



# UNDERCLIFFE UNCOVERED

## TALES FROM OUR TOMBS



### QUEEN'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE SPECIAL EDITION

#### • Vice-Chair's Comments •

Two very exciting developments have occurred at Undercliffe Cemetery in recent weeks: The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, and the installation of a headstone to mark the resting place of the Bronte family's nursemaid.

In this issue, fellow Trustee Jacqui Ambler relates the story of the application process which led to the work of the Charity's volunteers being formally recognised by the prestigious award of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is a tremendous accolade and, needless-to-say, everyone connected with the Charity is thrilled and delighted. As Jacqui indicates, there was a level of 'Bletchley Park secrecy' surrounding the application process which added to the tension and anticipation about whether it would be successful! Ed Anderson, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the County of West Yorkshire, will present the award to Allan Hillary, Chair of the Charity, at a formal event on 27 September (venue to be announced) to which all volunteers will be invited.

Steve Lightfoot, also a fellow Trustee, finally saw the campaign he spearheaded to place a permanent memorial on the grave of Nancy De Garrs come to fruition. Nancy was nursemaid to Charlotte Brontë, and it was fitting that the inscribed stone tablet was unveiled by Mike Bennett, a De Garrs descendant.

Interest in Undercliffe Cemetery continues to spread far and wide thanks to the work of our nearly 50 volunteers who beaver away in various capacities both seen and unseen. It is very gratifying to Allan and to me to witness this devotion to the Charity, and to the preservation of the Cemetery. The recent award to Bradford of City of Culture 2025 status will provide further opportunities for Undercliffe Cemetery to raise its profile through involvement in the activities and celebrations which are on the horizon.

John Jackson

#### • The story of our Queen's Award for Voluntary Service • Jacqui Ambler

It started with a phone call out of the blue late last summer: had we ever thought of applying for The Queen's Award at the Cemetery? The simple answer was 'no'. To my shame, not only had I never thought of it but I had never heard of it! This was soon remedied. A quick internet search told me that it was a group award specifically for volunteers, equivalent to an MBE – and very prestigious. However, looking in more detail at the examples given, it seemed to be awarded for the kinds of things we were already doing, and had been doing for many years.

It is true that the Charity and individuals within it had been recognised before: Christine and Tony Chapple were honoured by the Bradford Civic Society for their heroic work saving the Cemetery in the 1980s; Colin Clark had picked up the 'It's My City' award a decade later, having worked tirelessly with a team of volunteers to re-build the fabric of the Cemetery, and when approaching 'retirement' from these activities, Colin and his wife, Ann, attended a Queen's Garden Party as a mark of appreciation. But that was over fifteen years ago; both Christine and Colin have sadly passed away and are commemorated in the Cemetery themselves on the boulevard and at the main entrance respectively. Since that time, the Charity has matured under the inspirational leadership of our Chair, Allan Hillary, and has thriving groups of volunteers continually developing the infrastructure and services offered: the Grounds Maintenance Team; the Operations Group; the Management Team; the Education and Promotions Group (including researchers and tour guides); and the strategic work of the Trustees. It was clearly time to try for recognition of the work of all the current volunteers. John Jackson, Vice Chair of the Charity, agreed and it was decided to go ahead with the application. There were two initial imperatives: to meet the deadline for submission which was only a few weeks away in mid-September; and to keep the application as 'hush, hush' as possible – to abide by the protocols of the application process – but especially to keep any disappointment to ourselves as we knew that it was quite a complex process, and we had no idea if there was any chance of success.



Our first task was to identify the required sponsor: someone who was familiar with the work of the Charity, but not part of it, someone who was willing to give their time to the application process and submit on our behalf. A name immediately sprang to mind: John Bromley. As a local resident like myself at that time, John had been involved in the original, setting up of the Charity and the connection had been maintained through Margaret, he

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was a Trustee of many years standing until her recent retirement. We were fortunate in John's ready agreement and many hours were spent in John and Margaret's kitchen, navigating the various requirements of the online form. We also had to recruit two letters of support from individuals who were not directly involved themselves but who knew the Cemetery well and were able to write in some detail about the work of the Charity and the positive impact this had. Again, we were lucky in the ready acceptance of local resident and writer, Irene Lofthouse, and Dr Paul Jennings, who was able to describe the Cemetery's importance and the impact of volunteers' work from an academic perspective.

The next challenge was to provide the required background information, for example the total number of volunteer hours worked per year, our range of activities, details of our public liability insurance, our inclusive practices, and the range of people benefiting from the services provided at local, regional and national levels. The process of completing the form prompted much thought about who we are as a charity and our long-term goals as well as our immediate challenges, and made us realise just how much we have grown and developed over recent years. We are now a quite complex organisation, and many people with different interests are involved, all contributing to a thriving, exciting and forward-looking team. After an intense few weeks of phone calls, emails and visits to each other's houses, it was a great relief to press the 'submit' button at the end of the form just ahead of the submission date in September!

The news that we had got through to the next round came quickly. The next step was an assessment visit by two representatives from the Lord-Lieutenant's Office which has the role of acting regionally on the Sovereign's behalf. The assessment visit questionnaire was duly filled out, and a date for the visit agreed: Tuesday, 23 November when the Grounds Maintenance Team would be in action, and the Education and Promotions Group would be meeting in the Lodge. The two Deputy Lord-Lieutenants who attended could observe the work of different volunteers, see documentary evidence of various kinds and talk with John Jackson, Steve Lightfoot and others about the Charity's work. Inevitably a few people realised what the visit was about, but there was an appreciation of the need for confidentiality. John felt that it had been a successful visit with positive feedback, but we were aware that although a report from the two Deputy Lord-Lieutenants was likely to be favourable, it would be the national QAVS Office that would make recommendations, and Her Majesty, no less, who would give any final approval.

After the assessment report was sent to London, things went quiet till the following April when all the applicants who had got through to this point received an invitation from the Lord-Lieutenant to attend an online information seminar on protocols surrounding publicity, should any group be fortunate enough to receive a QAVS. Sue Crossley and I attended what was an interesting session. We heard from a couple of wonderful representatives of impressive organisations that had won previously, and were surrounded, in this virtual seminar, by a large number of other people from the region (over thirty if I remember rightly), who had also applied for the award and seemed to be doing amazing things. The message from the Lord-Lieutenant very clearly to everyone was stark: 'You have done brilliantly to get this far - but only a few groups get the award - so do not be disappointed.' Sue and I shared the same sense of apprehension afterwards, convinced that we would not gain the award after all. I was so glad that we had kept knowledge of the application to as few people as possible, and had avoided a more general sense of despondency!

When I saw an email from the QAVS office only two weeks later in my in-box, I had already accepted the inevitable and opened it reluctantly; imagine my surprise and absolute delight to read that we were, in fact, being congratulated ... I had to scroll back several times to ensure I hadn't misread it. It was thrilling to share some really good news after the difficulties of the past couple of years, while asking everyone to maintain 'radio silence' until 2 June as required by the award organisers. A rapidly created publicity group swung into action under Tim Hardy's leadership. Press releases and social media posts were prepared and arrangements made with the local media so that the good news could be publicised in the *Yorkshire Post*, *Telegraph* and *Argus* and via interviews on local radio stations and social media posts. It made it feel extra special that it was the week of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee when the whole country was in celebratory mode, although it meant that our own news had to compete with so many other events at the time!

However, our QAVS award is perpetual, which means we can continue to celebrate, and publicise this achievement with the prestigious purple logo on our website, publications and communications. And as individuals, UC Charity's volunteers are also entitled to identify themselves as winners of the award and celebrate accordingly!

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## • War Graves Visit by Allan Hillary and Andy Tyne • Bus to Bradford Group

Undercliffe Cemetery Chair, Allan Hillary, and Trustee/Newsletter compiler, Andy Tyne, joined with First World War group 'Bus To Bradford' on a recent tour to France to pay respects to those Bradford men who made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives in the First World War from 1914 to 1918. Among the group, pilgrimages made were to the War Cemetery graves of seven men remembered on family stones in Undercliffe.

Allan is pictured at the graveside of Private Ingham Crossley in Ruyaulcourt near Bapaume.



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Ingham lived on Idle Road, Bolton Junction, directly opposite Jimmy Speirs at the time Bradford City won the FA Cup in 1911. Jimmy was City's captain and winning goal-scorer. Andy is pictured behind the stone of Bradford Pal Private William Barraclough of Bradford Moor who is buried in Sucrerie Military Cemetery, Contalmaison on the Somme.

In 1919, before Portland headstones were erected at gravesides, William's mother, Priscilla, was pictured at his wooden grave marker and the image was used for the front cover of a booklet we produced for our 2014 First World War centenary tours. Bus To Bradford will, whenever possible, be making annual battlefield/cemetery visits and with over 200 men remembered on Undercliffe stones, there are many more to visit. Please let us know if you have anyone you'd like us and Bus to Bradford to cover.



## • Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Visits to Undercliffe Cemetery •



We've had no fewer than three visits from our great friends at the CWGC this spring and summer to help us maintain and keep the stones visible and tidy. In addition to that work - which they do annually - there have been some repairs to gravestones and, very unusually, the erection of a new stone at the grave of Private Michael Joseph Garvey. He was buried here after his death on 5 January 1919, however, until now there has been no stone to remember his military service. There are many potential reasons why this is so. If and when we discover the real reason, we'll be sure to let you know. Watch this space - it could be very interesting.

## • Bradford Literature Festival •

As part of our association with the Bradford Literature Festival, we recently hosted two well-attended evening tours for people interested in learning of the many literary connections of those who are buried at Undercliffe. Our expert tour guides and researchers presented well-received, fascinating (and sometimes amusing) stories about a wide range of Bradford's literary characters, encouraging many visitors to book on our future inspiring tours - and perhaps to join our dedicated team of volunteers.

We've several tours still to come, so please keep an eye on the website and our Facebook Group (click on logo) for further news.





## • Nancy De Garrs •

Steve Lightfoot

After Charlotte Brontë was born in 1816, Nancy De Garrs – more commonly known as Nancy Garrs – was recommended to Patrick Brontë by the Bradford Industrial School. She moved in with the family at Thornton and worked for the Brontës for eight years, including when they moved to Haworth. When the Undercliffe Cemetery volunteers discovered that Nancy had been buried at the Cemetery it was quite a surprise to find out that she had died in the Bradford Workhouse. We just had to find out more and began to research her story.

Two remarkable interviews had taken place, one at her home in 1877 and the other at the Bradford Workhouse in 1884. The interviews revealed just how close Nancy had been to the Brontë sisters and Branwell and Patrick.

They had given her gifts; these were her Brontë relics, which she treasured. She never tired of talking about her days with the Brontës. Hanging on the wall at her home was a letter from Charlotte; she was offered £5 for this but wouldn't part with it. There was also a photograph of Charlotte on glass, most likely an Ambrotype. The reporter who visited her at home said, *'The expression of the features in Miss Brontë's portrait, which is taken on glass, is altogether pleasanter than that in Miss Gaskell's book.'* Was this a different image of Charlotte from the one we all know? If it was, where is that photograph now?

Some of Nancy's Brontë relics were sold to the Brontë museum for one guinea, in 1896, by her nephew John Hodgson Widdop. There was a travelling bag that Branwell had given her, some sovereign scales that had belonged to Patrick, and a letter of reference. But there were other things that as far as we know have never been found: a roasting jack that Patrick had left Nancy; a scrap book that Nancy had been keeping – with all sorts of memorabilia and newspaper cuttings relating to the Brontës; and Charlotte's letter and the photograph referred to above. Had Widdop sold these items to someone else or did Nancy give them to one of her sisters or her brother?

Nancy had played her part in bringing up the six Brontë children – feeding, washing and clothing them and taking them for walks on the moors. Nobody knows what influence she had on the children, but she must have had some. She had also defended Patrick when Elizabeth Gaskell had made several outlandish statements regarding his behaviour. She deserves to be remembered.

Nancy's dying wish was not to be buried in a pauper grave. Even before her death, a fundraising appeal was launched. The news reached the *New York Times* which appealed for funds, although when she died there still wasn't enough to get Nancy a headstone. The Undercliffe volunteers decided that Nancy should be remembered, and it was time for her to have a proper memorial. The research was published, money was raised, more donations were forthcoming from the family and others, and finally, a headstone was installed on Monday, 27 June 2022. Mike Bennett, a descendant of Henry De Garrs, Nancy's brother, unveiled the stone.



*'There's no use in weeping,  
Though we are condemned to part:  
There's such a thing as keeping  
A remembrance in one's heart.'*

Charlotte Brontë 1838

## • The Federer Collection •

Local Bradford newspaper the *Telegraph and Argus* recently published an excellent piece on the truly colossal collection of over 8,000 books and pamphlets accumulated by Charles Antoine Federer, a Swiss emigrant to Bradford in 1857. Certain items, such as Abraham Holroyd's *Currer Bell and her Sisters*, 1855, and *Reports of the Brontë Society & Museum*, 1896, relate to Patrick Brontë and his famous literary daughters. Very appropriately, Charles is buried just in front of Nancy de Garrs's newly restored burial plot, with an inscription on his headstone 'President Of the Bradford Historical and Antiquarian Society'.

You can read more about the Federer Collection by clicking on the logo,

**Telegraph & Argus**



## • Volunteer Profile •

**As part of our continuing series on our volunteers, we talk to Gaynor Haliday:  
Researcher, Tour Guide and Trustee**

Having been brought up in the district, I have a long association with Undercliffe Cemetery, my first foray being a dusk-time scramble over the wall with my best friend who lived on Pollard Lane. Landing among the eerie gravestones, our overactive teenaged minds were too spooked to ever repeat the experience – though we did later visit the amazing monuments in daylight.

Through my extensive family history research, I knew my family had been ‘Undercliffe Folk’, living at various addresses close to the Cemetery through the years. I also knew that my great grandparents were buried here. Somewhere. So when I spotted a plea on Facebook for researchers to join the Cemetery team, I jumped at the chance.



Soon I was part of a great group of like-minded, enthusiastic researchers, at first looking into the lives of Bradford’s worthies – names of men who were familiar to me – and subsequently uncovering stories of newer discoveries that we just have to share. I love being able to tell their tales through our ever-popular programme of tours. Believe me, we have some extraordinary people buried in Undercliffe Cemetery!

I also love being part of the transcribing project, which is revealing so many new topics for us to explore, particularly around infant mortality (which affected not only the poor but the wealthier Bradfordians too) and the thousands of paupers buried here without a headstone to their name.

I mentioned at the beginning that I knew my great grandparents were buried here. Then another set of great, great grandparents. Then another set of great grandparents. Then a set of great, great, great grandparents!

So far, I’ve found I have eleven graves containing various family members. What a connection – and one I didn’t realise I had. So thank you for placing the Facebook ad and letting me be part of the team.

On a slightly amusing note, when I was very small, I had a playmate with whom I built sandcastles, played marbles in the gutter and made balls of softened tar & generally hung about with. When his family moved away, I didn’t see him again. He was a small chap then and my mum often used to wonder what had happened to ‘little Andy Tyne’. I wish I could tell her that 50+ years later, he’s still little and I know what’s happened to him!

***Gaynor will be sharing her family story & how she used our records to discover so many relatives in Undercliffe Cemetery at our Open Day on 6 August 2022.***

[Click on the OPEN DAY logo for more details.](#)



## • Donation •

We’ve received another kind and generous donation from long-standing supporter Paul Hartley, which has been used to buy four Bulldog hedge clippers. With the growth of vegetation as it is at the moment (raid and rampant!), they are getting plenty of use by our grounds volunteer team. We are hugely grateful for all donations we receive; they genuinely help us look after this beautiful place. Sometimes keeping up with keeping everything tidy feels a bit like the equivalent of painting the Forth Bridge (although a solution has been found for that never-ending task!). We are able to accept any donations via our website; cheques sent to the Cemetery are just as welcome; and if you’re visiting for any reason, we now have a credit card facility. Thank you so much for your continued interest and support.

To make a donation, either click on the CAF logo or use the QR Code.



*Thank you for your support!*

