

Sensational Colours

The blackberry season started so well, but the damp and gloomy end to summer meant that the promise of a bumper crop was never fulfilled. However, other berries thrived, like the rowans, bent to the ground under the weight of fruit ...



Once the fruit had ripened to the optimum, the winged scavengers stripped the trees in a few days and the branches sprang back to a normal level. Rose hips were also abundant ...



Rose hip syrup was once found in most households, but seems to have fallen out of

favour - perhaps surprisingly, when it has anti-inflammatory, anti-ageing and pain-relieving properties, especially in relation to osteoarthritis. You can eat the seeds, which are rich in nutrients and high in vitamin C, or add them to other foods, such as soups and teas.

The experts predicted that the weather that spoilt the blackberry crop would lead to a glorious autumn. They were not wrong. Before the end of September, we were seeing some unusual red shades on the cherry trees ...



This was followed by a full range of mid season colours, like the examples shown below ...



Of course, it was necessary to visit regularly and seek out different trees to take full advantage of the show, which climaxed in a final flourish, with trees like the tupelo, tulip tree and Hungarian oak, shown on the next page.

Friends TOPICAL



While we have had a fungi walk (report on page 9), this focussed on waxcaps, but there have been plenty of other and larger fungi to see around the Cemetery. There have been segments of rings interrupted by memorials, etc and fungal colonies, like the one below found behind Cathays Library.



Autumn Miscellany

Once again, the Cemetery has been awarded a Green Flag. This is not a bureaucratic formality, but requires annual inspection and interviews, including with members of the Friends. The flag-raising ceremony on 8th October was well attended, despite the damp and dismal weather:



It was interesting to see that the

Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as a result of inspection of UK and global archives, has recovered the names of some 11,000 servicemen not previously commemorated by the CWGC, while findings regarding the number of First World War casualties believed to be missing from named commemoration are expected to be published soon. The Friends occasionally raise queries with CWGC and we hope to report good news on these matters in future issues.

The annual Remembrance Service, organised by Bereavement Services, was held at the War Graves plot in the New Cemetery on Tuesday 12th November, led by the Fr James Henley. There was a welcome address by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Helen Lloyd Jones, and "The Last Post" was played by Alan Bourne, Director of Music, RAF St Athan. The service was attended by pupils from Allensbank Primary School, Gladstone Primary School and Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, who all made a direct input to proceedings. Eleven wreaths were laid at the Cross of Sacrifice, including one on behalf of the Friends and the Tuesday walking group, by Jean Sanford. A twelfth wreath was laid at the plaque to Frederick Barter VC by a member of the Barter family ...



After the service, the role of honour was read directly from the headstones in the War Graves plot by the children from the three schools.

We are sad to report the death of Julian Litten

on October 19th, aged 76. He was regarded as England's foremost funerary historian and was very supportive of the Friends, visiting in the early years, contributing to the 150th Anniversary book, delivering the annual lecture via Zoom, at short notice, in 2021, etc. His definitive book, *The English Way of Death*, documented funeral practices since 1450. He founded the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery and 20 years ago drew up plans for his own magnificent funeral including designs for the vault which he had booked there, his coffin and memorial. In the last couple of years, he had a change of heart and chose to join his long term partner in the churchyard at Thaxted. His knowledge and enthusiastic support for other organisations, always given with humour, will be badly missed by all cemetery friends groups.

Spiridion

Part 4 – London to Cardiff and Business Success

In our last issue, the seventeen year old Spiridion had just arrived in London, a strange city in an unknown country, where he knew no one. Up to now, we have relied heavily on Spiridion's personal account. Fortunately, since we started serialising his life story, another document has come to our attention, a paper entitled "Spiridion & Son, Cardiff, 1844-1964" by William Linnard, which appears in Antiquarian Horology, Volume 41, No. 1 (March 2020). We gratefully acknowledge the contribution this has made to the latter stages of our story.

Spiridion found himself on London Bridge, watching the people crossing. Strangely, one thing stuck in his mind - street urchins had collected the shells of oysters, which had just come into season, and built them into grottoes. They placed a lighted candle inside and solicited pennies from passers-by. After a while, it occurred to him to don his *krakuska*, a four-

cornered cap, which was part of the Krakow regional costume. Within a short time, a stranger approached and addressed him, first in German and then in Polish.

This man took Spiridion to his house and then to the offices of the Literary Association of the Friends of Poland, where he was introduced to its Secretary, a Mr Lachszyrma, who had been a Colonel in the Polish Army. He was given some money to cover his immediate needs and, a few days later, introduced to Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, who was the first Marquess of Bute's youngest son. The coincident link with Cardiff was not the only thing to make the Cambridge educated Lord interesting. He was an MP, married to Princess Christine Bonaparte, the niece of Napoleon Bonaparte, and, most importantly, an advocate of Polish independence and sympathetic to eastern European nationalist aspirations, giving much time and money to this cause. It was Lord Stuart who apprenticed Spiridion to the watchmaking firm, William Bittner & Pohler at 10 Duke Street (remember this street name!), St. James. Bittner was a fellow Polish refugee.

During his apprenticeship, Spiridion saw Queen Victoria crowned in Westminster Abbey (28th June 1838), being, as he put it, "up into the roof with some workmen." After completing this apprenticeship, he seems to have taken a sabbatical, during which he turned his hand to "many strange things", including working on the Great Western Railway (which ran its first trains in 1838 and was completed to Bristol in 1841) and drove the Royal Mail Coach from Devizes to Bath. He finally settled down, working for Henry Grant, a watchmaker in Fareham, Hampshire.

In 1844, Henry moved to Cardiff, taking Spiridion as his assistant. In 1848, the young man married Grant's sister Rachel, in Southampton, and, a year later, their son, Josef, was born in Cardiff. In 1851, they had a daughter, Vanda Karolina. In common with Victorian practice, she barely gets a mention

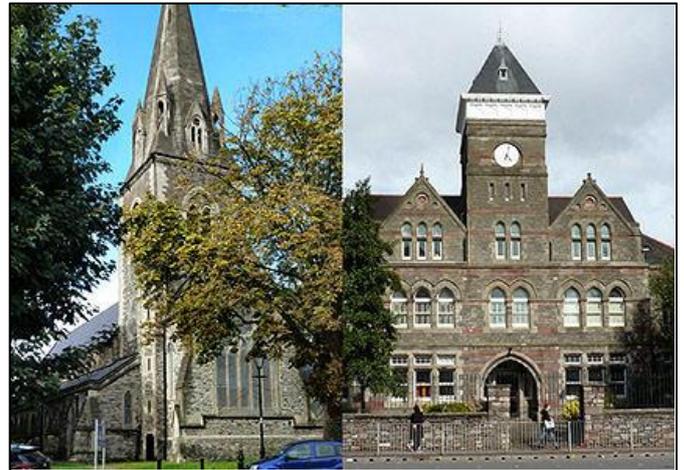
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historic accounts of Spiridion!

Between 1848 and 1855, Grant's business moved around, including addresses in Angel Street, Herbert Street and Duke Street, but Grant had financial problems and Spiridion bought the business. Although Grant became a ship chandler and nautical optician in the docks, he was declared bankrupt in 1859, with Spiridion purchasing that business and stock. Convinced that the name Władysław Kliszczewski was just too difficult for the local people, he decided to trade under the name Spiridion.

So it was as W Spiridion (though this was soon simplified to Spiridion) that he began trading from the premises on the north side of Duke Street, backing on to the Castle walls and close to the Castle entrance. As the business grew, he occupied warehouses in Paradise Place and Frederick Street (looking very different today, as a spur off Queen Street, surrounded by St David's Centre), where stock was stored and workshops were sited. He also took on apprentices and experienced staff, both local and foreign. Jewellery shops were a target for thieves and, on one occasion in 1856, Spiridion's business was burgled via the adjacent premises. Watches and jewellery worth £500 (around £45,000 today) were taken.

The business prospered and expanded into repairing, restoring and supplying public clocks. In 1854, he overhauled a two-dial turret clock at Trefecca College, near Talgarth, which had been made by members of the community in the 1750s. While no longer in the turret, it is understood that this clock is preserved in a museum at the college. Examples of turret clocks that Spiridion installed and maintained in Cardiff include the old town hall (in St Mary's Street, but long since demolished), St Peter's Church in Canton and St David's Hospital (in 1881, when it was built as a major redevelopment of the former Union Workhouse). The last two buildings can still be seen today and are pictured below.



The clock, on the north side of the tower at St Peter's, doesn't appear in this picture, because the church is encircled by trees. But a glimpse through the trees (below left) shows that the inscription on the face has faded beyond legibility. By contrast, at St David's, "Spiridion Cardiff" looks out clearly onto Cowbridge Road East (below right). Sadly, neither clock appears to be working now.



Other examples of these clocks can be found in towns in south Wales, like the the Methodist Chapel in Caerphilly (installed in 1882) and Llantwit Major town hall (provided in 1887, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession).

In 1879, Spiridion secured the agency for the sale of the latest electric master clock, which had been exhibited at the Paris Exhibition the previous year. It was advertised as able to "control any number of dials, of sizes up to 33 inches diameter" and that the system could be seen and inspected in his shop.

Spiridion remained a fervent Polish patriot throughout his life and always hoped that the situation in Poland would improve to allow him to, at least, visit his home once more. He made

several attempts to gain permission to visit Poland, but each failed. On the last attempt, he managed to get the Russian consul in London to prepare a petition for an amnesty, which was to have been presented to Czar Alexander III on his coronation (May 1883). Unfortunately, the viceroy carrying the petition died on the journey and it never reached the Czar.

With advancing years and in failing health, he managed to obtain permission to go to Krakow (at this time part of Austria), where his youngest sister, Eleonora, came out of Russian Poland for what must have been a highly emotional meeting. It was about fifty years since he had last seen her as a small girl: she was now a widow with three grown up daughters. While he didn't get into Poland, the hill city allowed him a glimpse of his native land.

All of his other siblings, except his eldest sister, Louisa, were dead and he had lost contact with their families. But he did learn that his second brother Jakob, who had left him to travel alone to Krakow many years before, had suffered the fate which their father had feared. He was taken from his home by the Russians and educated and indoctrinated by them. (*One can see parallels with what the Russians have done in Ukraine recently!*) He later became the Magistrate's Clerk at Przedborz in his home country.

One of Jakob's sons, Maurycy, came to Britain in 1868, when about the same age that Spiridion had been when he landed in London. In 1881, we find Maurycy trading as a watchmaker and jeweller under the name Maurice Spiridion, in Commercial Street, Newport. Had his uncle had a hand in his training and been complicit in his adoption of the Spiridion trading name? Or could it be that Maurycy had just taken advantage of his uncle's local reputation?

Meanwhile, back in Cardiff, Josef, who was an accomplished jeweller and ran a well established business in St Mary's Street, merged with his now frail father and they traded as Spiridion &

Son from this time.

Spiridion's own experience on his arrival in London meant that he was always ready to help fellow Poles in Cardiff. In 1885, he met and befriended Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski, who had been born into a Polish gentry family, in 1857. His early life was very similar to that of Spiridion and he had left the country at the age of sixteen, to become a sailor. He was to become famous later as the author Joseph Conrad. Conrad was impressed by Spiridion's early adventures, using some of them in his novels, and became a firm friend of Josef.

Perhaps one of the most notable legacy items left by Spiridion is the 'Dragon Clock' in the trading hall of the Coal Exchange (now the Exchange Hotel), in Mount Stuart Square, which was built in 1888. This large fusee clock (pictured below) has the name "SPIRIDION & SON" in the centre and its frame is flanked by two ornately carved dragons and has the motto "TEMPUS FUGIT" carved beneath.



A fusee is a cone-shaped pulley with a helical groove around it, wound with a cord or chain attached to the mainspring of antique mechanical clocks. For around 500 years, this simple device was used to improve timekeeping by equalizing the uneven pull of the mainspring as it ran down.

By 1881, Spiridion is described in the census as a master gold/silversmith. His skill and quality

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workmanship was rewarded with a variety of jobs and services for the Council, for example, repairing the Mayor's chain in 1886, repairing the maces in 1889 and supplying commemorative silver or gold keys, ivory mallets and trowels, for use in various formal openings and civic events.

Spiridion and his wife lived above the shop at 29 Duke Street and brought up their children there. Both had married and left home in the 1870s - but the space was well used: the 1881 census shows that they had a live-in servant and two of their employees, an apprentice and an assistant goldsmith, also lived there. The assistant was Rachel's niece, Charlotte Buller.

The merger of the Spiridion interests proved to be a wise move. Spiridion suffered from heart and kidney problems, the latter diagnosed as Bright's disease at the time. Today, the problems would be better understood and more precisely diagnosed. It is likely that he had diabetes and high blood pressure. The affect on his health was slow but inexorable. Despite this, and the concern of friends and family, he continued to work and run the business until a few days before his death. He suffered a heart attack or stroke then, over the course of five days, grew weaker, lost consciousness and died on 17th February 1891. He is buried in a double plot I391/I418, easily found on the west side of the diagonal grass path that splits the Section.

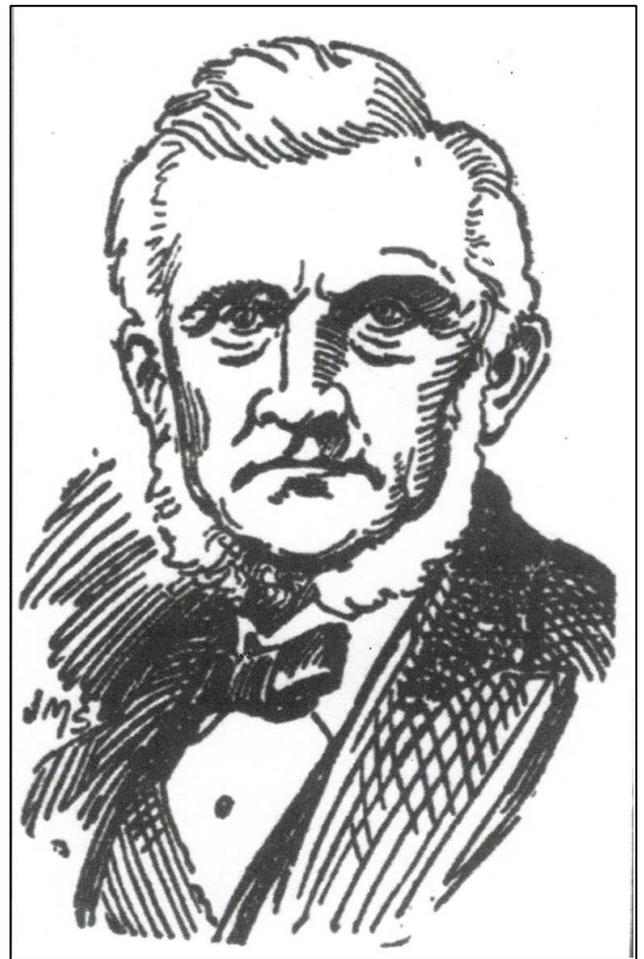


Spiridion memorial

The grey granite memorial has an emphatic air of permanence but, as is not unusual with this stone, the inscriptions are difficult to read. At the base of the shaft of the cross and on the top two tiers of the pedestal is the following:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
WLADYSLAW SPIRIDION
KLISZCZEWSKI
BORN AT WINIARY
GOVERNMENT OF KIELCE
KINGDOM OF POLAND 26TH DEC 1819
DIED AT CARDIFF 17TH FEB 1891
ALSO OF RACHEL HIS WIDOW
BORN AT PORTSMOUTH 11TH JUNE 1815
DIED AT CARDIFF 9TH DEC 1893

Even in death, his Polish patriotism is emphasized in recording his place of birth which had effectively become part of Russia.



Spiridion picture from Western Mail report of his death

We can see from the census that took place about six weeks later how the family responded to the death. We find that Josef and his wife have moved into 29 Duke Street, where Charlotte Buller continues to live and work, now described as a cousin and an assistant watchmaker. Spiridion's wife, Rachel is at 10 Windsor Terrace, Penarth, as the guest of Charlotte Buller. While the names are the same, the age difference tells us that this one must be the mother of the one working for Josef, so is Rachel's sister or sister-in-law. Rachel died in December 1893, to be reunited with her husband in Cathays Cemetery.

While you might expect this to be the end of the story, there was a significant legacy ... but that must wait for our next issue.

The Catholic Chapel Drawing

Back in January 2024 we were contacted by email by Nick Ruff who whilst studying architecture in Cardiff 40 years ago as part of his course was required to measure and draw up a local building. He was then living in Pentyrch Street with four other students and often walked through the Cemetery so he chose to measure and draw the Roman Catholic Chapel on site. He had also obtained access to the interior through site staff. He went on to draw up the front elevation. Not realising at the time that the chapel would be demolished in less than a year's time.

He now resides in Bristol but frequently still comes over to Cardiff at times. He took the opportunity to attach a photo of the front elevation drawing in the email and asked if we would like to take possession of the drawings. We eagerly wrote back that we would and arranged for Nick to drop them off in February 2024 at the Bereavement Services Offices in Thornhill.



Meanwhile we had contact with Cardiff University Library over depositing the Barbier Archives with them, and had arranged to take some of the staff on a themed guided tour of the Cemetery in April 2024. Not missing the opportunity we spoke with Alan Hughes, Head of Special Collections & Archives about the possibility of getting the rather large drawing scanned on one of their high-tech scanning machines, with the view to eventually printing a panel for display purposes at the Chapels.



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Alan kindly agreed and got one of his team, Sarah Hayten in Digital support, to arrange a meeting at their offices in the Cardiff University Library building in May 2024. After a tour of their premises and a look at their extensive range of machinery and scanners, Sarah said she would process the files to let us have a copy. She also very kindly had arranged with Alan to print a copy of the drawings on a foam-backed presentation panel for display in the chapels.



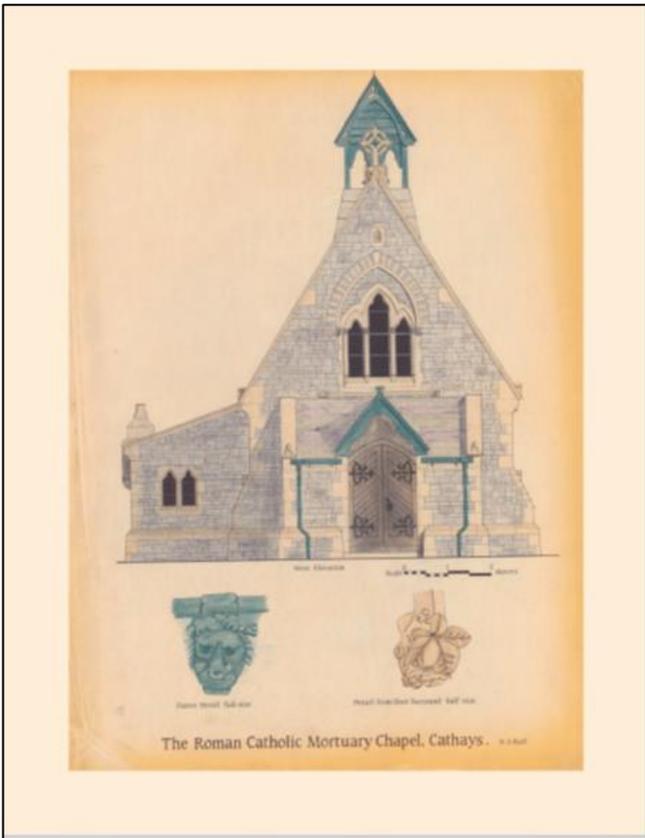
In June 2024 we finally got to pick up the completed display panel, which we took back along to the Chapels for safe storage. After showing them off at the next Friends Committee Meeting it was decided that we should first display them at the Open Doors Event on 8th September as part of a re-display of the Catholic Chapel model that had lain in storage for many years at the house of the original donor, Roger Martin.



Unfortunately due to the fact that the Chapels are listed buildings we are unable to fix the new panel to the walls of the existing chapel and they had to mount on the chairs surrounding the walls of the Chapel. However this does not distract from the detail in the drawing, and we are eternally grateful for the generous support and donation from Cardiff University Library, as well as Nick Ruff.



The panel now makes a worthy addition to the information panel collection and fills a gap in the displays covering a very interesting but long gone part of the Cemetery's past.



Recent Events

Open Doors

On **Sunday September 8th**, the Chapels and vestries were opened to the public as part of the CADW Open Doors programme. It was the first opportunity to see the new mounted display panel drawing and the model of the Catholic Chapel (see story on page 7) There was a steady stream of visitors during the day and about 30 of them enjoyed a guided walk around the Cemetery in the morning.

Walks

On **Sunday October 20th**, **Roger Swan** led the **Heritage Walk**, on behalf of **Bereavement Services**. Despite unfavourable weather, which meant that the walk became a mixture of talks in the chapel and outside sorties during brighter interludes, the event was well attended, with many taking the opportunity to buy some Cathays Cemetery Honey. This was the final walk to be led by Roger and we are pleased to take this opportunity to thank him for his valued support over several years.

On **Saturday November 2nd** there was a fungi walk, held in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. The walk, expertly led by Gareth Stamp from Cardiff Parks Department, concentrated on waxcaps, finding at least a dozen different types, including scarlet, pink (ballerina), golden, oily, parrot, snowy, orange, citrine, butter and smokey spindle. In dry warm weather, the walk was enjoyed by about 30 people and the finds underlined the Cemetery's status as a SINC.

Talk

On **Tuesday November 12th**, **Simon Morgan of Mossfords** presented the **Annual Bill Mosley Memorial Lecture** in the **Episcopalian Chapel**. The talk, entitled "**From Sketch to Stone**", described the research, which started from a photograph of the entrance arches from around 1905, when all three shields were intact, through identification of the coats of arms to finding a suitable image. The missing coat of arms was that of Charles Croft Williams (mayor at the time) and a coloured image on vellum was found. This had to be converted into black and white and then into a 3-D design for carving. The Portland stone was sourced from a particular quarry, to ensure the optimum characteristics for durability and fine carving; then it was down to a skilled mason, still doing the finer detail by hand. Finally, we were shown the preparation and fixing of the finished shield, to round off a thoroughly engrossing lecture.

Our Regular Events

Monthly Workdays

Our October workday, a change from the normal cutting back of vegetation to maintain access, was a very satisfying morning weeding and tidying the WW1 plot in the New Cemetery in readiness for the annual Remembrance Service. Unfortunately, the November workday had to be cancelled by Bereavement Services.

Why not join us for a couple of hours sociable

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exercise? You can work at your own pace and tools and gloves are provided. **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, but note that there will be **no workday in December or January**, so our next dates are **22nd February, 29th March and 26th April**.

Tuesday Walks

Our record of never cancelling a walk because of the weather has been put to the test recently, but is still in tact! But we are fortunate that there are plenty of trees to shelter under ...



Following our appeal for more leaders earlier this year, we are pleased to report that we now have a pool of four... and some new tales to tell. All are welcome to these sociable strolls, meeting just inside the **gates adjacent to Cathays Library at 10.30 am every Tuesday morning** - but there will not be walks on Christmas and New Years Eves.

Future Events

Annual General Meeting

The **AGM of the Friends** will be held on **Saturday January 25th at 10 am** in the **Anglican Chapel** at the Cemetery. Agendas and other relevant papers will be sent out in January 2025. This is your opportunity to influence the course that the Friends follow. If you can't get there but have issues that you

would like raised, please write to us in advance.

Talk

Please note especially that this talk has been given a 15+ rating.

On **Tuesday February 11th at 7pm**, **John Wake**, himself an ex detective, will deliver a talk about "**Death on a Gravestone**". This is the title of a recent book, which he co-authored with M K Jones - *the body a of local politician is found on a gravestone in Wales' largest cemetery ...* The talk will be given in the **Anglican Chapel** - on the right when you enter the main entrance from Fair oak Road. that parking is available inside the Cemetery.

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.

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