

UNDERCLIFFE CEMETERY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2021

Bradford's History in Stone

• NEWS ROUND UP •

• A message from our Chairman - Allan Hillary •

The New Year sees the Charity, as indeed the country, in the grip of the third wave of Covid-19 crises, this creating severe health issues if stringent code of practices are not in place and adhered to.

Fortunately the Charity's established risk assessment, incorporating strict health and safety guidelines, implemented in April 2020 and reviewed on 5th January 2021 has enabled our willing and loyal 15 (increases of three during 2020) maintenance volunteers to continue their programme of general care of the 26 acre listed Grade II* site on Tuesday and Wednesday each week, during the Spring, Summer and Autumn growing seasons. Since October, a very noticeable impact has been achieved by our ground maintenance team in clearing and restoring a number of separate severely neglected areas that have never been touched since the Bradford Cemetery Company went into liquidation and abandoned the site in 1976. Volunteers have uncovered numerous interesting headstones and impressive monuments, which our volunteer research team have been made aware of. There is much further groundwork to be undertaken, levelling sunken graves, making these areas safe for the visitor. This restoration project has however exposed the Charity's future need to increase our ground maintenance team, especially once the Spring growing season commences, now we have reclaimed new areas.

The Charity and I will always be eternally grateful to our present reliable maintenance team for their willingness to adhere to our agreed joint health and safety guidelines, and undertake this mammoth Winter task.

Take care.

Best Wishes.

Allan Hillary



• A toddle round the tombs - John Jackson •

When hosting tours of the cemetery I always make a point of adjourning temporarily from the main promenade to a winding pathway in the consecrated section that I know enthusiastic participants will find to be of particular interest.

At the head of this short avenue is the familiar recumbent 'white lady' with babe in arms, a weathered sculptural image which is often interpreted as a mournful representation of the perils of childbirth.

Anne Barlow, the inscription informs us, was the wife of William Wagstaff Barlow (for many years registrar of marriages, assistant overseer of the poor, and comptroller of taxes in Bradford). She was born on 21 December 1834 and died on 30 December 1867, while Sarah Elizabeth, their infant child, died several years earlier on 23 August 1859 aged 28 weeks.

William Wagstaff Barlow (1822 - 1891) took as his second wife Catherine, who died on 2 January 1901, three weeks before Queen Victoria's death.

By a remarkable coincidence, according to her epitaph, Catherine was born on precisely the same date as her predecessor in that marital role!

cont.



cont.

Adjacent to the Barlow memorial is the final resting place of the man who designed the cemetery, and who became its first secretary and registrar. William Gay would no doubt be delighted to observe that folk are still treading his carefully planned pathways 170 years after he laid them out. The inscription on this modest tomb reads simply, *In Loving Memory of William Gay, His Wife, His Son, and His Mother*. One can imagine the professionally renowned Mr Gay being heartily fed up with rambling inscriptions and dates, and the incessant and monotonous ring of the stone mason's chisel reverberating round the cemetery!



A nearby slightly gothic-looking memorial surmounted by an imposing stone cross recalls the earthly existence of a man whose delightful name might have been that of a character in a novel by Charles Dickens. Harris Ullathorne died at the age of 47 on 12 November 1901.

Richard Spencer, who expired on 2 March 1862 aged 62 years, had been busily engaged during his earthly existence. He was, we are advised, *Bookbinder and Stationer, Registerer of Births & Deaths Upwards of 25 Years*. (Two slight inexactitudes appear in the latter designation: The correct title being, of course, *Registrar*, and since civil registration did not commence until 1 July 1837, the number of years he occupied that office was not quite 25). Undercliffe Cemetery was within the area of Richard Spencer's jurisdiction as registrar for the Bradford East District, and he would have recorded the deaths of many hundreds of local people for whom the cemetery became their final resting place.



The most poignant memorial on this pathway – and perhaps in the cemetery – is that which commemorates four young brothers who, the startling inscription on their monument states, *were all cut off within one week*. The stone tablet conveys vividly the fragility of human life in Victorian Bradford, the densely populated town being, from that perspective, one of the worst places in the kingdom in which to be born.

In the period 1871-75, only 50 percent of children born in Bradford could expect to reach the age of five. By 1900, improvements in social conditions and medical provision reduced to 26 percent the number of children who died in Bradford before their fifth birthdays.

The brothers Smith – Ralph, Horace, Godfrey, and Rowland, aged from one year to seven years – were the progeny of Harriet and Robert Smith, their father's occupation recorded on the headstone as *Station Master, Midland Railway, Bradford*.

This unimaginable calamity struck during the early part of August 1880, three of the infants being claimed in an epidemic of scarlet fever. Harriet, who was widowed in 1897, would bear for almost 60 years tragic memories of her young family's obliteration. She died in 1939 at the advanced age of 90.

• Herbert McKell - An Undercliffe Hero •

Amazing research from his relative - Gaynor Haliday

Corporal Herbert McKell - 3rd Special Company Royal Engineers – is buried in Villers Station Cemetery, near Arras, France. He is also commemorated on his parents' grave in Undercliffe Cemetery.

Herbert was the third son of Edith (née Lodge) and James McKell. Born in late 1896 at 15 Beech Grove and educated at Hanson School, he was too young to enlist when war broke out in August 1914. By that time the family was living at 21 Westfield Terrace, a very short distance from Undercliffe Cemetery.

Click on the link to read this amazing and fascinating historical research by Gaynor about one of our local fallen heroes.



<https://www.undercliffecemetery.co.uk/about/history/military/herbert-mckell/>



• Volunteer Profile - Sue Crossley •

Membership Secretary and Researcher

I'm a Bradford-born girl but have lived in Halifax with my husband Brian for 35 years. We have a married daughter, Jaime and three gorgeous granddaughters. Jaime and I have been researching our family history for more than 25 years and together we have arranged and coached a number of family history courses for both Bradford and Calderdale adult learning over the years. We continue to research our family spread far and wide. We have just recently taken on a 999year lease for a closed burial ground in the Denholme area of Bradford, where there are two Commonwealth Graves and 388 persons at rest. We have already obtained records for the burial ground and intend on maintaining and improving the area for all.

I am also secretary for the Shibden Valley Society, a small community group in the Shibden Valley. The group monitors development; reports on crime; and we repair and maintain footpaths and bridleways in and round the area.

I worked in the social housing sector for more than 30 years and during my employment have held several roles: I.T. Manager, Business Analyst and Systems Project Manager. I retired in January 2019 and started looking for a suitable volunteer role.



I have been volunteering as a researcher for Undercliffe Cemetery Charity for about 18 months and in April 2019 gave my very first tour talk on Charles Rice. Since then I have researched several other people and given a number of tour talks. I was very pleased to get a round of applause from tour guests at our 'Women of Note' event just before lockdown began in March 2020 for my research on Julia Varley OBE. The whole research team have worked hard in preparing our list of scheduled 2020 tours but due to the Covid 19 pandemic all events had to be cancelled.

I have been working with Deb Stirling, another researcher, on our new 'Gruesome Tour', which was due to take place in October 2020 but will be rescheduled for this year. Watch out for more information on our new events schedule! I have been assisting Steve Lightfoot, our lead researcher, with social media channels (Facebook, Twitter etc.), and have also created some Self-Guided tour maps for our six Listed Monuments and Funerary Art tours.

I took on the role of Membership Secretary in a bid to assist the registrar with administration of the members list and to improve communication with members. I hope to bring members interesting information and updates about Undercliffe Cemetery, our Charity work, and the work we all do as volunteers to ensure our wonderful Victorian Grade II* listed cemetery remains as an important testament to the industrial heritage of Bradford.

• How our story started - Part One •

Compiled by Sue Crossley and Jacqui Ambler

Our vice-chairperson John Jackson and a well-known local historian and retired schoolmaster, Mr Alfred H Robinson were instrumental in saving a great deal of the Undercliffe Cemetery records back in 1977.

When the Bradford Cemetery Company went into voluntary liquidation in 1976, the Registrar's post was defunct. The lodge, which served as the Registrar's office and home, was abandoned and subjected to vandalism. Vital burial records had been removed from the lodge to the office of the liquidator, but there were many thousands of documents still in the building. The house had been set alight and these records were damaged. John and Mr Robinson spent dozens of hours in the partially derelict house working their way through stacks of papers going back to the late 1840s.

Most of the documents found were correspondence between the company, its clients and business associates, but some official documents connected with burials were still present. John and Mr Robinson spent time going through the paperwork, not realising at the time how important this task would be to Undercliffe Cemetery Charity.

Of particular interest among the mountain of papers rescued is a draft of a letter dated 15 July 1854 from William Gay, Secretary to the Bradford Cemetery Company, to *"the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Palmerston, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department"*.

The letter afforded his Lordship intelligence touching upon the inauguration of the necropolis. It states...

"The Company was formed by some of the most public spirited inhabitants of Bradford less as a commercial speculation than as a means of supplying what was generally acknowledged to be one of the most important requirements of the town".

The letter continues, *"An estate of about 25 acres, most eligibly situated about one mile from the town, was about two years ago, purchased for the purposes of the company... The licence of the Board of Trade was given and bears the date 15th October 1852, and the site in question was conveyed to the company by deed dated 5th day of November 1852. Since that time a large sum of money has been expended by the company in laying out and ornamenting the grounds and in erecting lodges and chapels thereon."*

cont.

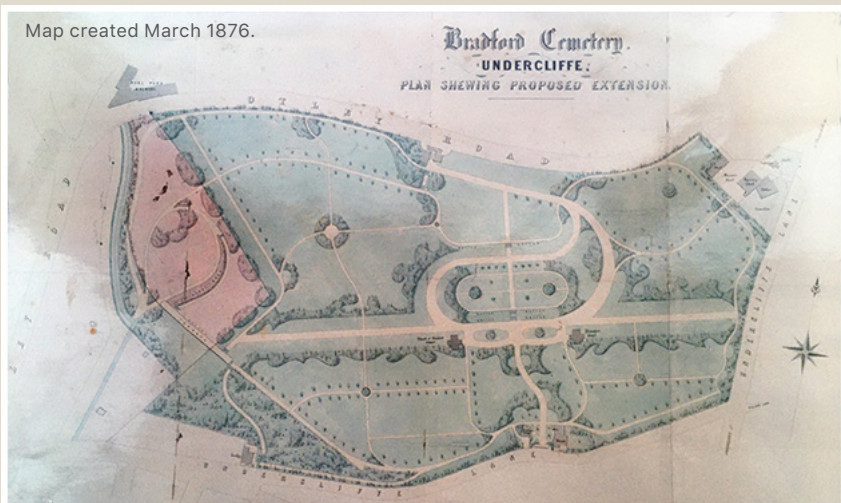


"The site selected by the Bradford Cemetery Company is generally considered as the most suitable in the district and indeed by many as, in some respects, the finest and most eligible site in the Kingdom."

In 1852 the directors of the company, in an address to the public, remarked upon the overcrowded state of the Bradford Parish Churchyard and commented that it had long been desirable that *“a more convenient site for sepulchre should be provided, not only for the sake of public health, but also for that of public decency and private satisfaction.”*

The Directors expressed the hope that the townsfolk would avail themselves of the new burial arrangements at Undercliffe, assuring them that relations and friends of those who were interred within the Cemetery would *“derive the comfort of knowing that graves once closed are in no danger of ever being reopened, except at their own desire.”*

Finely detailed plans of the estate illustrate the professional manner in which the cemetery was laid out by Mr Gay in a way calculated to take full advantage of the splendidly appointed site. The elevated situation of the end of the main promenade afforded magnificent views of the Bradford basin, the Aire Valley corridor, and the surrounding hills.



Excerpt taken from an article by John Jackson in the Bradford and Calderdale Chambers of Commerce Journal 1987

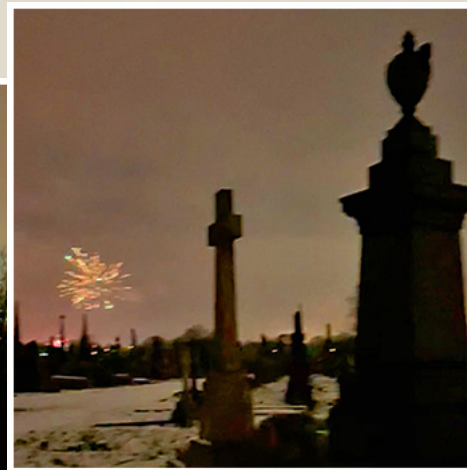
• The Bradford Blitz - 31 December 2020 •

Braving both the elements and a fairly secluded spot in Bradford at midnight, our intrepid vice-chairman John Jackson captured this amazing video of the New Year celebrations taking place in our city.

It illustrates superbly what an incredible vantage point Undercliffe Cemetery really is!

Please click on the link (blue text) at the foot of the page to see this spectacular firework display in all its glory, but be quick, the link expires at midnight on 31 January 2021.

Many thanks to John for allowing us to share his video.



• D-Day Memorial Find •

Private S. W. Whitley

A recent Tuesday morning volunteer session discovered a section of the memorial stone of one Stephen William Whitley of Bradford, a private soldier with the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment, who tragically gave his life, aged just 18, on 6 June 1944 - more famously known as D-Day.

Remembered at Undercliffe, Stephen is buried in Hermanville Beach War Cemetery, Normandy, France. We plan to excavate the area of Stephen's stone to see if there's a more substantial part and we'll let you know of developments.

The cemetery volunteer team would very much like someone to join them with a military speciality in a field other than the Great War, where we have strong representation. We try to have at least one military themed tour each year and they're always popular but do tend to be almost exclusively Great War based and we'd very much like to be able to expand and widen their content to cover other conflicts.

Please contact Andrew Barker at the Cemetery if you're interested and would like to help.



• Undercliffe's Historic Core •

New find from the Kodak archive dated 1860

We have known about this photo for quite some time, in fact when we did the Photographers and Artists tour in 2019 we put a copy on top of a wooden post and placed it in the exact position in the cemetery from where the photo had been taken. What is interesting about this photo is that it was taken by Samuel Smith (not our Samuel Smith) when he visited his family in Yorkshire.



The method used was the one that Fox Talbot had invented. It was called the Calotype and he patented it in 1841. So it was quite early days as far as photography was concerned.

Although by 1851 there was the wet-plate collodion photography which had been introduced by Frederick Scott Archer.

The exposure time would have been minutes rather than seconds, so if anyone had walked through the cemetery while he was taking it you would have seen a ghostly shadow!

We are looking for a present day photographer to take the same image, from the same spot.

The best photo submitted, as judged by our committee, will feature in next month's newsletter!

Email your entries, marked 'Photo Competition' to:

office@undercliffecemetery.co.uk

• Funding News •

Congratulations to Andrew Barker, Undercliffe Cemetery Registrar and Business Manager, in securing much needed Covid related 'Business Assistance Funds' and also to Halifax Bank for their kind and generous gift of £1,000 from their 'Business Community Fund'.

As important to the Charity as these funds are, we are still very reliant, in the absence of our own fund-raising activities, on Members' and friends' donations.

Please renew your membership and spread the word to potential NEW members. Details on next page.



• Membership Renewal •

Thankfully, cemetery membership numbers continue to rise. This is really important as one of our main areas of fund-raising and due to the pandemic cemetery tours and events have stopped. Sadly it would appear that they are very unlikely to re-start anytime soon.

At present, members renew throughout the year, mostly in timing with the month in which they joined. It would be much easier for us to manage and help with cash flow if we could use January as the common renewal month.

Renewals can be made by sending a cheque for £10 payable to Undercliffe Cemetery Charity to the Registrar at the lodge, or by our Virgin Money page (click on link). As ever, any donations in addition would be much appreciated and gratefully received, and if you select 'gift aid' then this will maximise the donation you are making to our funds.

Please click on this link or copy and paste into your browser to renew your membership.

<https://www.undercliffecemetery.co.uk/support-us/renewal/>

If paying by cheque, please make it payable to 'Undercliffe Cemetery Charity' and address your envelope to:

**The Registrar
The Lodge
127 Undercliffe Lane
Bradford
BD3 0DW**



In case of difficulty or for more details, please telephone: 01274 642276
or email: office@undercliffecemetery.co.uk



• Virtual Remembrance Service •



Our Virtual Remembrance Service took place on 11 November 2020, we received many favourable comments including one from no less than the CWGC!

Our thanks go to Steve Lightfoot, Geoff Reid, Stuart Firth, Allan Hillary and Andy Tyne in the preparation of the Service, hopefully one that can be replaced by the real thing next November.

• Special Thanks •

Our cemetery relies heavily on the hard work and dedication of our amazing volunteers, occasionally, and certainly during these uncertain times, we deem it necessary to give our special thanks to individuals whose labours help to keep the ship afloat.

So... a big thank you to Deborah Stirling and Pauline Shieldhouse, in addition to Gaynor Haliday, for the work they've done adding some fascinating stories of key individuals to the History section of the cemetery website.

And last but not least, Stewart Field, volunteer, who's repaired and serviced all our strimmers which are certainly getting lots of use at the moment.

