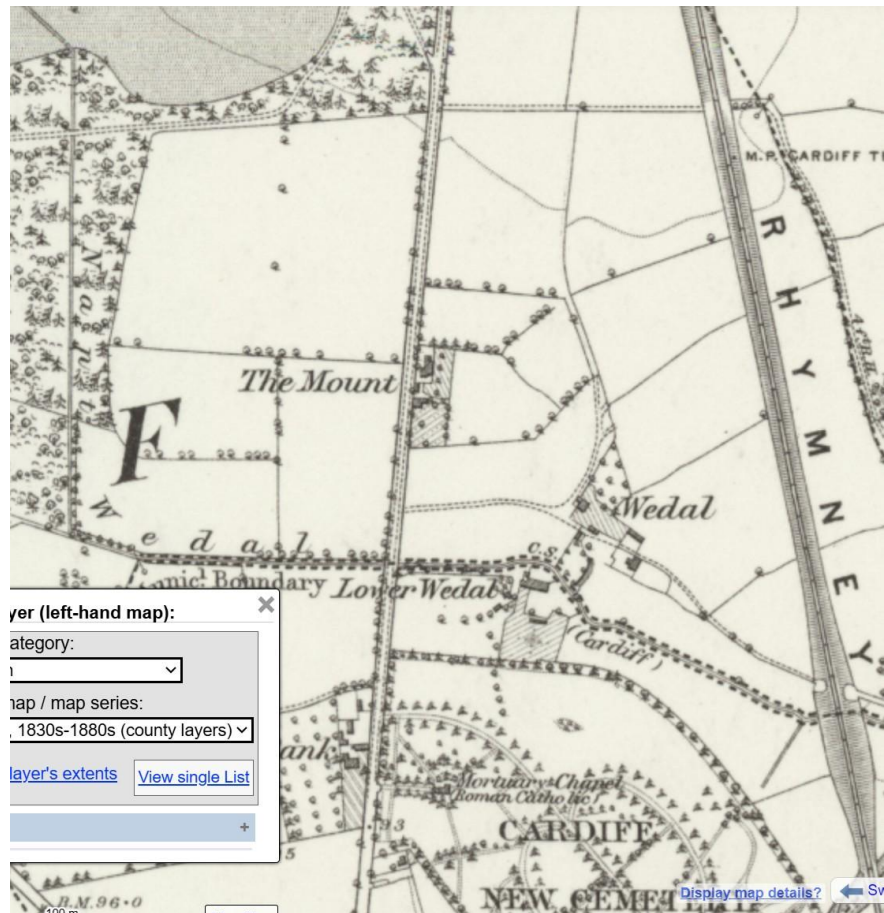# Cathays Upper/New Cemetery Tour

History of the Upper Cemetery

Cathays Cemetery opened in 1859. It holds over 224,000 burials.

By 1891 the population had expanded to 129,000 an increase of 110,000 on the 1851 figure. In 1896 the area between the existing cemetery and the filter beds was examined which was almost immediately obtained and openened as the new cemetery with the section north of the main drive used temporarily as allotments The farms taken over were Wedal and Lower Wedal and a property known as "The Mount". The layout of the new section moved away from the ornate design to more geometric lines.

The Mount

The Mount used to be owned by George Bush, Chief Clerk for the Cardiff Railway Company. He is buried in the lower cemetery. Untruth: The Mount was compulsory purchased and George Bush moved to Washington DC and built a large white house.

His younger brother was Ernest T Bush the photographer. Many of his photographs were made into postcards. Many of these were collected together to form a collection of old postcards of Cardiff by Ernest T Bush. He lived in Splott Road and later moved to Flyde near Blackpool seemingly giving up photography to run a guest house his wife had inherited.

The land for the upper cemetery at Cathays was purchased just after the turn of the Century, but the first burial didn't take place until 1910.

With the advent of the First World War in 1914, and Cardiff being a major Hospital site, Cathays Cemetery was soon the final resting place to the less fortunate victims returning to their homelands. There are 685 war graves in Cathays Cemetery, from both Wars, as Cardiff was a major port and saw a large number of casualties to its Royal Navy and Merchant Navy's personnel as well as part of the 3rd Western General Hospital and schools converted into hospitals in WWI (Splott, Howard Gardens, Albany Road). But there are more less-well-known stories to be told.

In the 1960s there was still a bridge joining the two halves of the cemetery and in 1968 the Parks Committee approved work to repair it costing £3,295. By the early 1970s the railway line had been replaced by the new road, Eastern Avenue. Expenditure for the demolition of the connecting bridge over Eastern Avenue was approved in the financial year 1970-71

Dates of other Cardiff Cemeteries opening:

1936: Western Cemetery, Cowbridge Road West

1952: Thornhill Cemetery opened with the crematorium opening the following year.

2021: Northern Cemetery opened

Irene Steer

Irene Steer, the first Welsh woman to win a Gold Medal at the Olympics. She struck gold in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics as the anchor leg swimmer in the victorious, world record breaking British 4x100 yards freestyle relay team.

She was born in Bute Street near the corner with Custom House Street, Cardiff on 10 Aug 1889. Her father was a draper. By 1901 the Steer family had moved to 32 The Parade. She attended Cardiff High School for Girls, a few yards from her home, from 1899-1906.

She had leant to swim at Guilford Crescent baths but also practiced in Roath Park Lake. She became the first Welsh swimmer to be awarded a Welsh Swimming Association certificate for breaking 100 second for 100 yards in 1907. She won the Welsh 100 yards title for seven years in a row from 1907 until she retired in 1913. Irene Steer was a sporting pioneer just by competing at the 1912 Olympics, the first time women had been allowed to enter the swimming competitions. It would be 96 years before another Welsh woman struck gold at the Olympics when Nicole Cook won the women's cycling road race in Beijing in 2008.

In 1915 she married dental surgeon Dr William Nicholson, who was Chairman of Cardiff City on a couple of occasions. They had two children and lived at 51 Tydraw Road. She was still proudly going to watch Cardiff City at the age of 87.

Irene Steer – far right

Lieutenant Norman Oscar Glossop, Royal Engineers – Japanese POW

Born 28 Jan 1916 in Cardiff. Baptised Feb 19th at St Margaret's Roath.

Captured on 15 Feb 1942 in the Battle of Singapore.   On February 15, 1942, the British, Australian, and Indian garrison surrendered at Singapore, with approximately **80,000 Allied troops captured**. .

He died 29 November 1942, aged 26 in Moji Camp in the south of Japan.

Son of Frederick William Glossop, and of Florence Glossop, of Cardiff. 50, Kimberley Road, Cardiff Father was a printer, originally from Manchester,. Mother originally from Herefordshire.

Seconded to 54 Engr. Stores Coy. King George V's Own Bengal Sappers and Miners

He is remembered on the Singapore Memorial in Singapore.

https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2132214/norman-oscar-glossop/

https://2nd4thmgb.com.au/story/moji-hospital-camps-japan-ww2/

War Graves and Cross of Sacrifice

The cemetery contains war graves of both world wars. Just over a third of the 1914-1918 burials are contained in a War Graves Plot in the portion of Section EB, this plot is on two converging roadways leading to the main entrance. The remainder of the graves are scattered in other parts of the cemetery. After the 1914-1918 War, a Cross of Sacrifice was erected in front of the plot in the angle formed by the junction of the two roadways, the whole forming a triangular island site.

The 1939-1945 War burials are scattered throughout the cemetery in more than 30 different sections. A number of them are airmen who came from the Royal Air Force stations at Cardiff and St. Athan.

There are now nearly 500, 1914-1918 and over 200, 1939-1945 war casualties commemorated in this site. Some 40 French and Norwegian Foreign Nationals are also commemorated here.

Headstones would be all alike, with no distinction of rank, race or religion. They were to be laid out in straight rows with the national emblem or the service or regimental badge plus the rank, name, unit, date of death, age and religious emblem on the headstones. Families could also add a short personal inscription if they wished.

STEPHEN TOMER

Private, 55th Battalion, Canadian Army Veterinary Corps (Service Number 445412)

Stephen Tomer was born on 14 Jan 1888 to Frank and Margaret Tomer of Woodstock, New Brunswick, Canada. He was a Maliseet Native North American. He married Madeline Purley in 1908. He joins up on 13 Aug 1915 and the unit sailed on 30 Oct 1915. He became ill in Feb 1917 in France. In May 1917 he was being treated for paratyphoid B at Addington Park war hospital in Croydon and then treated for appendicitis in October. It seems he never properly recovered and was sent to the No3 Western General Hospital (Cardiff Royal Infirmary) on 30 Mar 1918 but he died of bronchial pneumonia on 6th Apr 1918 in Albany Road Military Hospital (Albany Road Primary School) aged 30. He is buried at Cathays Cemetery (Grave EB 57). His grave is decorated with the Canadian maple leaf emblem. His brother Solomon Tomer also fought in WWI. He is remembered on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial. Commonwealth War Graves Commission record.

Photo of Stephen Tomer – Source: Portraits of 28 Woodstock New Brunswick men who died during the first World War were published in the "All Woodstock Number" of the August 1922 issue of "The Busy East of Canada" (Vol. 13, No. 1). This section was captioned: "Woodstock Boys, Who Made the Supreme Sacrifice in the Great War". Retouching: M. I. Pirie, 2011.

Herbert Ivan Babbage

Private, 23rd Company, Royal Defence Corps (Service Number: 7353)

Herbert Ivan Babbage was born in Adelaide, Australia on 18 Aug 1875 to Charles Whitmore Babbage, a bank clerk and sketch artist, originally from Somerset, England and Amelia Babbage née Barton, originally from Frimley, Surrey. In 1876 his father was convicted of forgery and embezzlement and whilst he was still serving his sentence, Ivan and his mother and brothers moved to Wanganui, New Zealand. Ivan studied to become an artist, initially in New Zealand and then at the London School of Art and later at the Académie Julian in Paris, France. He returned to New Zealand where he had a number of exhibitions before moving back to England again in 1911 and setting up a studio at St Ives, Cornwall.   At the outbreak of WWI Herbert Ivan Babbage enlisted at St. Austell and was posted to Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry with a service number of 3308 and then transferred to Royal Defence Corps. In a letter home to New Zealand

Babbage writs of guarding a viaduct in harsh wintery conditions, presumed to be the Goitre Coed Viaduct, Quakers Yard. Ivan Babbage suffered from bowel cancer and received treatment at 3rd Western General Hospital (Howard Gardens), Cardiff where he died on 14 Oct 1916 aged 41. He is buried at Cathays Cemetery. He is remembered on the St Ives War Memorial and the St. Ives Arts Club Memorial for the Great War. Commonwealth War Graves Commission record. Herbert Ivan Babbage was great-grandson of Charles Babbage, 'father of the modern computer'.

More information about Herbert Babbage:
https://roathlocalhistorysociety.org/2023/03/09/impressionist-painter-herbert-ivan-babbage/

Memorial to Chinese WWII War Dead

N51 30.305 W3 10.951 Section EE

The Memorial was erected in 1961 and refurbished in 2010 with help of a lottery grant.

The local Chinese community would have been well represented in the Merchant Navy, in particular on vessels registered in Cardiff. WWII saw the loss of a sizable number of such vessels.

BBC News article:-

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/south_east/8602713.stm

Sunday, 4 April 2010

Chinese cemetery landmarks in Cardiff refurbished

Ceremonies have been held to mark the refurbishment of two Chinese "cultural landmarks" at cemeteries in Cardiff.

A £6,100 lottery grant enabled repairs to be made to a memorial stone in the Chinese section of Cathays cemetery.

The stone is called "the grave for deceased Chinese friends" and commemorates those who died in World War II.

The grant included refurbishment work on an arch over the entrance of the Chinese section of Pantmawr cemetery.

Ceremonies were held at both cemeteries on Sunday afternoon, one day before the Ching Ming festival which is one of two Chinese festivals when deceased ancestors are honoured.

Project co-ordinator Haowei Cai said: "This is part of the traditional culture of the Chinese. It's important for Chinese people and Chinese society to pay their respects to the dead."

A group of Chinese people in Cardiff decided to erect a memorial stone in the 1960s to

commemorate the war dead and allow relatives to visit and remember them.

Jennifer Stewart, head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Wales, said: "This project will conserve two cultural landmarks in Cardiff and tell the hidden stories of the Chinese community in south Wales for present and future generations to learn about."

Mohamed Abdullah – Riot Victim

The 1919 South Wales race riots took place in the docks area of Newport and Barry, South Wales, as well as the Butetown district of Cardiff over a number of days in June 1919. Four men were killed during the disturbances, three of whom are buried in Cathays Cemetery.

White soldiers returning from WWI felt foreigners had taken their jobs and houses during a period of a shortage of jobs and housing.

Houses were ransacked in Butetown and Adamsdown. A Chinese laundry was ransacked.

Mohamed Abdullah, a ship's fireman aged 21, died in hospital from a fractured skull, after being attacked in Bute Town. Part of their defence was that it may have been a policeman's baton may have caused the injury that killed him. Or he may have received the injury when being carried from the house. The post-mortem results stated that the victim's skull may have been thinner than a normal man.

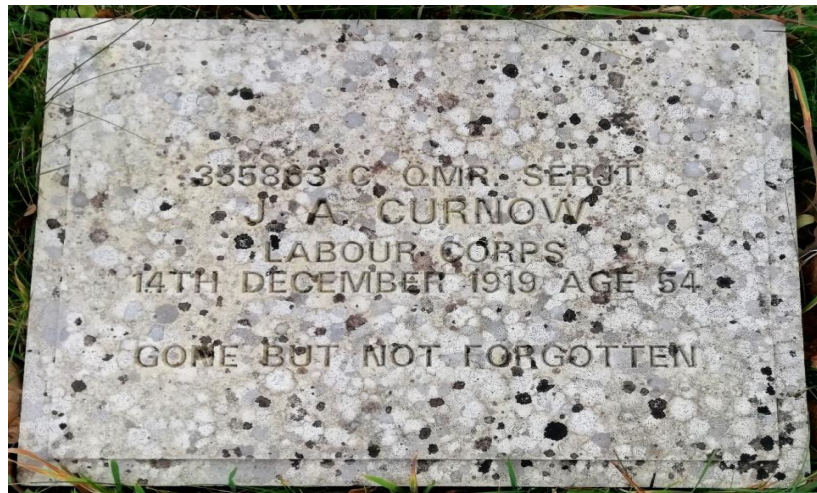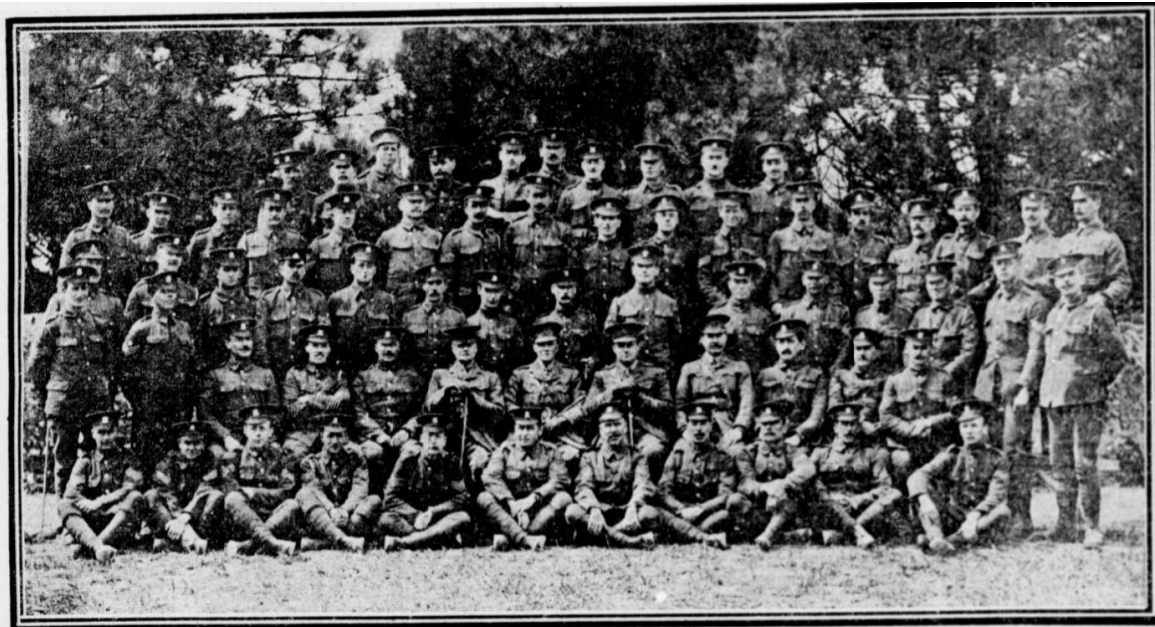Six men were arrested for the murder but were later released uncharged.

JAMES ARTHUR CURNOW

Company Quartermaster Serjeant, Labour Corps (Service Number: 355863)

James Arthur Curnow. Born 1865 in Bedminster, Gloucestershire. Had a long army career, serving in the Welsh Regiment in South Africa (1883-86), Egypt (1886-89), Malta (1889-93) where he married. The family lived at 11 Clive Road, Canton. He was discharged for the first time in 1903 but then when WWI began he enlisted again in Sep 1914 again with the Welsh Regiment and served in France. Suffered from hemorrhoids and sent back to England in 1917. Served a short time with the Labour Corps before being finally discharged in Sep 1917 aged 52. He died on 14 Dec 1919 aged 54 in Cardiff. Qualified for a war grave as his cause of death is attributable to his war service. He is buried in Cathays Cemetery (plot EI 1188). The grave has a pedestal marker often called a Gallipoli Marker as they are used on graves where it may be inappropriate or not feasible to use a standard CWGC headstone. N51 30.347 W3 10.929

https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/2759242/james-arthur-curnow/

The sergeant-majors and sergeants of the 11th Battalion the Welsh Regiment, the Cardiff Commercial Battalion, with the O.C., the second in command, the adjutant, and the quartermaster. Front row—Sergt. W. Beckett, Sergt. L. L. Fullerton, Lance-Sergt. D. Macleod, Lance-Sergt. V. Casade, Sergt-Master Tailor W. Jones, Sergt. W. Russell, Sergt. R. Taylor, Sergt. W. Cummings, Sergt. C. Nind, Sergt. A. Rein, and Sergt. Lane. Second row—Company-Sergt.-Major F. Adkins, C.-S.-M. J. Wilks, O.R., Quartermaster-Sergt. H. E. Radford, R.-S.-M. G. W. Capel, Major H. R. Westmacott (second in command), Colonel F. R. Parkinson (commanding officer), Capt. E. I.·G. Richards (adjutant), Lieut. W. Pointing (quartermaster), R.-Q.-M. Sergt. G. Culberson, C.-S.-M. W. Bevan, (1. of M.), C.-S.-M. A. Thompson. Third row—Sergt. T. Nash, Sergt.-Major Barnes, Sergt. T. H. Lucas, Sergt. A. Boswell, C.-S.-M. C. C. Simons, Sergt. J. J. Morris, C.-Q.-M.-Sergt. T. H. Field, C.-Q.-M.S. J. Phillips, C.Q.M.S. J. A. Curnow, C.-Q.-M.-S. T. F. James, Sergt. C. Davies, Sergt. A. Tucker, Sergt. W. Bailey, C.-S.-M. B. Johns, Sergt. N. V. Shee, L.-Sergt. T. Neyland. Fourth row—Sergt. F. Hunter, Sergt. W. Elliott, L.-Sergt. J. Lindsley, Sergt. J. H. Neal, Sergt. J. Davies, Pioneer-Sergt. W. Spong, Sergt. J. Garman, Sergt. A. J. Roberts, Sergt. W. Ivor Morris (O.R.), L.-Sergt J. S. Smart, Sergt. E. Ayres, Sergt. W. Sage, L.-Sergt. A. G. Barry, Sergt. R. Stevens, Bandmaster W. White, Sergt. S. A. Jones, Sergt. G. Reed. Back row—Sergt. J. Close, Sergt. J. Downs, Sergt. J. Davies, Sergt. T. Fears, Sergt. J. D. Morris, Sergt. F. Reed, Sergt. O. W. James, O.R., Sergt. F. Soulsby, Sergt. J. Close, and Sergt A. Thompson.