

The Genesis of Highfield Road Jewish Cemetery, Roath Park, Cardiff.

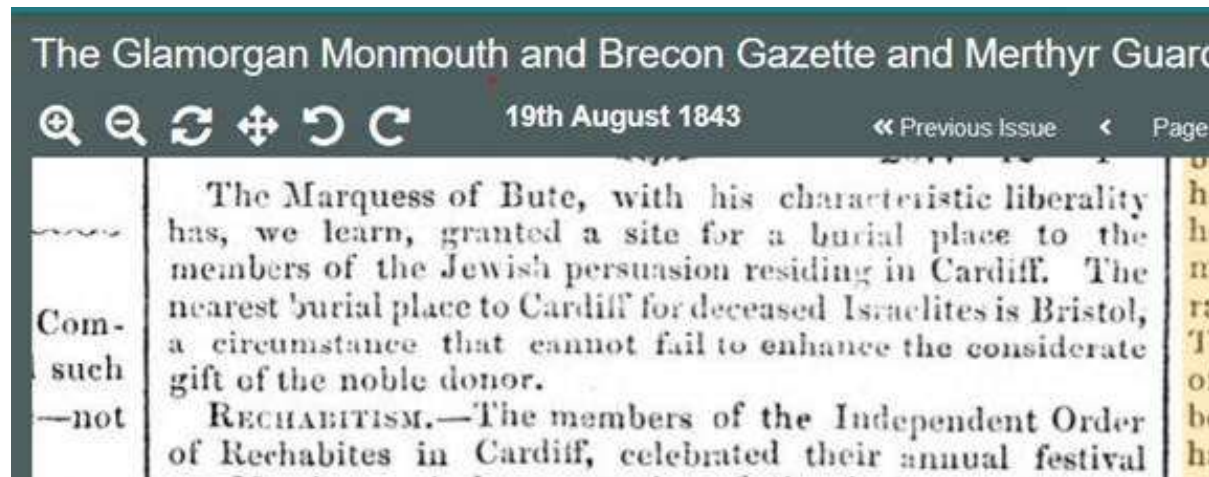
The following items help to establish the origins of this cemetery. Thanks to Cardiff United Synagogue *Chevrah Kaddishah*, Mike Hawkins (JHASW volunteer researcher and John Farnhill (JHASW volunteer and trustee of *The Friends of Cathays Cemetery*) for their help and permission to use this data.

1. The 1841 plaque on the cemetery wall:



The date 1841 is confirmed by the Hebrew date AM 5602. The plaque mentions Mark Marks as President, Solomon Marks as Treasurer and Samuel Marks as Secretary. ***Who erected this and when? Is this the original site? Was it erected to mark the date, thank Lord Bute and/or as a tribute to the Marks family?***

2. A report dated 19 August 1843 in The Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian:



No location is given. Surely at this time Swansea would have been nearer than Bristol?

<https://newspapers.library.wales/browse/3631009> .

3. William Rees (Professor Emeritus in the University of Wales) in his 'Cardiff: A History of a City' (published -second edition - 1969 by the Corporation of Cardiff) states (page 314): "Negotiations were proceeding in 1846 with Lord Bute for a Jewish Burial Ground, allocated as a strip of land alongside the Cardiff-Merthyr Road, near the Black Weir." Rees was writing a popular history. He uses footnotes to expand the text but does not give any sources. He acknowledges in his Preface "the work of the City Archivist of more than 50 years ago". *What had he seen to prompt these comments?*

III. The Reformed Borough

afterwards, in East Terrace, near Charles Street, where a synagogue was opened in 1858. Negotiations were proceeding in 1846 with Lord Bute for a Jewish burial-ground, allocated as a strip of land alongside the Cardiff-Merthyr Road, near the Black Weir. By 1863, the Primitive Methodist cause was represented by a church in Bute Street, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Philip Maddocks, also at Canton (erected 1864).

Highfield Road would have been very remote in the 1840s. Blackweir might have been an earlier site, possibly even with the plaque being moved.

4. There is an 1846 letter in the Glamorgan Estate of Lord Bute collection in Glamorgan Archives (DA/30/100) which is catalogued as correspondence about "Cardiff burial ground". It contains no mention of a Jewish cemetery or Blackweir. The Adamsdown cemetery opened in 1848 on land donated by Bute.
5. Stanley Soffa has advised me that the Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer of 23 July 1847 recorded that Leon D. Walter of Cardiff had donated £ 2. 0s. 0d to an appeal to pay off the mortgage of the Swansea Synagogue and purchase the freehold of their Burial Ground described as "the only one in Wales".
6. John Crichton-Stuart, 2nd Marquess of Bute, died on 18 March 1848. He was succeeded by his son John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, 3rd Marquess of Bute, who was only six months old. Glamorgan Archives hold papers (DBDT) which the National Archives at Kew have listed on their website as "records related to the trusteeship of the property of the 3rd Marquis of Bute when he was in infancy by Debenham and Tewson, solicitors in Cardiff". The 80 page on-line catalogue lists 800 items including leases etc dated from 1749-1876.

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/N13609785>

Having searched this catalogue, there is no reference to 'Highfield', 'Black Weir', 'Blackweir', 'Jewish', 'Marks' or 'burial'. The four references to 'cemetery' relate to "premises situate in a new street leading from the Newport Road to the old Cemetery in Cardiff" (1875), Porth and Litherddu.

7. John Farnhill found a handwritten letter of 1850 by Solomon Marks, in Glamorgan Archives, catalogued as Collection of the Glamorgan Estate of Lord Bute, ref DA/34A/28:

Cardiff May 14th 1850

Sir,

I have taken the liberty of addressing you respecting the piece of ground which the late Lord Bute generously and benevolently gave to us for the purpose of burial. We accordingly took possession of it about 4 years since but it is perfectly useless until we shall have sent the deeds legally entitling us to it up to our High Priest. We have two or three members of our congregation whom their very great age & sickness render liable to a call from their maker at any minute. We are therefore not certain today that the boon granted by his late Lordship may not tomorrow be invaluable & the more especially as that if we were constrained to apply to another Congregation the report that has been spread abroad of our having such a piece of ground would induce them to add to the great expense to which a stranger is always liable for such a privilege.

Trusting Sir, that you perceive the urgent necessity for having the deeds executed without loss of time and that you generously use your best on our behalf

Believe me to remain

On behalf of Congregation

Your obliged and obedient servant

Solⁿ Marks

I will take the liberty of calling on Friday.

(See copy of original letter below)

Cardiff May 14th 1850.

Sir, I have taken the liberty of addressing
you respecting the piece of ground, which
the Late Lord Bath generously & benevolently
gave to us for the purpose of burial. We
accordingly took possession of it, about 4 years
since. But it is perfectly useless until we shall
have had the deeds legally entitling us to it
up to our High Priest. We have two or three
members of our congregation, whom their very great
age & sickness render liable to a call from their
Maker at any minute. We are therefore not
certain to day, that this has been granted by His late
Lordship may not to-morrow be irrevocable,
& the more especially, as that if we were constrained
to apply to another congregation, the report which
has been spread abroad, of our having such a piece of
ground, would induce them to add to the great expense
to which a stranger is always liable for such a privilege.
Trusting Sir that you perceive the urgent necessity

ODA 34A/28

for our having the deeds collected without delay
time & that you will generously use your best
power on our behalf. Believe me to remain

& behalf of Congregation

Your obliged servant

Jos^{ph} Marks.

I will take the liberty of calling on Friday.

8. The earliest reference to be found in the Jewish Chronicle archive is from page 175/1 of March 7 1851:

"CARDIFF.- A correspondent acquaints us that, in consequence of the increase in the number of Jewish families, a synagogue is intended to be built in this town. The burial ground, which is about being enclosed with a wall, was the gift of the late Marquis of Bute."

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9. Report dated 17 July 1852 in the Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian and Brecon Gazette:

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17th July 1852

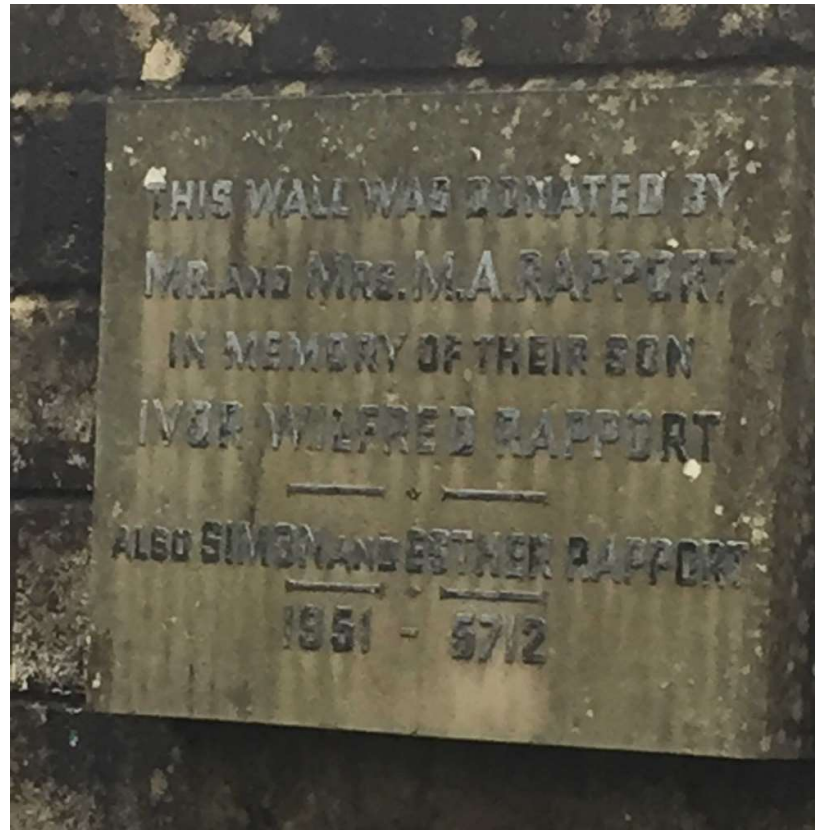
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July 15, suddenly, of apoplexy, at his residence, Sea Locks, Cardiff. R. D. Hyde, Esq., Lieut. R.N.

July 8, Abraham Lyons, of Bute-street, Cardiff, aged 40, being the first to be interred according to Jewish rites in the new burial ground presented to the Cardiff congregation by the late Noble Marquess of Bute.

July 8, at Tongwynlais, near Cardiff, aged 89, Mrs. Tombs. mother of Mr. Daniel Tombs. of Newnort.

10. A plaque on the inside of the cemetery wall states that the wall was donated by Mr. and Mrs. M.A. Rapport in 1951:



11. The **first burial** at Highfield Road cemetery appears to be have been **Mr Abraham Lyons**, on **July 9th 1852**. At position Area C, Row 1, No 37 . This numbering was obviously allocated later.

There was some difficulty confirming this, as the complete gravestone is in Hebrew with no English translation, nor is there any surname on the gravestone.

The gravestone reads :

My eyes cry on the parting of my father Mr Avrohom Yitzchak the son of the Honourable scholar Mr Yehudah (Abraham Isaac the son on Judah) from Yelarove (or Vlorove), aged 40 years who passed away on 22nd tammuz 5612 (the Hebrew date A.L. corresponding to 9th July 1852). May his soul rest in peace.

Conclusions

The 2nd Marquess of Bute promised land for a Jewish burial ground possibly in 1841, but definitely by 1843 and the Highfield Road site was handed over around 1846. There may have been earlier discussions around a different site. However the deeds were not completed before his death in 1848. After prompting, the estate completed the transfer at some time between May 1850 and March 1851, by which time a wall was being built around the ground. The first burial was of Mr Abraham Lyons on 9TH July 1852.

A plaque was erected to indicate that the Marquess gifted the land in 1841. We do not who did this, nor when or where the plaque was originally erected. It seems at least some of the cemetery wall was rebuilt around 1951, at which point the plaque may have been relocated.

Acknowledgements:

This article is reproduced by kind permission of researcher Mike Hawkins, a volunteer helper at Jewish History Association of South Wales, at the Glamorgan Archive Centre, Cardiff.