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Issue 4

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Progress so far

There was a soft launch for the website at the Heritage Open Weekend in September. The website is still a work in progress and volunteers will be testing it for usability over the next few months. There will be a formal launch at the end of the Project next year.

The genealogy research volunteers have now compiled and checked data for the first 1020 people buried in the Cemetery. This information has been added to the online database. They are currently steadily working their way through the second burials register.

The cataloguing is still progressing well. Volunteers are working on the memorial forms, invoices and correspondence. A very interesting set of documents about German soldiers buried at Oswestry and their exhumation and removal to the German War Graves Cemetery at Cannock has now been catalogued.



First gravestone after a preliminary clean.

Six sections of the photographic grave survey have been completed. Work is ongoing preparing the images for the database.

Digitisation work has now commenced on the burial registers and four volumes have gone to Ludlow Bookbinders to be rebound.

The first gravestone is now away being restored.

The research of the Cemetery's history has now commenced, with the first findings being used as part of the Cemetery tour for the Heritage Open Days. The majority of the Cemetery records are soon to be returned to Oswestry Town Archives. If you are interested in researching the Cemetery's history and learning how to use the Cemetery archives, please contact Sara Downs, Project Manager.



Musical Davies family?

The story of the following individual was brought to my attention by genealogy volunteer, Councillor Sandy Best.

Abraham Davies' death was recorded as accidental drowning by the inquest jury recorded in the Oswestry and Border Counties Advertiser of the 13 July 1870. The poor man's death was attributed to his swimming too soon after eating even though he was a careful, if not a reticent, swimmer. Abraham had been partaking of an afternoon's leisure, swimming with two friends Robert and Jeffery Poole in the river Vyrnwy at Llywntidman. This was an activity that they had shared on several occasions before. It appears that Abraham suffered a sudden attack before he drowned.

It was not the inquest record that tweaked the interest of the researcher, it was what was recorded about the funeral in the following week's paper. According to the Border Counties Advertiser of 20 July 1870 it was reported that:

'Mr Davies' s funeral took place amidst signs of respect and regret more widespread than we remember to have witnessed before in this town. At almost every shop and private house in the town the signs of mourning were shewn, and a very large number of the inhabitants, including nearly every tradesman, followed the body to the grave. The long funeral procession left the late Mr Davies's residence in Church-street soon after noon, and walked by way of The Cross to the Cemetery. Many sympathizing spectators were gathered on the route, and many more at the Cemetery, and it was touching to witness the unaffected regret everywhere displayed.'

Mr Davies, a draper, was remembered for his work in the promotion of musical education, psalmody and his services to the Sunday School. Most of all he was remembered 'for his singular kindness and geniality'.

Oswestry's version of a state funeral for a very well liked man.

Quite by chance, photography volunteer Dave Pass brought to my attention the memorial of Sir Henry Walford Davies KCVO OBE. Born in Oswestry in 1869, he became a composer, who



held the title Master of the King's Musick from 1934 until 1941. The memorial is on his father's grave. His father, John Whitridge Davies is alleged to have been a leading figure in the local musical scene—both he and his brother were involved with the Congregational church in Oswestry.

Abraham Davies's grave is next to that of John Whitridge Davies in section G of the Cemetery. Could it be that they were all related? Hopefully the genealogical research will answer the question.

Walford Davies' memorial—he died and is buried in Bristol.

A call for interesting snippets

Thank you to Dave and Sandy for their contributions to this quarter's newsletter. If you find any interesting gems of information that you want to share, please send them to: sara.downs@shropshire.gov.uk

Heritage Open Days—Oswestry Cemetery Project exhibition and tour

The Project exhibition was well received at the Guildhall. The Saturday was an interesting day, the Project shared the Council Chamber with archaeological finds from the castle and Charlie Chaplin!

In the afternoon, the small but very enthusiastic group who participated on the tour were introduced to some of the characters who came to light during the Project.



Oswestry Town Council and Project staff and other Heritage Open Day eventers with the Cemetery Project exhibition.



Some of the people have appeared in previous newsletters, but there were plenty of new individuals to learn about. The tour visited the War Graves section and graves with unusual headstones.

The image shows a Carrera marble headstone in the shape of a horse. Local history has it that the stone was precariously imported from Italy in a

wooden box with only one wooden support to secure it.

The tour included a chance to visit one of the chapels and see the Bath stone interior that the architect, Hans Price, was very keen to have and cost the Burial Board £103 for the privilege (£4445 in modern money). A slight increase on the £20 (£863 modern money) they wanted to spend on fire brick! The chapel is rarely open these days, with as few as four funeral ceremonies taking place there in a year. The group was also able to view the old bier (now redundant), reputed to be about 100 years old. Grateful thanks go to David Davies & Sons, Funeral Directors, who allowed the Cemetery Superintendent to borrow old photographs showing a bier in use. The images gave some indication of what Abraham Davies' funeral procession may have been like.

About the Project

The Project funded by Oswestry Town Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund aims to:

- Conserve and catalogue the Cemetery records.
- Repair the first headstone.
- Conduct a text and photographic survey of the headstones in the Cemetery.
- Undertake a mapping survey.
- Research the history of the Cemetery and create new information boards and leaflets.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Project Manager (details below).

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