



UNDERCLIFFE CEMETERY NEWSLETTER

WINTER
2022

Bradford's History in Stone

• NEWS ROUND UP •

• Chair's Comments •

The Charity greatly appreciates and values your membership and sponsorship which demonstrates to me that you care and accept the importance of maintaining, restoring and securing the 26-acre former private cemetery (1854–1975), which displays the finest Victorian and Edwardian funerary in the North of England, for future generations. In 1998, the Cemetery was listed by English Heritage as Grade II*, the highest registration a cemetery can be given.

I am fully aware of and wish to thank Sue Crossley, Andy Tyne, Gaynor Haliday and Tim Hardy's strenuous efforts to keep you all informed of the activities being done by the groundwork maintenance team and the research and promotion volunteers through the monthly members' update and Charity quarterly newsletter. Membership numbers of the Charity really gives me a focus on our efforts of encouraging interest in the Cemetery; they are increasing and the income it generates at £10 per member annually, and the kind donations that often follow, is significant in allowing us to continue our efforts to get the Cemetery looking at its best – as you'll see in the newsletter and members' updates.

I hope you find these productions interesting and informative, especially the many photographs showing the multitude of skills and tasks our volunteers undertake every week.

Finally, I wish you all a safe, healthy and brighter New Year.

Allan Hillary

• Pictures from the Volunteers' Christmas lunch •



• Installation of ten more QR codes •

Ten new QR code plaques have been placed at particularly interesting grave sites including the Scott family plot at the end on the Main Promenade as pictured. We've an ever growing number now which show the fruits of the research volunteers' labours. Please scan them graveside next time you see one.



• Digitisation of the Cemetery Records •

Work has begun on digitising the Undercliffe Cemetery records. This is a huge project and will take a number of years to complete. We are currently dealing with around 1,000 records per week with eight volunteers involved in the work. Our old records' system is based upon microfiche, and a system which was developed in the 1970s. It has reached the end of its life and it is time to bury that system and move on to a more modern alternative.

The new system, using a database, will allow us to find the records very quickly and bring new information to light: for example, who is buried in any of the Company Graves – something which can be very, very difficult, if not impossible, using the old system. We have processed 10,000 records so far and have discovered some really interesting facts and found people we just didn't know we had at the Cemetery, such as Titus Salt's sister. We have also discovered Nancy De Garrs' mum is buried at Undercliffe. Her daughters, Nancy and Sarah, both served the Brontë family for many years; four of her other daughters (Nancy's sisters) are also buried here.

The infant mortality rate during the early years was really shocking and the records show just how bad this was, with many children dying in their infancy. Our researchers have been looking at the reasons why and will reveal much of what we have found in our 2022 season of tours.

After a fire at the lodge nearly destroyed all the records in the 1980s, we are dealing with some records that are in a very poor state. We hope that this won't prevent us from covering most of the records, but some are lost or missing and we would appeal to anyone who may have books from the Cemetery to return them. These were probably picked up by people when they were thrown out of the burning building. We won't ask any questions, we would just love to have the records back and make our collection of records as complete as possible.



Undercliffe Cemetery Order Book

• James Settle - Can you help us? •

James Settle died 27 January 1942 serving as a fireman in Pudsey. He is buried in Undercliffe Cemetery, the gravestone placed there by his mother. However, we know little else. In 1939, he was living with his wife Nellie in Pudsey and both were involved in woolcombing. It was wartime and James was also an auxiliary fireman. We believe that he was born to Samuel and Ruth Settle (née Slingsby). Sam was a bridge painter and they lived in Laisterdyke. He was 50 when he married Ruth aged 38. Ruth died in 1953. Nellie remarried in 1945 to a Harry Rowley.

Are you related to or know James' story? If so, how did James die?

Researchers: Helen Clappison and Deborah Stirling



• Cliff Tasker •

Volunteer Profile

I retired in September 2020 and was looking for something to occupy my time; I had taken up walking as a form of exercise since the start of the Covid pandemic and, recovering from knee replacements the previous year, my walks were often in Undercliffe Cemetery. I'd known about the Cemetery for as long as I can remember without knowing anything about its history, size or beauty. On many of my walks I saw people working in the Cemetery and assumed they were council workers so was surprised to find they were all volunteers who gave up free time each week to help maintain the Cemetery and so in March 2021 I too became a volunteer.

On my first day it was obvious everything is down to team work, whether it be grass cutting, strimming, clearing undergrowth or litter picking – to mention just a few of the tasks. It was nice to see everyone working together in a friendly and helpful manner, but most of all with total respect for each other and the Cemetery.

We are a small band of volunteers who go each Tuesday to do planned work required by the Cemetery's needs. My preference is to clear areas that look overgrown and neglected; one of these areas was in Consecrated section A, where brambles, rhododendron and ivy had taken over and there were twenty or so graves which couldn't be seen. It was slow work as care has to be taken not to damage any gravestones or surrounds. Pam and I did most of the clearing of grave works with Chris and Alan on strimmers, then all were involved in clearing the debris. The reward for all the hard work is seeing the inscriptions and finding out who is remembered on the graves. For a relatively small area it revealed some interesting finds: two brothers who sadly died in the First World War; two further deaths from the First World War; an innkeeper's daughter; a lady who was housekeeper for forty years to a prominent Bradford family; and my favourite, the grave of a gentleman born in Germany who came to England when working in the wool industry and died in 1893. His grave consisted of a headstone, half a surround and what appeared to be a random pile of stones. After clearing the foliage, it became clear the ivy roots had dislodged the stones and were damaging an adjacent grave; once the roots had been cleared, repairs were made to both graves as necessary. It was a job well done by all.



There is nothing better than going home after work with a sense of achievement, which has happened often while I've been a volunteer, and it's a feeling I haven't had for many years.

I see many people enjoying the Cemetery; some just having a stroll, others looking for graves of relatives and loved ones and it's nice to help where I can now I know the layout of the Cemetery. We volunteers are mainly past retirement age, so it would be nice to see more people when possible give a few hours each week to continue the good work for future generations to enjoy.



• Thomas Firth - Waterloo Veteran •

Deborah Stirling

According to his obituary, when Thomas and his wife Hannah (née Ingram m. 1819) walked out they were the fairest of couples. Thomas was 6 feet tall and a handsome man. Born and raised in the Wilsden area, he moved to Manningham in the late 1830s where he settled his wife and eleven children in Whetley Street and later in Picton Street. His children were, William, John, Joseph, Sarah, Nathan, Mary, Alfred, Martha, Tom, Ann and Caroline, all born between 1821 and 1843. He was a power loom worsted weaver. However, before marriage he had experienced a very different life.

Born in about 1787, he grew up to be a fine figure of a man for those days; as well as being 6 ft in height he had broad shoulders and was strong young man with a taste for adventure. He was accepted into the 1st Cavalry Brigade of The Royal Horse Guards (Blues) and soon found himself shipped abroad to fight the French under Wellington.

It appears that Thomas's first taste of battle was on 21 June 1813 at Vitoria in Spain where the British, Spanish and Portuguese ('the Allied forces' led by The Marquess of Wellington (later Duke)) defeated the French led by Joseph Bonaparte. The Blues were under the direct leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hill. However, Thomas' captain was probably William R. Clayton (later 'Sir') as Thomas was in Clayton's Troop. Hill's section was in the thick of the battle and when Thomas Picton's troops challenged the central part of the French line and eventually broke through, the French retreated defeated. The French lost 8,000 men dead, wounded or captured. The Allied forces, under Wellington, lost 5,158 dead or wounded, of which 3,675 were British, 921 Portuguese and 562 Spanish. Thomas may have then become embroiled in the sieges of Pamplona and San Sebastian before chasing the French back over the Pyrenees. Here further battles were fought at Nivelle and Nive.

Thomas's final battle before being discharged in 1816 was Waterloo, fought mainly on 18 June 1815. It was at this battle that a ball went through his hand.

The battle was fought between Napoleon's French troops and a coalition between the British under Wellington and Blucher's Prussian army. As the French were outnumbered, Napoleon decided that the only way he could win was to divide the British from Prussians. On 15 June, he crossed over to what is now Belgium and attacked the Prussians who were routed, losing 20,000 men, with Napoleon's losses only about half that number. During this battle, Wellington had his own fight, beating the French at Quatre Bras. Wellington fell back to Waterloo and the defeated but still strong Prussians moved north but kept in touch with the British. Wellington took a chateau at Hougoumont where he garrisoned his guardsmen. Thomas could have been amongst them.

The French moved against Hougoumont but were not successful. Soon after, the French attacked the allied Left Centre where the Belgium and Dutch troops were positioned. The French caused a rout. The British Heavy Cavalry reciprocated but took the charge too far and the French Cavalry began a counter-attack cutting the British to pieces. The British formed defensive squares, which were quite effective, but eventually their formation was compromised under heavy fire. However, they were saved by a poor decision by Napoleon not to send for reserves to hammer home his advantage. Instead, he sent troops to capture Plancenoit from the Prussians.

Photo of grave at Undercliffe of Thomas Firth with inscription 'one of the old Waterloo veterans'

Another poor decision was to release his most elite troops, the Imperial Guard, to march up the ridge from Hougoumont to La Haye Sainte and attack Wellington. Unfortunately, he was attacking Wellington at his strongest point and the Imperial Guard was routed by heavy firing from British Guardsmen and the Light Infantry. This defeat sent the French in to a panic and all night the Prussians harried the French Cavalry. Napoleon lost 40,000 men dead, wounded or captured. The Allies lost 22,000. The Allies entered Paris on 7 July. Thomas would have received the medal shown here. He passed away on 31 January 1871.

Reference on a well-known family research site to Thomas Firth who 'lost the use of his left thumb at Waterloo'



• Nurse Marshall •
victim of another viral epidemic

The groundworks volunteers are already hard at work with their autumn & winter work which doesn't involve the focus on strimming and grass cutting, naturally those are the priorities in spring & summer. One of their first has been to recover Unconsecrated Section I immediately behind the Behrens Family Mausoleum on the Main Promenade.



One of the stones we recovered was for a young lady victim to an earlier deadly pandemic viral infection. Nurse Mabel Marshall, who worked at 'St Luke's War Hospital', fell victim to Spanish Influenza on 29 October 1918, aged just 25, as the Great War was in its final days. Mabel will have cared for some of the local First World War victims at St Luke's after their being shipped back home for treatment

war wounds. Sadly many didn't survive their injuries and we now have nearly 300 First World War soldiers either buried or remembered in Undercliffe – the number growing as we make new discoveries.

We'll keep you updated as best we can with the groundwork volunteers' efforts in future newsletters, and as Cliff Tasker recommends in his volunteer profile: come and join us!

• Members' Fee Reminder •

Membership of Undercliffe Cemetery Charity is due on 1 January each year.

We know that everyone is busy and people are not as able to get to Undercliffe Cemetery as often, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but we would appreciate it if you could take a moment to pay your membership fee and continue your support of Undercliffe Cemetery Charity.

You can pay your membership fees of £10, by cheque made payable to **Undercliffe Cemetery Charity** and posted to the Membership Secretary at the address below:

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

Or you can pay our Registrar, Andrew Barker, at the Lodge if you are in the area.

We would be grateful to receive your payment as your membership fee supports our work in maintaining this Grade II* listed cemetery.

Thank you

• And finally •

The T&A's parent company, The Garnett Foundation, recently ran a campaign offering significant financial support to two local charities per catchment area based on the numbers of supporting readers' votes. Sadly, Undercliffe Cemetery Charity narrowly missed out in our catchment area, the winners being the Cinderella Club and Jacqui's Million. Emma Clayton, Lifestyle & Leisure, at the T&A and a regular supporter of Undercliffe, says we were very close to being in the top two but not quite. Perhaps next time ...





Cemetery Tours 2022



5th
March

A Winter's tour of the 'Historic Core' area.

9th
Apr

Highlights of the Cemetery - Volunteers' favourite stories.

7th
May

Artists, Entertainers and Photographers

28th
May

Death, Disease and Squalor

25th
June

New Discoveries at the Cemetery

16th
July

Women of Note



6th
Aug

Family History and Open Day with Cemetery Tour

27th
Aug

The Industrial Revolution • Railways, Canals, Ironworks and Mines

17th
Sept

Crime & Punishment in Victorian Bradford

8th
Oct

MILITARY TOUR

29th
Oct

An even more Gruesome Tour of the Cemetery

Bespoke tours can be arranged for local community groups and can be booked now.

Every year our members and friends support the charity by giving an annual donation of £10. Please help if you can. Details on our website or at the office.

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

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