

UNDERCLIFFE UNCOVERED

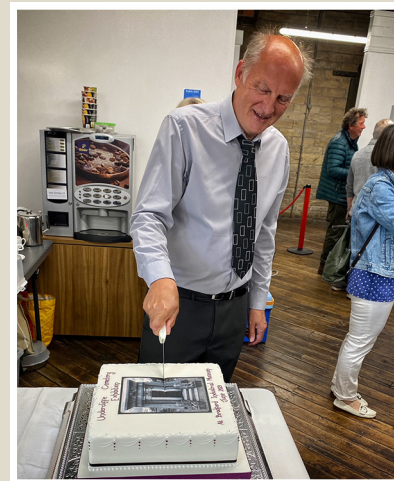
TALES FROM OUR TOMBS



• Chair's Comments •

It's that time of year when the grass grows at an incredible rate. You turn your back on an area just cleared and up pop the brambles along with hundreds of sycamore seedlings. The equipment we use is always tested to the limit, and some was getting just too old to do the job efficiently. It was time to invest in a new mower and four new strimmers which I am pleased to say are now in service.

Last year all the volunteers were delighted that the Charity had been awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - and to top it all we got an invitation from the Palace to attend the Royal Garden party. Only two representatives could attend, and these were chosen from the Trustees. It was the perfect opportunity for Jacqui our longest-serving volunteer, who has been involved with the Cemetery since the 1970s to represent the Charity, and also for Stewart who heads up our groundwork team. As you will see from Jacqui's report, I think they both managed to sample the wonderful food that was on offer, and see our new king. What an occasion to celebrate our award, a day to remember for these two, and a year to remember for all of us.



Our engagement with the local community continues to be the focus of our attention in this quarter. John, Jacqui and Rebecca engaged with Peel Park Primary School; Tim and the other volunteers helped with content put on a marvellous display at the Industrial Museum; and Riaz from Bradford Through the Lens and Maria from Bradford Movie Makers produced some films for us.

In wider connections, we had a family visit us from Ohio, USA. They were tracing their ancestors. Everyone pulled together to make their visit a success. It was also a reminder of how, in days gone by, it was Bradford folk who emigrated to other countries such as Canada, the USA and Australia.

We also hosted a regional meeting of the volunteers who maintain and inspect the War Graves from across the North of England. It was interesting to hear about their work and the challenges that they face. Andy took them on a short tour of the Cemetery to look at some of the military graves. Two tours were laid on for the Bradford Literature Festival and we had around 40 visitors for each event. Other tours included a 1940s-themed tour, Immigration during the Victorian era, Bradford's Garden Cemetery, and a Researchers' Favourites tour. We also had a visit from the volunteers at Beckett Street Cemetery in Leeds who showed great interest and wanted to know all about how our volunteer group operated. Our plan is to work with more cemetery volunteer groups and a visit has been planned to Lister Lane in Halifax.

Security is always a concern and we have started to raise the bollards at the Undercliffe Lane entrance to prevent quad bikes from entering the Cemetery. The quad bikes are a menace all over Bradford, and why the council doesn't ban their use is a complete mystery. The bollards will be raised when the office is closed.

This quarter, Jaime joined the team and what a marvellous start she has had - getting to know the work and all the volunteers. Her experience with the Scouts came in useful when a local Scouts group visited the Cemetery with their parents to do a litter pick and help restore the grave of Colonel Skelly.

Steve Lightfoot

• Bradford Industrial Museum Exhibition •

At the end of November 2022 and following on from our QAVS award in September of the same year, the volunteers at Undercliffe Cemetery were looking at ways to expand the charity's profile and recognition throughout Bradford and the surrounding areas, in order to take advantage of the city's recent award of City of Culture 2025. What better way of achieving this than approaching the amazing team at Bradford Museums & Galleries for help and advice? Their team, led by Head of Learning, Vicky Clifton, visited Undercliffe at the end of January 2023; it was the beginning of an amazing partnership and a team from Undercliffe were invited to erect, in early February, a display at the Bishop Blaise (patron saint of woolcombers) festival on two consecutive weekends at the Bradford Industrial Museum.



cont.

cont.

Such was the success of the event, and realising the importance of Undercliffe Cemetery and the part it played in Bradford's history, we were invited to hold our own exhibition in the Café Gallery. Following on from an intense couple of months' preparation by the Education & Promotions team, the exhibition was finally unveiled on 7 June.

The exhibition consists of 29 colourful information boards which feature the history of the Cemetery along with stories of individuals and events that helped shape Bradford. The exhibition, originally planned to be on display until the end of September, has had such positive feedback that we have now been asked by the museum about the possibility of our exhibition running until the beginning of December! Watch this space!



If you haven't seen the exhibition, or perhaps have never visited the Industrial Museum, now is the time to go, it's a superb venue with some amazing exhibits and, of course, with the added bonus that now you can read all about 'Bradford's History in Stone' as you enjoy your cappuccino in the museum's Café Gallery!

• A Grand Day Out! •

Following our QAVS award in June last year, two Cemetery Trustees were privileged to represent the Charity at the Coronation Garden Party on Wednesday, 3 May 2023 ...

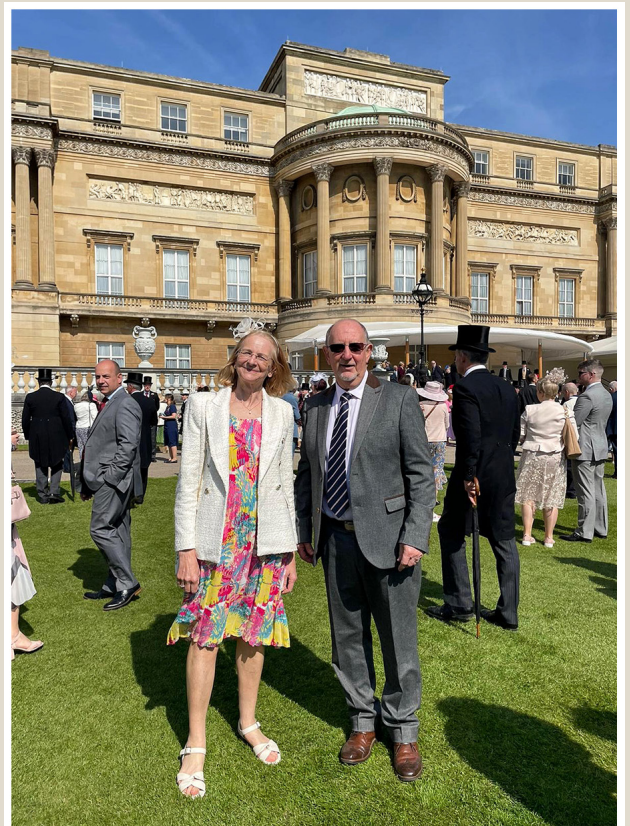
I was looking out for Stewart Field from the corner of a Costa at Victoria Station. It took me a moment to recognise him without the boiler suit and UC tabard; he was very smartly suited and booted for the occasion! We had a quick coffee and I had a chance to don my fascinator, carefully transported in an old Black Magic chocolate box (thanks, British Heart Foundation, Bradford).

All set, we made our way out under the station archway and walked up Buckingham Palace Road to join the snaking queues along the perimeter walls of the royal residence. As we waited, we watched as workmen opposite busily constructed the stands at the top of the Mall to be used for the Coronation. There were lots of us queuing, all smiling and clutching our entrance tickets and photo IDs, waiting for 3 p.m. to tick round so that we could get inside the huge Palace gates. There were only the security checks to get through now. Stewart breezed in, but the uniformed official held on to my passport for a little too long, then asked me if I was still living in Sheffield, the place of birth on my passport. I was a bit flummoxed, and at this point I couldn't help noticing a row of his uniformed pals behind him all armed with machine guns ... My face must have fallen, and I confessed to living in Bradford now, but a smile broke out (he hails from Chesterfield), and he waved me through as I commiserated with him on the twisted spire ...

We were in. There were two bandstands, blasting out belters as only brass bands can, in their brilliant scarlet suits and gold buttons. We strolled along the manicured lawns and found ourselves heading for the visitors' tea tent, joining another queue which gave us a chance to feast our eyes on the fare on offer. It did not disappoint: the menu included Coronation chickpea wraps, crushed pea and mint fingers, smoked salmon and lemon cream cheese mini-bagels, Clarence Court egg mayonnaise and fresh salad cress. There wasn't a crust in sight, and everything was impeccably presented and served, and there was a lovely atmosphere as people waited their turn patiently, all minding their Ps and Qs!

For 'afters', there was a range of cakes to rival those on offer at our tour events. As they were miniatures, I was able to sample almost all of them: coffee eclairs, raspberry shortbread, chocolate croustillants, mulberry Bakewell

cont.



cont.

slices, apricot and lavender tarts, doll-sized Victoria sponges – as well as scones with jam and clotted cream. I was in cake heaven! This was all washed delicately down with Twinings ‘Garden Party Tea’, a variety which I haven’t spotted, as yet, on the shelves of Shipley Asda.

Suitably replete after an hour’s queuing and grazing, the rendition of the National Anthem from the bandstands alerted us to the arrival of the royal party. Although the flag was flying – so we knew the king was in residence – I wasn’t convinced that he would have time to appear, given the Coronation was only three days away. However, appear he did, on the West Terrace at the rear of the Palace, in morning suit and top hat, along with Camilla in an eye-catching navy and white dress coat, and the new Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, with Edward in a matching morning suit and topper, and Sophie in a lovely pink gingham dress coat and high court shoes (walking carefully on the grass!).



Stewart held his camera above the heads of those in front of us and got a good shot of Charles chatting to people in the line. When they mingled, it was lovely to see Camilla making a beeline for those with mobility issues who could not approach easily. A couple of lines developed, forming a corridor towards the entrance to the royal tea tent (separate from the visitors’ and diplomats’ tea tents), with the royal party stopping to speak to individuals as they made their way towards their afternoon tea. We opted to do a tour of the gardens, and were able to do a quick maintenance audit of the area ... both the Ladies and Gents scored ten out of ten.

Further into the gardens we found a lake, a rose garden, and an arboretum. At the far end we were only a stone’s throw from Hyde Park Corner and the junction of Knightsbridge, Park Lane and Piccadilly, but it didn’t feel or sound like it. Strolling back towards the Palace, we found a pair of enormous ornate urns that would not have looked out of place at Undercliffe.

Finding ourselves back near the tea tent, we bagged a couple of chairs (which couldn’t be had for love nor money earlier) and sat down to enjoy the atmosphere and some more people-watching. Stewart spied the waiting staff mingling with trays of ice cream – and we felt duty bound to sample them. They were just the thing to cool off as the afternoon was, unbelievably, continuously warm and sunny, without a cloud in sight.

Soon it was time to join the crowds filing out the way we had come in, via the Palace gates, and make our way by tube and train back to Bradford. It had been a marvellous day to remember: A Grand Day Out!

Jacqui Ambler, May 2023

• Riaz Ahmed • And Bradford Through the Lens

How did I start?

I was born and bred in Bradford and I have been a photographer since 2011.

When the lockdown was first announced on 23 March 2020 my photography came to a standstill, and had a lot of time on my hands.

So, I decided to venture into isolated areas and do some filming as a pastime. I have a fascination with cemeteries and graveyards, as my photography always represented real life situations (street photography).

I knew of two victims of the Yorkshire Ripper who were buried in Scholemoor Cemetery in Bradford, so I did a brief murder trail for both victims, with their backstory, on film – and **Bradford Through The Lens** YouTube channel was born.

It was at that point I had a feeling I could take the channel on a positive journey and show Bradford’s amazing History and Heritage – although I started off with some gruesome stories.

My driving force was to break the stigma and the bad reputation that Bradford has in general, and also being an Asian person, I was hoping to take this interest across other parts of the community.



cont.

cont.

I have a strong passion for doing this in Bradford, because of my roots. So, my idea was to do something different, go the extra mile for the viewers on YouTube.

For the first year or so, Imtiaz Sabir did some filming with me, but he left a little while back. However, through my viewership, I came across Mark Nicholson and Andrew Bolt, both amazing authors of books about Bradford. They are now both part of the **B TTL** team and I get to film some very interesting videos with them. I am really proud to work with them!

What fascinates you about Bradford?

Apart from being a Bradfordian? Well, I think there is something very quirky about Bradford. Sometimes I wake up and I have love/hate relationship with it. I think you know what I mean!

But it has a wonderful history which is not often highlighted. For example, it has the oldest concert hall in still in use; cars were once manufactured in Bradford; the city was the first to introduce school dinners – and much more.

But for me, I like to film stories that are lost in time.

The future of B TTL

I will always cater for what the viewers want, and it seems that there is a lot of interest in what we are doing on the channel. We are often contacted by people who want to commend our work, and at times families have managed to find lost relatives' graves through our films. That really touches us to the core!

A big shout out to Undercliffe Cemetery & volunteers; most of our stories end up in the Cemetery, which shows us how important this Cemetery is to Bradford! We will continue to promote it and bring you lost stories of Bradford district.

Who knows, if we still have fuel in the tank and have the resources, we might cover other areas. What do you think?



• American Visitors to Undercliffe Cemetery •

Our chairman, Steve Lightfoot, was delighted to meet the Skillicorn family from Ohio when they visited the Cemetery on 13 June 2023

They were visiting to pay their respects to Judy Skillicorn's great-great grandfather and grandmother who were buried at Undercliffe in 1879. The family had an old photo of the headstone, and we traced where it was in the Cemetery. Unfortunately, it was in an overgrown area, but our groundwork volunteers came to the rescue on the Tuesday before the visit and cleared a pathway through to the grave.

The ground was very uneven but with great care Steve and Judy's granddaughter managed to guide Judy and her husband Robert to where the grave was. Thankfully, the headstone was in remarkable condition considering its age. Judy was very appreciative of the work that the volunteers had done in clearing the ground.

She told us a little bit about her family history.

'It is a very special memory of being there at the top of the hill and looking over the city of Bradford and knowing where my ancestors were buried. Thomas Parratt's son, William Thomas Parratt emigrated to Pt Edward, Ontario, Canada and married an Irish woman. They had six children who emigrated with their parents to Cleveland, Ohio, USA and I knew all of them. My grandfather was named after his father and was William Thomas Parratt, also. His brother, George Watson (named after the son who died in infancy on the tombstone) Parratt, is credited with throwing the first forward pass in professional football and is listed in the sports record books. His sister Mary Parratt was a horse woman and participated in horse shows where her horse "danced". My grandfather was quite an athlete and specialised in running events.'



cont.



cont.



Here some of the family, granddaughter Skye, daughter Jodie, and Judy are looking at one of the old record books which was thought to be lost but had turned up by chance a few years ago. It wasn't the one relating to their family, but it gave them some idea of what the old records looked like. As it was a day for tracing the family history, Judy wore her Parratt T-shirt.

The family, along with their tour guide Andrew Ward from Expedition Yorkshire, were shown some of the highlights of the Cemetery. Andrew then took them to Bradford Cathedral and Saltaire. They had also visited Haworth. The family gave a generous donation to the Charity.

Sarah from the West Yorkshire Archives copied the original burial records which were sent to the family



• Arnold Pitts Remembered •

Our last newsletter told of our stalwart volunteer Graham Swain's visit to Tyne Cot Cemetery in Belgium to remember two Bradford Great War casualties who are also remembered on family headstones in Undercliffe. This time, here's your newsletter compiler, Andy Tyne, recently remembering Arnold Pitts who was killed in the Great War and like so many others has no known grave and is remembered on the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing near Ypres, also in Belgium. Arnold is also remembered in Undercliffe. Private Arnold Pitts of the Northumberland Fusiliers was killed on 12 April 1918 aged just 18.

He'd lived in the family home on Charnwood Road in Eccleshill, Bradford, the youngest of five children to parents John and Alice. His eldest sibling was 21 years his senior. Arnold's sister Mary was the mother of Eric Anderson, a Second World War soldier who was killed on 6 April 1943 in Tunisia, North Africa, having had the honour of being awarded the highest military award that can be given, the Victoria Cross. Eric, who'd lived in Fagley near Undercliffe, was buried where he died and is recognised on the family plot with Arnold as pictured.



• Bespoke Tours •

Undercliffe's Education and Promotions team is trying hard to make the tours we run even more appealing to the general public. The funds raised by these tours are crucial to our financial well-being and our latest innovation is the creation of bespoke tours to cater for smaller groups at different times through the week. As we've now uncovered so many interesting stories, we are able to run tours across several different themes and subjects. We charge £60 for groups of up to eight people. Please contact the Undercliffe Registrar for further details.



• More Ground Improvements •

The groundwork being done by our Tuesday volunteers continues to amaze us all. Here's a couple of before and after photos showing the impact they've made. We've never enough volunteers though for both groundwork and research, so if you want to become part of either (or both) group(s), please call the Cemetery or pop in on a Tuesday morning – you'll be made more than welcome.



• Meet our New Registrar, Jaime Armitage •

I joined Undercliffe Cemetery Charity as the new registrar at the beginning of May; the role is so varied and I am loving it. I am no stranger to Undercliffe; many years ago, I lived nearby and often looked in awe at the amazing monuments as I passed by. I have also been a family historian since my teens and discovered that I too have relatives buried here.

One thing that attracted me to the role is the possibilities Undercliffe holds – there is so much to the place that people may not realise. The artwork and sculpture on the monuments is beautiful and the amount of wildlife, both flora and fauna, is astonishing. Only last week, I was walking through the Cemetery and a fox ran across the path in front of me – I have been told we have a whole family of foxes living in the Cemetery. The pink-blossomed hawthorn trees, which you don't see very often, and the smell of the honeysuckle as you walk down the central path to the promenade. It is such a peaceful place to sit and relax.

I don't spend all my time at Undercliffe. When I am not at work, you can usually find me at Scouts as I am a very busy Scout Leader across West Yorkshire, including travelling to the 25th World Scout Jamboree in Korea in a few weeks – and if that wasn't enough I am also Mum to three very active girls; rest and relaxation is definitely overrated in our house!

I am looking forward to watching the Cemetery change over the seasons and hearing the stories that are just waiting to be uncovered by our amazing researchers and groundwork volunteers as they continue to reclaim areas in the Cemetery that have been lost over the years.

It would be lovely to chat with some of our members and locals, so please call in to The Lodge if you are passing and say Hello.



Jaime at the 24th World Scout Jamboree at the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia, USA

