



UNDERCLIFFE UNCOVERED

TALES FROM OUR TOMBS



• Chair's Comments •

As we start the new year, we look forward to new and exciting opportunities for the Charity. We are already establishing a closer relationship with the Bradford Museums service and we will have a stand at the Industrial Museum on 5 and 11 February. Raising awareness of the work we do at Undercliffe Cemetery is so important in recruiting new volunteers and making the general public aware of what an historic gem the Cemetery is. The digitisation of the burial records of the Uncon section of the Cemetery will be completed in 2023 and we will finally be able to put the microfiche copies of the records and the rather sad-looking microfiche reader into storage. The digitisation has taught us so much about the Cemetery; we have discovered details about how Bradford Cemetery Company conducted its business, including the 'Company Graves', the colour-coded plan showing charges for a family plot and the movement of remains from other cemeteries to Undercliffe. There is no shortage of tragic tales behind some of the burials, but we must celebrate the lives of many of Bradford's Victorians, the people who made Bradford the wool capital of the world. As a researcher myself, I love to uncover new information and highlight of 2022 for me was the story of Colonel Skelly. We would never have found out about him had it not been for the digitisation. Another gem – and thanks to the West Yorkshire Archives for this – was the discovery of the plans of the Camm Brothers stained-glass windows which were to be installed in the old mortuary chapels. We still don't know if the windows were ever installed or if the plans were just proposals. The windows would have been magnificent.

The tours this year will be packed with new discoveries and new research that our volunteers have completed. This research will enable us to add more stories to the historical section of our website and we will reveal many of them in our newsletters and through our social media channels. We now have a good following on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. If you don't follow us at the moment please do to be kept up to date with all our activities and the information on upcoming tours.

As the workers of the nation clamour to keep up with inflation, we must remember that our income remains static and every penny has to be earned through hard work and through the donations that we receive from our Friends. The Council wishes us well but does not follow this up with adequate funding. Our small grant has not increased since it was first introduced many years ago.

The departure of our only employee, Andrew Barker, due to retirement, will be a huge blow and we are currently looking for someone to replace him. If you have the necessary skills and enthusiasm, why not put forward an application?

Thanks again to all our volunteers and supporters; without you the maintenance of the Cemetery would not be possible.

Steve Lightfoot



• Digitisation •

Our research volunteers are making great progress with their work transcribing and digitising the Cemetery records. When complete, this will make accessing and sharing the historical family records and information from the formation of the Cemetery much more practical – and – like other similar information providers, will be a significant income source for us to finance some of the many other areas requiring finance.

So far we've been concentrating on the Unconsecrated section where there are approximately 51,000 recorded burials; we now have photos of practically all these records, either from the Record Books or the Registers completed at the time of burial. You'll understand with these records going back 150 years, some are more difficult to read and record than others, but to date we've transcribed 60 per cent on to our growing database. In time we'll start on the 70,000 in the Consecrated section.



cont.

cont.

Many things are being uncovered in the process, amongst which are numerous fascinating people and their stories – ranging from Colonel Skelly, a direct descendant of Edward Longshanks or Edward I (the ‘Hammer Of the Scots’), to a chap whose occupation at his death was stated as ‘organ grinder’! In addition, there are several Great War burials which record the military hospital in which the deceased passed away. These are not necessarily Bradford Military Hospital (or St Luke’s as it’s now known) and add the final piece in the jigsaw for much of our military research.

As you can see, there’s much more still to do but no doubt our New Discoveries tours will feature some of the more interesting stories and, hopefully, accessible headstones. A piece of research completed from one such digitisation find from Deb Stirling is below but be warned, it’s strong stuff.

• Eric Morgan Langley • An Unfortunate Death

The entry in Undercliffe Cemetery’s records for Eric was too intriguing not to investigate further as it stated: ‘Killed on Road, Bawtry’ and his occupation appeared to be a Motor Tester. Eric’s story is that of a life cut short. He was born in Worcestershire on 12 December 1898 to Joseph Henry and Mary C. Langley. Joseph was the son of a labourer; however, after settling in Barkerend Road, Bradford, Joseph H. worked his way up from manual jobs to that of an assurance agent. Eric joined up a few days before his eighteenth birthday and served firstly in the Royal Flying Corps and then in the Machine Gun Guards. After the war, he appears to have moved to Peterborough where he was employed as a draughtsman at Baker Perkins and lodged at a property in Lincoln Road. He had served as a police dispatch rider during the General Strike (4–12 May 1926) and was quite a good motorbike racer although there appears to be no published evidence of this. Perhaps he was not the greatest when it came to bike maintenance as he was sent to court twice for not having the right lighting on his bike.

On 16 May 1926, after visiting his fiancée in Shipley, he was returning on his Sunbeam ‘racing model’ when at about 8 p.m. he met his death on the Great North Road near Bawtry. He was attempting to overtake a small car when he hit a charabanc head on and he slid under the radiator. He died instantly and reports say that every bone in his body was broken. Witnesses say that the speedometer showed a speed of 72mph, others 76mph, which was quite fast on public roads. His body was removed to a nearby garage. He was buried on 22 May 1926 in grave I127 Uncon at Undercliffe Cemetery.

Research: Deborah Stirling

• Pam Dooley • Volunteer of the Quarter

I first joined the team in 2020 after a chat with Andrew Barker the Registrar, complimenting him on the work that was being done. He said it was all down to the volunteers, so I decided to join as a volunteer.

I really enjoy the work and being in a team of very good people who are all very committed to the maintenance and improvement of the Cemetery.

The one achievement I am most proud of was my discovery of a praying angel sculpture in a box at the rear of the work hut. I started an investigation of where she’d come from and came up trumps when I found the plinth where she belonged. With the help of my colleagues, she was placed back in her original position from who knows how long ago; the pictures show the before and after.

For the future, we need to encourage more volunteers to join us. It’s hard work but so rewarding to volunteer in such a magical place.



• Woodland Trust •

We’re keen to re-emphasise our respect for nature in Undercliffe and whilst we face a tough task over the incursion of brambles and general overgrowth over our 26-acre site we really do maintain, preserve and protect all those features which add to the Cemetery’s genuine awesome beauty. The Woodland Trust appreciates our efforts and we’ve been awarded a gift of a substantial number of slow-growing trees to be planted at our discretion in areas we feel would benefit and we look forward to sharing these with you in the years to come.



• Groundwork Improvements •

As per previous years, the spring and summer groundwork volunteer focus on grass strimming and garden maintenance has now passed and the team have focused their considerable efforts on reclaiming areas lost to the major vegetation growth. One such area is the left-hand side of the Main Promenade past the Behrens monument up to the Undercliffe Old Road wall – sections Uncon I & K. Before and after photos illustrate vividly the impact. Here are some that as well as featuring on our social media platforms – which are busier than ever – went to press in the local *Telegraph & Argus* newspaper and will have been read locally, nationally and internationally.



Gravedigger Graham Swain, our great friend and supporter, used some of his professional equipment and, with the help of a good few of the groundwork team one recent Tuesday morning, managed to fill in a huge and potentially dangerous hole that had been found during previous work in Uncon K.

A recent New Discoveries tour included a talk on Harry Brook, not the England cricketer but a Bradford casualty of the Battle of Spion Kop in 1900. Here's a picture of his headstone, the one with a Remembrance cross at its base; how much safer it is now to remember him!

As we've mentioned before, reclaiming these areas and discovering and sharing some of their fascinating stories combining the skills and efforts of both the groundwork and the research volunteer teams is tremendously satisfying. The icing on the cake is having the resources to keep on top of it and not let them be lost again.



• New Great War Find •

Section Con F is being opened up for safer access. Amongst the riches it contains is the tomb of Felix Marsh Rimmington and his family. Rimmington's story as leading light in the pharmaceutical chemist world is well told on our website, along with the notorious 'Humbug Billy' case. Please take a look if you haven't yet done so. The whole area facing west from the Main Promenade from the Historic Core to the Smith Monument is now largely free of the long-standing and invasive huge areas of vegetation overgrowth and we can now enjoy uninterrupted views across to the Undercliffe Lane wall. Here are a few for you to enjoy. Our most senior associates can't remember this section of Undercliffe being as open as it now is.



A new find at grave reference Con F 202 gave us the family stone of Private Willie Kershaw who fought in the Great War with the Honourable Artillery Co. before being killed on 9 October 1917 aged 33. He was living at Coleridge Place in Bradford when he joined up. Willie is the 287th Great War soldier, sailor or airman buried or remembered at Undercliffe. As we find more stories, we keep adding to this number. Some interesting aspects to Willie's find – literally next to his stone, at Con F 201, Private Walter Darby of Godwin Street, Bradford is remembered. He had joined the Machine Gun Corps and died less than 3 weeks after Willie, on 26 October 1917, aged 24. Walter's stone is well known to us, but until now Willie's wasn't since it was totally overgrown and had fallen flat on the ground (as the pictures show).

cont.



cont.

Another uncanny factor linking Willie and Walter is that both stones are inscribed 'Killed in action in France'. In fact, both were killed in Belgium in the horrendous Battle of Passchendaele and both are remembered on the panels of the massive Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing. Sadly, neither have a known place of burial; two Bradford men remembered in the same foreign field together and remembered in Undercliffe together.



• 2023 Cemetery Tours •

We're working on the details of this year's tours; there will be a mixture of the good old favourites (but with new 'finds') and some new themes to attract your attention and attendance. Details will follow, so keep an eye out! Here's a photo from our last one of 2022 on the theme of 'Even More Gruesome'. We do like to enter into the spirit!



Speaking of which, one of this year's tours will cover our connection with pubs, alcohol and the licensed trade. We've dozens of references to local pubs, one such being the very local Malt Kiln, Idle Road, Undercliffe recently found in F Con section.

An interesting contrast is that of Robert Richard Labatt and his wife Agnes, both buried in the Historic Core. Richard was a son of John Kinder Labatt, founder of the massive Labatt Brewing Company formed in Canada. Richard met and married Bradford girl Agnes in 1871, but died in 1877. Agnes died in 1916, and both are buried at Undercliffe. Theirs and many other stories to be told!!

• Volunteers' Christmas Party •

A group of volunteers and trustees enjoyed the lovely hospitality and Christmas fare at the George and Dragon, Apperley Bridge. Many a toast was proposed and taken up; most of the many local, national and international issues were discussed - some at great length - and a wide range of proposals, solutions and remedies put forward. A *Question Time* hosted at Undercliffe would be tremendous!



cont.



cont.



Sponsored by the finest *Thwaites Wainwright* ales!

• A Call For Research Volunteers •



We are still looking for volunteers to join our Research Team. We are a friendly bunch of detectives who research the stories of those buried in the Cemetery. Whether you are interested in the great or the poor, the villain or the hero, there are plenty to get your teeth into. Also, there is an opportunity to rescue the long dead from oblivion by helping us transcribe the records. You might find your talent in promoting the Cemetery, working in our education scheme or connecting with other organisations. Failing that we always need practical help on tour days, guiding, working in the cafe and we always welcome cake bakers!

If you are interested, then please drop us a line at:

office@undercliffcemetry.co.uk

• Social Media •

Most of you are probably aware that we have some hugely popular Social Media sites.

Our following continues to grow month by month, concentrating on quality rather than quantity, our articles and photography are always worth a look, it is also the best way to keep an eye on our events and the latest news. With almost 1,600 followers on Facebook, almost 1,300 followers on Twitter and almost 800 followers on Instagram we are definitely worth a follow!

We have followers worldwide, not only in the UK but as far afield as the USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Brazil to name just a few!

Website 

www.undercliffcemetry.co.uk

Facebook 

Undercliffe Cemetery Charity

Twitter 

@Undercliffcem

Instagram 

undercliffcemetry

• And Finally!!! • Recent Filming

We've recently had film crews recording for an unstated Netflix production (no not 'that' couple) and another from a well-known TV drama serial based in Yorkshire. This helps bring in more greatly appreciated income, and coverage to match that we enjoyed from *Peaky Blinders* and several others over the years. Clearly, we're attractive to entertainment producers too.

