Chinese species, *farges catalpa*. Young shoots and opening leaves of the cross are blackish-purple, though the leaves later turn dark green. The bell-shaped white flowers also have purple marking, so it is not hard to see how it got its name. As if to emphasize how late the flowering is, one of the Cemetery specimens, in Section T, could be seen adjacent to a rowan with ripe red berries ...



While wild, natural growth in the Conservation Areas is wanted, in places there is currently what might be regarded as too much of a good thing! But this has some compensation - blackberries are even more abundant than in previous years and the picking season was well

under way before the end of July. Don't feel guilty about picking some - there are plenty for birds, small animals ... and humans.



The stump of a recently felled cherry tree in Section T is sporting a splendid bracket fungus:



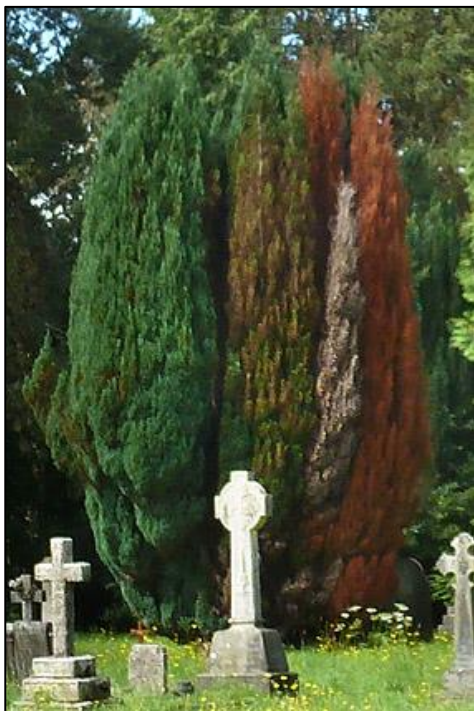
It is probable that this fungus was responsible for the demise of the tree. Bracket fungi attack the heartwood, causing decay and rot in the host tree, and produce their bracket-shaped fruiting bodies on the outside of the trunk. Progressive weakening of the tree, which was witnessed in this particular case over the last few years, leads to dying branches, which can combine to cause failure of the tree completely. In this case, the tree was felled for safety reasons.

Our last newsletter noted the sighting of a stoat. We are happy to report another sighting and are grateful to Peter Price and his nimble camera work for this confirmation:



In the absence of a closer view, being able to see the whole body and/or observe it running, we cannot yet be certain that it is not a weasel. Both are mustelids, which means having a long body and short legs, and are related to otters. Weasels are smaller than stoats ... but we are unlikely to get two standing side by side for comparison! They are surprisingly widespread and happy in lots of habitats including woodland, grassland, and moorland. They are carnivores and include voles, mice and small birds in their diet - not to mention slow worms, in the Cemetery!

Towards the end of the period, this multi-trunked fir in Section R had taken on a strange colour scheme ...



.. but it is not yet clear why. It looks strangely

artistic, but is probably signifying something more sinister!

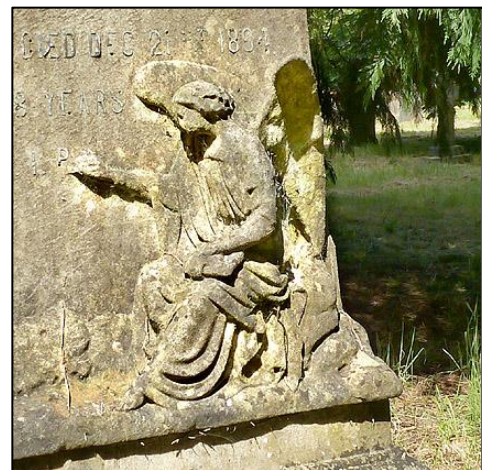
Summer Miscellany

It was nice to see that the Famine Memorial had been cleaned. The Great Famine is significant in Cardiff's history, because of the large number of desperate people who came to Cardiff. Look at the names on the memorials in the Catholic areas of the Cemetery and the connection is clear.



Newly cleaned Famine Memorial, with close up of one face

No matter how often you visit the Cemetery, there is always something new to discover or, at least, notice for the first time. The deterioration of memorials is inevitable, with the loss of not only the inscription record, but also some fine examples of the monumental mason's art. An unusual example in Section H is shown below, spotted when the light conditions were favourable:



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It finally had to be accepted that our wonderful monkey puzzle tree was not going to recover and the heavy duty tree surgeons were called in, with some impressive equipment, like the vehicle that appeared able to carry its own size and weight in tree trunk. One or two other dead, large trees were also removed, including one Corsican pine left as a large stump, to become a high-rise bug hotel.



The "mechanical ant" and high-rise bug hotel

Once again, nature has been at the fore of activities. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasized as, if the Cemetery is to have a long term future, it has to depend on purposes other than that for which it was primarily intended in the middle of 19C. Its role in supporting biodiversity, as a relaxing green space, as an arboretum, as a heritage and educational resource is now predominant.

June kicked off with a butterfly walk organised by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. Among the butterflies identified were a small copper, a small white, a holly blue and a large number of speckled woods.



Speckled wood and holly blue butterflies

Also seen was the fifth stage larva (caterpillar)

of a tortoiseshell butterfly, where it had folded up a nettle leaf by dragging the edges together with its silk, as shown below:



In truth, this was a much broader nature walk, thanks to the diverse expertise of the group. Other notable spots included a common carder bee, a cluster of ants feeding on aphids (would be a welcome sight in many gardens!) and an aptly named swollen thighed flower beetle ...



Just to round things off with a link to the bird walk a couple of weeks earlier, a blue tit family was now out on the tree by their bird box, with the fledglings being fed by their parents on the branches.

Stopping to talk to someone passing through the Cemetery, the Tuesday walk leader was surprised to be told that a pair of beetles were mating on his hat! We are grateful to that visitor, Ian Boostrom, for recording the pair and providing this picture, on the next page, which enabled us to confirm that the couple were in fact grasshoppers:



Soon after the butterfly walk, a Nature Survey (a joint venture with Highfields Church), was conducted in the Cemetery by local ecologist, Peter Sturgess, with ten eager participants. This was a churches-count-on-nature project coordinated by the Caring for God's Acre group. The weather stayed kind and the survey counted over 160 different species of plants and animals, including a pregnant slow worm ...



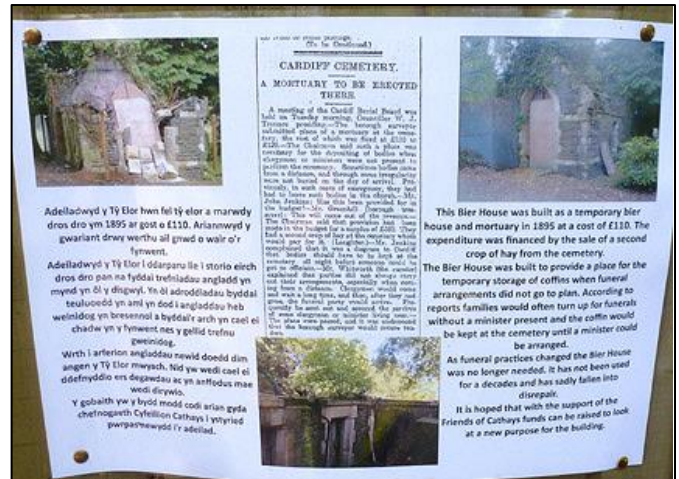
... among several of varying ages, enjoying the proximity of a nearby ant's nest. It was great to get confirmation not only of the presence of slow worms, but also that they seem to be thriving. In an extremely informative and interesting day, another notable find was this orchid ...



While it is still to bloom, we think this is the
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first record of an orchid in the Cemetery unless, of course, you know better!

There has been growing interest in the future of the bier house and we were pleased to see that someone has placed an illustrated poster on the surrounding safety fence, explaining what it is, its history and importance.



Bier house information notice

We are pleased to report that the Cemetery has once again been awarded a Green Flag.

A recent news item reported that a new cycle trail had been opened, linking the main cemeteries in Greater Manchester. Perhaps this is what the underused cycle paths in Cardiff are working towards. But there are still a few missing links before all cemeteries here can be linked!

Spiridion

Part 3 - A Long Way to England

In our last issue, we left Spiridion standing outside the boundary of the ancient Kingdom of Poland, in Austrian Silesia (now part of the Czech Republic), with no clear idea of his final destination.

Initially, Spiridion made for Olmütz (today, Olomouc), where he had an address for some people who would help him. In fine weather and with hospitable country people, he made good progress. At first, many people he encountered

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spoke Polish but, when he reached Olmütz and tried to enquire about the people and address that he had, communications failed, and he soon attracted a small crowd. This drew the attention of two town guards and, when he failed to produce a passport, he was taken to the town jail which was filthy and alive with vermin.

The next morning, he was taken before the Mayor, who took pity on the youth before him. An interpreter was found so that he could be questioned, but Spiridion claimed to be an orphan, with no knowledge of his birthplace. He said nothing of the address which he had for fear of giving away too much of his own story or jeopardising the people who might have given him help. He told the Mayor about the condition of the cell in which he had been kept and the Mayor, wanting still to make further enquiries, took him to his own house, gave him a good meal and then put him in a room in the courthouse. Spiridion wondered about coming clean with the Mayor, who appeared to be a kind man, but he also feared being sent back to the Russians. He couldn't risk the latter so, after dark, he climbed out of a window and hastened out of town, on a road heading south. By the next morning he was more than 20 miles away.

After a few days avoiding big towns, utterly worn out and hungry, he found himself on the outskirts of the small town of Austerlitz (*which gave its name to Napoleon's victorious battle, fought nearby: it is now called Slavkov u Brna*). He approached some farm buildings, hoping to bed down in a barn for the night, but was caught by the farmer and beaten. Coincidentally, a policeman was just riding by and Spiridion was apprehended. His hands were tied, he was tethered to the policeman's saddle and, for three hours, dragged along at jogging speed to Brunn (*now Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic*). He was put into a cell, not clean, but an improvement on the one in Olmütz. He was subjected to a thorough search, cross-examined and all his letters and papers were confiscated. As a political suspect, he was

confined to the town prison for some weeks.

Fortunately, a convoy of Polish prisoners passed through Brunn, on their way to Trieste, and the police decided that he should be attached to the convoy. He was soon in a cart with four or five of his fellow countrymen. It was a relatively uneventful journey to Trieste, via Vienna, Gratz (*both in present day Austria*) and Laibach (*Ljubljana, the capital and largest city of today's Slovenia*) and they were well fed and comfortable on the way. The journey from the Polish border to Trieste was about 400 miles.

In Trieste, they were taken to Fort St. John, where they found a few hundred other Poles. By comparison with other places where he had been confined, prisoners here were reasonably well looked after and Spiridion felt that time passed pleasantly enough. But, after a while, he felt the need to be usefully engaged, so approached the commandant, a good-natured and congenial man. A short time afterwards, arrangements had been made with a local watchmaker and he was taken to him each morning under guard (a corporal and two soldiers), returning in the evening, also under guard. During the day, he was under trust not to escape. The watchmaker was a Slovenian, who Spiridion describes as "a silent old man, never opening his mouth more than necessary, but he did his best to teach me his trade." Spiridion was a keen apprentice and, in a few months, had mastered many of the basics and was making himself useful to the old man.

The months slipped by. Occasionally a few more prisoners would arrive, but none left. One day, he was playing with the Commandant's pet dog when the Commandant approached, accompanied by a stranger who, amused at the dog's antics, stopped and spoke to Spiridion. The stranger was an Englishman by the name of Wood, a friend of the Commandant, who was to become a frequent visitor. Gradually, Spiridion got to know him and to trust him enough to relate his story. Wood told him that, if he could get to England, he would get an hospitable reception

and encouraged him to think of escape.

Just before Christmas 1836, Mr. Wood visited and told Spiridion that he had arranged passage to England on a ship lying in the harbour. Wood had also bribed the soldiers who escorted him to and from the watchmaker's. On the appointed day, he packed his few belongings in a knapsack, which was easily hidden under his overcoat, and did his usual work at the shop. The two soldiers came to collect him a little earlier than usual and, they set off for the fort in silence. Spiridion slowly dropped behind until he reached a narrow street leading down to the harbour, then raced down it as fast as he could. He found the three-masted ship without difficulty.

On boarding, he met the captain, George Elliott, a short bearded man from the North of England. Spiridion's first impression was not good, but he later found him to be a strong character with a kind heart. He handed over a letter and the passage money from Mr. Wood and was directed to hide below, until they were out of sight of the port. Half-an-hour later, they cast off and began moving out to sea.

The ship was the Matthew Plummer, from Newcastle-on-Tyne, designed more for carrying capacity than speed and not for passengers. Spiridion had to bunk down with the seamen in their cramped - and smelly - quarters in the forecabin. The sun was shining brightly and, as soon as the ship was out of sight of Trieste, Spiridion was up on deck. Seeing the sails filling out in the wind, hearing the water crunching against the bows and feeling the salt spray upon his cheeks was an exhilarating and enjoyable experience. When the Matthew Plummer came out of the shelter of a headland and moved out further into the Adriatic Sea, the swell increased and it was not long before Spiridion was overcome by sea-sickness and forced to spend the next few days below.

Despite this, Spiridion felt that the world was opening up to him, the relentless dread of

falling into Russian hands had gone and he had a destination where he expected to have the freedom to do the best for himself. He was just seventeen, but old beyond his years, he thought like a grown man and had gained self-reliance and confidence. The prospect of being left alone in a strange town, reliant only on his own resources, did not alarm him. And it was just as well that he felt like this, for the Matthew Plummer was not heading straight back to England but, for the next few months, planned to trade around the Adriatic and Mediterranean. This would include return visits to Trieste, which Spiridion wished to avoid and, besides, he preferred being busy on land rather than bored and queasy on the ship.

During these months, he visited Dubrovnik, Venice (in his own words, the Queen of the Adriatic), Naples (where he stayed ashore, while the ship was away visiting other Italian ports, earning a little money from watchmaking), Palermo, Genoa and several other ports.

When they put in at Algiers, a relatively new French colony, he decided to stay (against Captain Elliott's advice) while the ship was away for a couple of months. He took service in the shop of a Spaniard but, within a week, was taken ill with a fever. The Spaniard cared little for him and he owed his survival on an old black lady, who he had helped before he became ill. As he got better, though still unsteady on his feet, he would make his way down to the shore to get away from the smells of the town and look out for the Matthew Plummer, which by now was overdue. One evening, he found out how unwelcome Christians were here, when he was cursed, spat on and had dogs set on him. Yet it was as he picked himself up after this abuse, that he saw the Matthew Plummer approaching the harbour and it was not long before he was being welcomed aboard by the Captain and crew.

From Algiers, they sailed to Gibraltar, at one point being chased by two pirate vessels. The mighty rock, guarded by huge warships and proudly flying the British flag, was very

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reassuring. The following day, they left the Mediterranean (the sea of splendid sunsets, to Spiridion) and, apart from a stormy crossing of the Bay of Biscay, the final leg of their journey was uneventful. As they sailed into the Thames estuary, Spiridion was surprised at the maze of shipping that they had to thread their way through. Finally, on August 4th. 1837, they moored just below London Bridge.

Captain Elliott tried to persuade Spiridion to go on to America, where he was bound on his next voyage, but Spiridion had had enough of the sea and was anxious to get back on land. To his surprise and gratitude, Captain Elliott handed back his passage money, saying that he would need it to get started in London. He bade an affectionate farewell to the man who had become such a good friend, gathered up his belongings and went ashore. It was more than four years since he had left home, yet he was not yet eighteen.

In our next issue, we will see how he fared in London and what brought him to Cardiff.

Servicewomen in Cathays 4 & 5

Delmar Griffiths & Maureen Evans

Delmar Griffiths was born in 1923, the daughter of Mr and Mrs W J Griffiths of Cardiff.

She was a Leading Aircraftwoman in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, and died of chronic inflammation of the right kidney on 10th May 1946.

She is buried Plot A1845 in Cathays Cemetery.

Maureen Evans was born in 1922, the daughter of James and Kathleen Evans of Mynachdy, Cardiff.

She joined the Women's Royal Naval Service and served on HMS Goodings, which appears to be a land base near Newbury.

She died on 22nd April 1942 and is buried in Plot EM197 in Cathays Upper Cemetery.



Headstones of Delmar Griffiths (left) & Maureen Evans (right)

The Friends have been able to find out little about Delmar Griffiths and Maureen Evans. Perhaps our readers may be able to shed some light on the short lives of these two young women.

Recent Events

Walk

On **Tuesday June 18th**, **Gordon Hindess** led the Friends **Midsummer Walk**, which was blessed by lovely weather. About 30 people enjoyed a stroll around the Cemetery, which made a point of getting to the area around the site of the Catholic chapel, which has often missed out because of its distance from the start/finish. There were pauses at about fifteen places for anecdotes about the Cemetery and its residents, including tales of sporting prowess, spiritual photography, the raising of a swastika on city hall, Q-ships, a boutique castle and a theatre proprietor, producer and actor.

Other Events

On two evenings and a Sunday afternoon in the **first week of July**, the **Graveyard Voices** were again provided by the **A48 Theatre Company**, performing to **scripts by the writers of Living Lines** on walks around the Cemetery guided by **Roger Swann**.



A selection of the Graveyard Voices characters

The sell-out audiences were treated to varying programmes, but all finished in the Anglican chapel, for a cuppa, a chat, a chance to meet the writers and actors and, of course, the opportunity to show their appreciation for the excellent entertainment. We look forward to more next year.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

Our two workdays in the quarter were quite different. In June, efforts were directed at clearing areas where Graveyard Voices performances were to take place and placing simple grave markers, where no memorial existed. An example of the end result, at the grave of Winfred Fortt, is shown below.



Our last workday before the summer break found us cutting back spring growth over and alongside the drives - one of those jobs where the difference you have made is very clear. The picture on the next page shows the cuttings around just one junction stacked ready for shredding.



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 next dates are **28th September, 26th October and 30th November**. The October workday will probably be in the new cemetery, so check closer to the time. We have a winter break, so the next meeting will be in February 2025. Why not join us for a couple of hours sociable exercise? You can work at your own pace and tools and gloves are provided.

Tuesday Walks

We meet just inside the gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning, for sociable walks, which last about an hour. All are welcome to these gentle strolls, which aim to find the seasonal highlights around the Cemetery, while being informative about the history of the Cemetery and those buried in it. The socialising continues afterwards over tea or coffee in a local cafe.

Future Events

Open Doors

On **Sunday September 8th** from 11 am to 3 pm the Cathays Cemetery Chapels will be opened to the public as part of the CADW Open Doors, the national celebration of Wales' built heritage. See for yourself the restoration work which has been done on these listed buildings, with people on hand to tell you about the Chapels and the Cemetery and to answer your questions. During the day there will be a guided walk around the Cemetery to introduce some of the "residents".

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Walk

On **Sunday October 20th** at **11 am**, **Roger Swan** will lead the **Heritage Walk**, on behalf of **Bereavement Services**. This walk is an excellent introduction to the Cemetery and will start by the chapels, just inside the main entrance in Fair oak Road. The end of the walk will provide an opportunity to buy some Cemetery Honey.

Talk

On **Tuesday November 12th** at **7 pm**, the **Annual Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture** will be presented in the **Episcopalian Chapel** - on the right when you enter the **main entrance from Fair oak Road**. We are pleased to welcome back **Simon Morgan of Mossfords**, who will talk about the **making and replacement of the shield** on the main entrance. Please note that there will be an entry charge of £5 (cash only) for this lecture.

Publications

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

Cathays Cemetery on its 150th 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.

Themed guides (12 - 20 pages) - mostly £1.50 with black & white images or £2.00 for those with colour images. Because of disproportionate postal charges, these booklets have generally only been sold at events. Those currently available are:

Builders & Architects at Cathays Cemetery

Restoring the Chapels at Cathays Cemetery
Sportsmen in Cathays Cemetery
Doctors & Men of Medicine
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

There are also several free publications which can be downloaded from our website in pdf format.

Epitaph

On a memorial somewhere in England:

*Remember man, as you walk by,
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so shall you be,
Remember this and follow me.*

Someone responded by writing on the stone:

*To follow you I'll not consent,
Until I know which way you went.*

Please note that defacing memorials for any reason is unacceptable, so we do not condone such interference with memorials..

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