



# UNDERCLIFFE CEMETERY NEWSLETTER

**APRIL  
2021**

## **Bradford's History in Stone**

• NEWS ROUND UP •

### • Chair's Notes •

The Charity is seeking the assistance of anyone willing to help us implement and maintain an Environmental Update Survey we are planning. As part of this project, Chris Haxby, one of our Trustees and stalwart member of our maintenance team, has made six bird nesting boxes.

Photographs show Chris with Andrew Barker, the Charity's Business Manager & Registrar, fixing a box to one of our many well-established mature trees.

If you're interested in helping out or taking part in the survey, please contact Andrew at the Lodge.

Tel: 01274 642276

email: [office@undercliffecemetery.co.uk](mailto:office@undercliffecemetery.co.uk)



I also wish to share with members the passing of Tony Cairns OBE aged 89 years.

Tony was a former leader of Bradford Metropolitan District Council between 1994 and 1997 and Lord Mayor from 1997-1998.

He was a well-liked, active councillor, serving Tong ward from 1984 to 2010. He became a valuable Trustee of this Charity between 2010 and 2018.

The photo shows Tony accompanied by his wife Jean after receiving his OBE from the Queen at Buckingham Palace in 2007.

**Allan Hillary**

### • Improved Membership Benefits •

From April 2021, it will be possible to access old newsletters online. Undercliffe Cemetery Charity issues newsletters every quarter and there are some really fascinating articles in them. As newsletters are issued, they will be sent initially to those members who support the Charity, and after four weeks they will be published on the Undercliffe Charity website.

New benefits have been introduced for members: these include FREE talks at the Cemetery, plus there will be some tours for members only. This year, the members-only tour will be 'New Discoveries'.

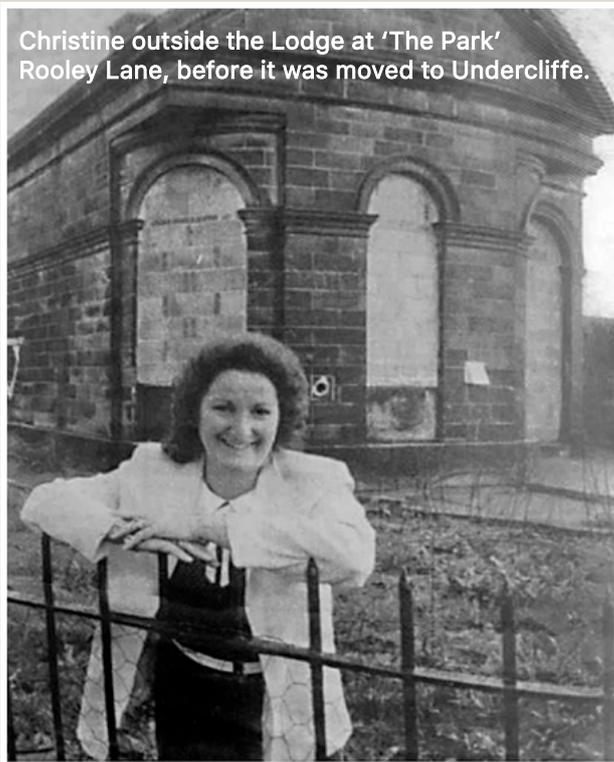
The FREE talks being scheduled for this year are 'Victorian Photography and the Family Album' and 'The History of Undercliffe Cemetery'. All dates to be confirmed.

## • How our story started - Part Two •

Compiled by Sue Crossley and Jacqui Ambler

### • From desecration to the green shoots of hope: the Christine Chapple era •

Part one of the Cemetery's recent history appeared in the January newsletter and explained the importance of the work done by Alfred Robinson (sadly now deceased) and our own current vice-chair, John Jackson, in saving many of the Registrar's records from the original lodges, following the voluntary liquidation of the Bradford Cemetery Company in 1976. This second instalment focuses on the saving of the Cemetery itself, instigated by an intrepid historian and housewife from Gomersal, Christine Chapple, supported by her husband, Tony. Hopes had been raised for the future of the site after it was purchased in 1978 for £5 by a property developer from Baildon, but rather than arresting the decline, 'stone-harvesting' by the new owner hastened its destruction and all the original buildings (the two lodges at the top end, the two chapels by the boulevard and the gatehouse entrance) were demolished. Further sources of stone to sell were then sought by the owner.



Christine outside the Lodge at 'The Park' Rooley Lane, before it was moved to Undercliffe.

Christine Chapple's response was to set up the 'Friends of Undercliffe Cemetery' and work groups were established to tend different areas. Whilst with a working party one Sunday afternoon in September 1981, she was approached by a passer-by who asked her, 'can you do anything to stop the removal of kerb stones from graves in the Cemetery?' When Christine saw what she felt was the desecration of graves, she contacted a reporter, Paul Parker, at the T&A. The story became headline news and many more Bradfordians joined the Friends of Undercliffe Cemetery.

They fought a relentless campaign to persuade the council to compulsorily purchase the Cemetery, Christine even becoming known (by her own account) by some at the council as 'that bloody woman from Gomersal'. But it paid off. A public meeting about the future of the Cemetery was arranged, attended by council representatives and a large number of concerned Bradfordians. A steering committee was formed with the idea of setting up a trust to protect the Cemetery, in the hope that the new owner would donate the site to them for safe-keeping. But the property developer was nothing if not tenacious himself and the final building left standing, the gatehouse at the Otley Road entrance, was demolished in 1983.

(Original photo in the Yorkshire Post, cited by Colin Clark & Reuben Davison: 'In Loving Memory: The Story of Undercliffe Cemetery' Sutton Publishing, 2004.)

Christine and the Friends then gained support at a national level when the Department of the Environment listed some of the six most important monuments to protect them, and, in June 1984, the Cemetery was made a conservation area. This proved a turning point and on 1st March 1985, Bradford Council compulsorily purchased the Cemetery and took responsibility for its future.

The four and a half years of campaigning had been almost a full-time job for Christine with the support of her family and the Friends. A celebratory meal was called for and it took place at the George and Dragon in Apperley Bridge.

There was more to celebrate in the following year, 1985, when a three-year restoration project was agreed between the Manpower Services Commission and Bradford Council. This was the beginning of a much more positive phase of the Cemetery's history and had a significant impact on the Cemetery's infrastructure and appearance, but not everything turned out the way it was planned. More of this in the next instalment of the newsletter!

Christine Chapple is buried in the Cemetery just off the main boulevard, a wooden post and QR code gives a link to Christine's story on the website.



A machine moves in to demolish the Otley Road lodge, simply for the stone, valued at £650



• TOURS - 2021 PROGRAMME •

7 August	Women of Note
21 August	Peregrination Tour
4 September	Bradford's Victorian Retailers
18 September	New Discoveries (members only)
2 October	Mayors & Lord Mayors of Bradford
16 October	WW1 and the Bradford Pals - Tour and Talk
30 October	The Gruesome Tour

We are delighted to announce that our tours are due to resume in August 2021. Our Tour Schedule for the year is detailed here and we do hope that you will be able to join us.

Of course, we are very keen to restart these very popular tours, but we will always take heed of the COVID situation at the time and update our website appropriately. Naturally, all tours are subject to COVID-19 Government legislation and recommendations.

Our new programme commences with the popular 'Women of Note' tour on Saturday, 7 August 2021 at 11:00am. This tour commemorates the work and lives of some of Bradford's doughty women, whose final resting place was Undercliffe Cemetery. Our researchers will be telling the stories of these women, some of whom just didn't know their place in Victorian Britain.

Booking is now open for our 'Women of Note' Tour and you can buy tickets using our online service by clicking the on link below.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/women-of-note-august-2021-tour-tickets-145250898347>

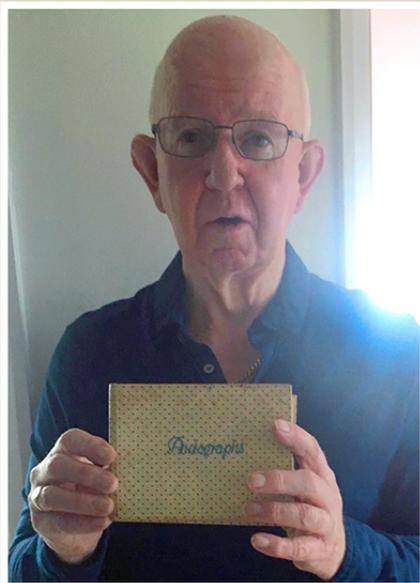
**All tours except the Remembrance event will be held on Saturdays, starting at 11:00am, hopefully with Lodge catering facilities available from 10:30am. The Remembrance event will be held on Thursday, 11 November, please arrive for 10:45am.**

• Billy Liar and Undercliffe Cemetery •  
John Jackson

Sometimes a chance comment or observation will lead to a remarkable discovery, or an amazing coincidence. Recently I chatted with Chris Lawson, one of the dedicated grounds' volunteers, about the 1963 'British new wave' comedy-drama film, *Billy Liar*, parts of which had been shot in the Cemetery. A picture had recently come to light showing John Schlesinger sitting in his director's chair on a plot in the historic core and looking rather pensive - possibly as Tom Courtenay (Billy) and Helen Fraser (Barbara) were engaged in a dramatic scene. Chris mentioned, almost in passing, that his friend, a schoolboy at the time, witnessed the filming and had managed to obtain some autographs of the cast and crew!

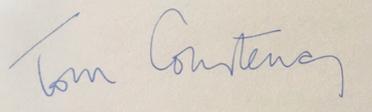
Philip Baildon was that young lad, and fortunately he had kept and treasured his autograph book. Reproduced below are Philip's memories of that brief exciting time in the Cemetery's history.

Billy Liar and my part in the making of the film. Philip Baildon.

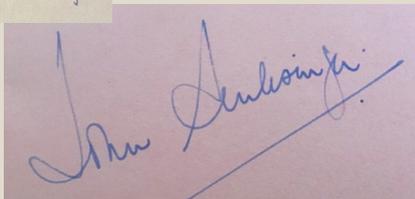


My family lived at 40 Heath Road, Bradford from 1955 until 1965 during my formative years. Our home was not far away from Undercliffe Cemetery and Undercliffe Street where the film *Room at the Top* had been filmed, which we all knew about.

On the 20th October 1962 word on the street was that *Billy Liar* was being filmed in Undercliffe Cemetery, so along I went to watch. I seem to remember it was during the autumn school holidays. There were lots of other kids watching but we all did like we were told and did not make any noise or get in the way. Everybody was really good with us and we circulated when they stopped to have a cup of tea, and that was when I got my autographs. I remember it being a cold day and the director wore a sheepskin coat. I'd never seen a coat like that before - you didn't get any in Undercliffe at that time! I've kept the autograph book safe all these years and now it's my claim to fame! I bet there isn't another from the day of filming in the Cemetery.



Philip Baildon



*Billy Liar* proved to be a box office hit, and is ranked 76th in the British Film Institute's most popular British films of all time. It was based on the novel by Leeds-born Keith Waterhouse, and many of the scenes were shot in Bradford and other northern cities. A few props are evident in the cemetery sequences, and the mortuary chapels were long ago demolished, but little else has changed. The (nearly) sixty years between the filming and the present day have witnessed some dramatic episodes in the Cemetery's history.



## • Volunteer Profiles •

Ted Trett and Heather MacGregor



One weekend late in 2017, my wife persuaded me to take her to visit Undercliffe Cemetery. Heather had moved up from Yeovil to live with me in Bradford and was keen to visit local places of interest. I have to admit that despite having lived and worked in Bradford all my life my only contact with Undercliffe was what I had seen in *Billy Liar*.

We were both astonished and surprised by the size and condition of what there was to be seen, and Heather was keen to see more and get involved and made contact through the Facebook site. She found out what the set-up was and started volunteering the next week.

I joined her and the team a couple of times during holidays from work, and when I retired I became a volunteer myself.

We both enjoy being part of a team of volunteers, it gives us an opportunity to do something useful and very different from anything either of us has done before. It is good to give something back to the city we live in.

The duties we carry out are many and varied, but we have a good friendly group of people to work with. Every week is different and it's good to have a job that you actually look forward to going to – what more can I say?

### Ted Trett

I had seen the signs for the cemetery and had always fancied a visit, but our busy schedule meant that we had very few chances to visit until one weekend I got Ted to take me there.

I have always liked places that have gone back to the wild and this was one of the attractions for me with wild flowers and secluded overgrown tracks. The graves too, tended or neglected they were all fascinating to me – so many stories.

To work there is great fun, you are never asked to do anything you'd rather not do and the other volunteers are a good team, I am not a native of Bradford but am glad to be able to help in some small way to preserve one of the city's treasures.

### Heather MacGregor



## • Historic Core Photograph - Then •



In the last Newsletter we featured a photograph of Undercliffe's historic core, taken by Samuel Smith during a visit to his family in 1860 and now part of the Kodak Photo Archive.

We asked for members to submit a present-day version of the photograph taken from the same spot.

On the following page we feature a stunning entry from our member Tim Hardy - suitably 'aged' to copy, as faithfully as possible, the original photo, but taken 160 years later!

We are hopeful that this 'Then & Now' item will become a regular feature in future issues of the newsletter. More details to follow in the next issue. Get those cameras out and prepare for a challenge!



• Historic Core Photograph - Now •

Tim Hardy



• And Finally! •

Undercliffe's Rhododendron Caves



Much work has been carried out in clearing the spectacular and rather eerie 'Rhododendron Caves' over the past few weeks, resulting in the revelation of many previously undiscovered graves. It would also appear that we have stumbled upon our Chair and Vice-Chair's 'skiving hole'!

We welcome any 'What the chairmen said next' suggestions.

Best comments to feature in our next newsletter!

Good luck!

