



UNDERCLIFFE CEMETERY NEWSLETTER

**JULY
2021**

Bradford's History in Stone

• NEWS ROUND UP •

• Chair's Notes •

I am very sad to inform members of the sudden death in Airedale Hospital of Peter Barker on Friday, 28 May 2021, aged 82.

Peter was an active and dedicated Undercliffe Cemetery Charity Trustee, becoming our company secretary in 2007 until he resigned in 2018, remaining a Trustee. He will be sadly missed for all his positive contributions, his carefully thought through advice, guidance and calm problem solving. He certainly made a difference to help secure the Charity's present stable progress and well-being.

Peter was the senior partner in Marston & Cockshott Solicitors, Bradford, president of Bradford Law Society during the 1990s and was an active Rotarian in the former Idle and Greengates Rotary Club. In his younger years he was a keen cricketer, later becoming an umpire in the Airedale and Wharfedale leagues.

Allan Hillary



• Cemetery History - Part Three •

Compiled by Sue Crossley and Jacqui Ambler

• The green shoots of hope begin to flower: the MSC era •

The previous instalment of the Cemetery's recent history explained the importance of the work done by Christine Chapple in securing the Cemetery's future in the 1980s. Christine founded the Friends of Undercliffe Cemetery and campaigned for compulsory purchase from the property developer who had bought the site for £5 in 1980.

The Cemetery finally became council property on 1 March 1985, after confirmation of the compulsory order by the Department of the Environment. By that stage, all the original structures had been demolished, including the Otley Road gatehouse, which had been bulldozed by the developer just a few months before the compulsory purchase order had been approved.

The Cemetery was left in a parlous state. After all the delays and devastation of the campaign years, a plan was agreed by Bradford Council and the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) to resurrect the original William Gay layout and restore the damaged and dangerous monuments, boundary walls and overgrown walkways and steps.

Another partnership was formed between the council and the Friends of Undercliffe Cemetery to manage the site and the Bradford (Undercliffe) Cemetery Company was duly registered in December 1985.

The ten directors included John Ayers as the Chair (an expert on the architecture of Bradford), representatives from the council and from Pennine Heritage (an organisation with expertise in conservation), and members of the Friends, including Christine Chapple and myself.

Christine volunteered to act as registrar, and I found myself in the role of deputy registrar, arranging burials (alongside my day job as a newly qualified teacher) when Christine was on holiday.



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It was a steep learning curve. However, on the positive side, the views from my living room and bedroom windows on Westfield Crescent were improving all the time!

The three-year MSC scheme project began in January 1986, enabling more than 60 unemployed people to be trained in new skills. Plant machinery and teams in hard hats and donkey jackets were in constant motion around the site. As the project progressed, an education and ecology officer, Alice Ross, was appointed to engage local groups and promote the site. When Alice moved in as a lodger, I became involved in this aspect and the living room became a hive of activity in preparation for a big exhibition about the restoration project hosted by Bradford Central Library.



The pace and breadth of the work was exhilarating. There were vast improvements in the cemetery hard landscaping: this included the repair of the perimeter walls, the reinstatement of the main boulevard and pathways in the historic core, the landscaping of the areas that mark where the two original chapels stood, and repairs to many monuments along the main walkways.

Some areas were cleared of vegetation, while others were left, of necessity, as wild areas, concealing some graves but enabling wildlife to flourish. The Cemetery was rising from the ashes and the achievements of those who had fought so hard for this were now being recognised.

In 1986, Christine and Tony Chapple were presented with The Bradford Civic Society Merit Award for:

“their initiative and persistence towards the preservation of Undercliffe Cemetery and for co-ordinating public interest which led to the acquisition and restoration of a monument of local and national interest.” (extract from the citation).

Sadly, this moment of recognition coincided with the conclusion of their direct involvement with the cemetery. Tony took up a new job in York and the family moved. Christine had to relinquish the role of registrar and I found myself stepping into this role until a more permanent replacement could be found.



But the group of volunteers who had taken on the running of the cemetery as directors also found themselves with another much bigger problem: two years into the three-year project, the MSC scheme was suddenly and unexpectedly gone, leaving much of the work incomplete and piles of building materials scattered around the site. Another challenging chapter of the Cemetery's history was unfolding. But fortunately, another husband and wife team, Colin and Ann Clark, were waiting in the wings.

Find out what happened in the next newsletter...



• Confessions of a Volunteer •

Profile of Chris Haxby, our Longest-Serving Volunteer

I started as a volunteer at Undercliffe Cemetery towards the end of 2007. I have lived in Bradford for most of my life and worked for Bradford Council for 25 years. When I decided to retire, I was looking for something to keep me fit and active and preferably outdoors. Just by chance I saw a television programme about the Cemetery, the problems they had in the past and the voluntary work that was being done.

I thought this could be just what I had been looking for and it would be an excellent chance to 'put something back' into the city where I have lived and worked for so long.

I have joined a group of volunteers at the Cemetery that has now grown from one or two, to 17 in number. We carry out very varied work depending on the time of year. Summer is definitely grass cutting time. We have strimmers, petrol-powered mowers and a ride-on mower. It can be a losing battle to keep all the grass tidy.

Winter is very different. We select an overgrown area of the cemetery and attempt to clear the undergrowth, leaving the mature trees. We clear brambles, willow herb and knotweed and self-seeded saplings. We then have a controlled fire to remove all the waste.



There is training available for the volunteers. You will be trained 'in house' if you wish to use a strimmer or petrol mower.

Some of our volunteers are qualified to spray herbicide to keep cleared areas weed free. We have three qualified 'First Aiders' and a trained approved chainsaw operative.

We do have to be very careful when working off the main paths as the ground we clear is very uneven, with many sunken or collapsed graves. I think it would be true to say that we all fall regularly, but thankfully no injuries, only hurt pride!

We have a bonfire most weeks during the winter and two of our volunteers had unusual hair styles after singeing their hair in the flames. I know hairdressers were closed during lockdown, but that was taking it too far!

These weren't men of course, we don't have enough hair! One volunteer did actually set his arm on fire, whilst holding a can of petrol. I quickly urged him to put the petrol down and as I was wearing gloves, extinguished the flames on his coat sleeve. Afterwards he did say, 'thanks, Chris for putting me out!'

As you will have gathered, we do work hard but at the same time have a laugh. The Charity Trustees provide us with a very enjoyable lunch in the Lodge every two months, but this has not been possible during the pandemic.

Hopefully, we will be starting again with this soon. Most of us volunteer at the Cemetery on a Tuesday, but a few come on Mondays and Wednesdays as well. We have all said that our time up at Undercliffe has kept us sane during the last year, as we were only closed for about four weeks.

If this sounds like something you would like to do, have a laugh, get some fresh air and exercise summer and winter, then please come and join us.

Chris Haxby. June 2021

• General Grounds Maintenance •

The works currently being undertaken by our ever-growing grounds maintenance team, in addition to their normal spring and summer strimming and mowing, are truly breathtaking.

Much time and effort was taken removing brambles and large areas of overgrowth in Consecrated Section I last autumn and winter which we're treating with weed killer to maintain the clearance, and more recently, Consecrated Section C is being tackled.

Some before and after photos are here to show the contrast, but the real impact is to be seen by visiting the Cemetery; come on a Tuesday or Wednesday and you can join in!

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We are very respectful of nature's incursions into the Cemetery and its impact on the local flora, fauna and wildlife, particularly in the remote sections adjoining Otley Road and with this very much in mind, will concentrate our efforts away from there. The monuments' histories and stories our research teams are uncovering hopefully make it very much worthwhile



• Thank yous •

As ever, we're eternally grateful to all our benefactors and donors and the following must be thanked: Adcocks of Knaresborough, who provide the prodigious amounts of strimmer line we use; Thomas Crompton of Bradford for the tons – and we mean tons – of infill for recovered graves; R. N. Wooller of Keighley and the Co-Operative Community Grant for financial donations and a very generous donation from a Trustee to finance pea gravel to finish off the grave infill in Consecrated Section C mentioned earlier.

• Alf Ayrton and Donation of Strimmer •

Many thanks to Undercliffe friend and Bradford City fanatic Paul Hartley who has kindly donated a metal-headed strimmer, Paul is pictured making his donation to Andy Tyne, Undercliffe Trustee and fellow City fan at the side of the Ayrton family plot in Consecrated L section.

Alf Ayrton's contribution to the history of Bradford City F.C. was immense, switching from the established and successful Manningham Rugby Club team, where he was president, to the football team Bradford City in 1903. They would play at Manningham's Valley Parade ground and in their club colours, claret and amber, inspired by the regimental colours of the West Yorkshire Regiment based at the nearby Belle Vue Barracks. Alf thought soccer not rugby would grow to be 'the game that paid'. How right he was!

Alf was City's first chairman and fended off an aggressive and hostile merger/takeover bid from the established Bradford Park Avenue club and laid the groundwork for City to become a limited company in 1908, three years before winning the F.A. Cup – the trophy appropriately made by Fattorini & Sons in Bradford.



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Also a very successful businessman in the wool trade, Alf retired in the 1930s and chose, like many fellow Bradfordians, to move to Morecambe, or as it was known 'Bradford On Sea'. Tragically, Alf was killed on 29 September 1939 in the very early days of the Second World War after being struck by a car in a blackout. His body was returned to Bradford where he lies at Undercliffe with his wife Harriet. Also remembered on the family stone is their son John who was killed with the West Yorkshire Regiment in the First World War and buried in Bethune, France.

The groundwork volunteer schedule for autumn /winter 2021 includes clearing the badly overgrown and bramble-strewn area behind Alf's grave to make it easier for people to pay their respects and remember Alf and John, Alf genuinely being a colossal figure in Bradford City's history. The donated metal-headed strimmer will really make this work much easier and we look forward to showing you the results in a later newsletter.

• William Sharp: Labourer, Fishmonger, Gentleman 1831–1900 •

Grave: K612 Unconsecrated

William Sharp has an impressive headstone for someone who came from humble beginnings. However, his life does highlight certain aspects of Victorian life.

William, born in 1831, was the son of John Sharp who is recorded as a labourer; later he is recorded as a farmer at Bradford Moor. Bradford Moor was described as a place of scattered homesteads, where it was also noted that horse races were conducted every second Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday in October. Undercliffe is described as a pleasant hamlet.

An aspect of Victorian life was, irrespective of one's class, to improve one's lot. William, initially a labourer, was, by the 1860s, a hay dealer and fishmonger in Bridge Street, Bradford.

He was also eager to get involved in public life. In 1868, The Bradford Observer announced the results of the election for auditors and ward assessors for the borough. For the East Ward, William was elected an assessor and in 1882 he felt his status was such that he could apply to be elected to be a Guardian of the Workhouse.

He appears to be politically inclined, supporting Edward Miall by allowing his shop to be used for the collecting of subscriptions and provision of requisition sheets for supporters to sign throughout the 1868/9 election.

Edward Miall (1809–81) was a politician and a Baptist minister. His allegiance was to the Whigs (Liberals) but his beliefs were so extreme that he even made enemies within his own party. He sympathised with those who did not pay the church rates, equivalent to our council tax.



He stood by the Chartists, was in favour of national suffrage and against the Corn Laws. Matthew W. Thompson won the election.

Lastly, William's story highlights an all too common problem. This story occurs when he shows his loyalty to a friend by being a character witness.

In 1868, Hezekiah Thornton, a druggist, was charged with murder after he performed an abortion on a young widow, Margaret Allisson, at Leeds. Margaret went to Hezekiah's shop and made it clear she wanted an abortion. During her visits, instruments and a quite a lot of medication were used. Margaret fell ill with peritonitis and died.

The jury was asked to consider two questions:

Firstly did the prisoner provide the deceased with an abortion? And secondly, was Margaret's death caused by the abortion? Death was common in such cases. The jury decided that the response to the first question was yes, but no to the second. As such, the charges were reduced to attempting to procure an abortion.

William died in 1900 and his probate records him as being a gentleman.

Deborah Stirling



• TOURS and TALKS 2021 •

Government guidelines permitting, we are pleased to present a full programme of events for 2021. Places could be limited so it is vitally important that you book early to guarantee a place.

Certain tours are for 'Members Only', so if you receive this newsletter this will include YOU!

Full details of each tour along with details of how to book are listed under the 'EVENTS' tab on our website.

All tours will be on a Saturday and start at 11 am. Coffee, Tea and Cakes will be available from 10.30 until 1pm. Each tour is expected to last 1 hour 30 minutes. Please meet at the Lodge at the Undercliffe Lane entrance, where there is a car park. You can also park on Undercliffe Lane itself. Evening talks at the lodge will be held on a Monday evening at 7pm.

12th
July

Evening talk on the history of Undercliffe Cemetery

MEMBERS
ONLY

7th
Aug

Women of Note

16th
Aug

Evening talk on Victorian photography and the family album

MEMBERS
ONLY

21st
Aug

Peregrination of Undercliffe Cemetery

4th
Sept

Bradford's Victorian Retailers

18th
Sept

New discoveries at the Cemetery

MEMBERS
ONLY

2nd
Oct

Victorian Mayors and Lord Mayors of Bradford

16th
Oct

World War One – The Bradford Pals

30th
Oct

The Gruesome Tour

11th
Nov

Remembrance Service • 11:00am

Full details of our talks and tours, and how to book, can be found on our website:

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