



# Friends of Darfield Churchyard

Newsletter: Autumn-Winter 2010



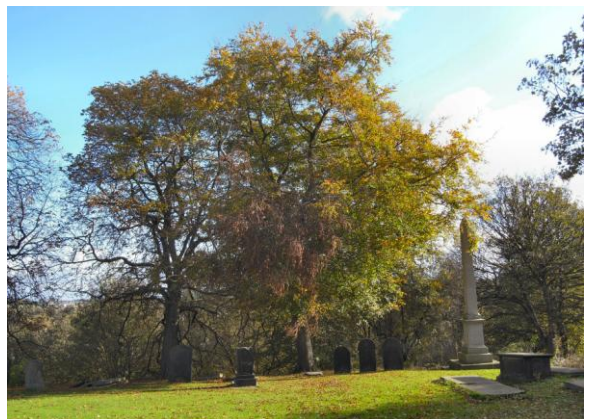
**Trees in the Churchyard... by Steve Rutherford**  
Working at RSPB Old Moor allows me to fulfil three of my favourite pastimes - be surrounded by nature, meet some lovely people and be part of the team that helps keep the Dearne Valley green and beautiful. And it was while talking to one of the regulars at Old Moor, Sheila MacMillan, that I found out about Darfield Church and the work that goes into the Church Yard. The conversation was based around another of my passions, trees; this then extended into an invitation to look at the trees in the Church yard.

So why trees? You would think with the birds and flowers that there would be more interesting subjects at hand. Well these huge organisms are individual environments giving food, shelter and homes for all sorts of lichens, insects, bats and birds to live in and around as well as giving height and structure to the area.

Parking in the car park of the Church hall early on a Sunday morning got my interest going and told me that this would not be a disappointing visit with English oak, cherry, ash, walnut and pussy (sallow) willow bordering the parking area. Two nice surprises of a wayfaring tree and the birch being a downy birch as opposed to the usual silver birch this was a great way to start.

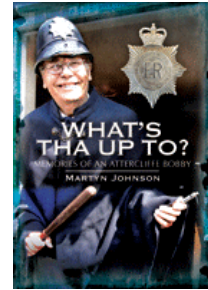
The entrance to the Church is flanked by two high, drooping weeping ashes giving an impressive extension to the doorway. To their right the propped up laburnum with its yellow bunches of flowers and almost comic lean made me smile as I was drawn past to the first of the three mature walnut trees - try rubbing the leaves and you may smell shoe polish. Further down the path an alarm call rang out from a great spotted woodpecker on one of the sycamore trees. I stayed still and watched as a male woodpecker brought food to a hungry mouth that had popped out of a hole high up in to tree. Making my way down to the east corner through the horse chestnuts in full flower I stopped next to one of the tall, erect Lombardy-poplar to look down towards Wombwell Ings and Bolton. Turning up towards the monument I passed the hawthorn left, unusually, to form a small tree I noted the cherry, lime, holly and elder along the fence. As the ground levelled off the weeping beech trees give a solid feel to the area and with the cats tongue leaves feel of the witch elms the area opens up to go in three directions - down the hill to the park with hazel, ivy, and cracked willow opening up at the Norway maple just before the goalposts, along the path between the houses or back to the Church following the line of gardens with their own array of splendid and exotic trees.

This was my first visit to the Church Yard and I have been twice since. I don't think they will be my last.



## Past and Future Events

On Thursday 30 September 2010 we had an evening event with Martyn Johnson as our speaker. His book, 'What's Tha Up To?', which was published earlier this year and is now a best seller in its second edition., was the basis - but not the limit - of his talk. It tells of Martyn's early career as a 'bobby on the beat' in Attercliffe and of some of the colourful characters and incidents Martyn found himself dealing with. The audience thoroughly enjoyed it and participated in the question time. We raised over £260 for our funds and wish to thank Martyn and Christine Johnson for their continued support, and to everyone who came along.



We hope to resume our evening events in the spring of next year with a talk by Steve Rutherford from the RSPB at Old Moor about the trees of the churchyard and a talk by Christine Johnson about bee keeping.

## Houghton Main Memorial Progress



As we have watched the rescue of the miners in Chile, our thoughts may have turned again to our own mining heritage and the Houghton Main Cage Disaster Memorial. We have just been granted the 'faculty', which is the official permission that is needed in order to commence work on the restoration of the memorial. The faculty is required to ensure that the proposed work is of an adequate standard and is not of any detriment to the historical value of the memorial. Roberts of Barnsley have now been asked to start the work and they have ordered the York stone which is required in blocks of at least half a ton and which has to be specially quarried. Actual restoration work should commence within the next couple of months, weather permitting. We are therefore hoping to hold the dedication service sometime in early spring. More details will follow nearer the time.

## Safety work in the Churchyard...a note from our rector, David Hildred

### (a) Ebenezer Elliott's grave

Since the last newsletter we have been involved with Health and Safety inspections, which have been carried out by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's Bereavement Services staff. One concern they raised with us were the sharp spikes on the top of the railings surrounding Ebenezer's grave. It took a few phone calls as we sought to work out what the 'due process' should be for tackling this, and in the end we were given permission from the Diocese to remove the spikes. At the foot of the railings there are places where they have corroded away completely, and so it is very heartening that FODCY are taking up the project of renovating the railings, so that we have a smart and safe monument for Ebenezer.



### (b) Headstone Inspections

BMBC's Bereavement Services have also been inspecting every headstone that we have in the churchyard to assess the level of safety. They spent a fortnight working in our grounds and checked 802 headstones. They found 22 failed, of which they immediately laid down 15, leaving 7 that have been staked in a safe way, so that families have time to contact a stonemason to effect repairs. The inspection has cost a considerable sum of money, but we hope that knowing our churchyard is a safe place will encourage many more people to visit it,



perhaps especially those who are researching their ancestry. This, along with the work that FODCY have done in clearing access to graves, means that visitors can approach with confidence any headstone in order to read its inscription. The BMBC team will return in 12 months time to check on those headstones that have been staked, and a few others that were noted to be near to failing.



### Spotlight on ..... The Darfield Judgement - by Mike Smith

Some childhood memories, which at the time seem unconnected, when looked back on from adult-hood can be seen to have a common basis.

Walking along School Street, one of a chattering column of schoolchildren on our way to church on Ascension Day.

Being fascinated by the little model cobbler working away in Marshall's cobblers' shop window on Snape Hill Road (he was an advertising item for Phillips stick on soles).

Adults and teachers talking about something called The Darfield Judgement.

In July 1906 a case brought before Barnsley Police Court involving Darfield residents featured points of law which, when decided upon eventually at a much higher court, would have far reaching effects throughout the country.

In 1892 Albert Ernest Sorby was appointed Rector of All Saints Church, Darfield, and soon became actively involved in just about all aspects of village life. Although a very gentlemanly person he held strong views, not least those concerning ecclesiastical matters, and prior to Ascension Day 1906 he issued a circular as follows -

#### **Darfield Church Ascension Day**

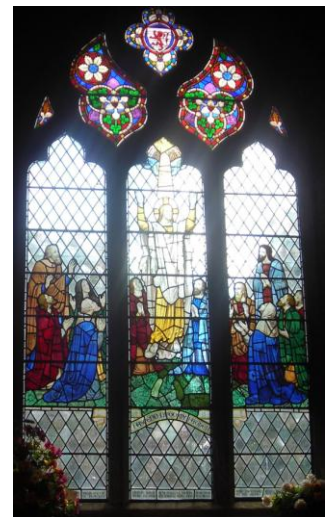
*There will be a service on Ascension Day in the parish church at 9am for children (and others) attending our day schools. Children must go direct to church (not school) and must be in the church punctual at 9 o'clock. After the service in the church, parents may give their children a whole day holiday if they wish. The Board of education says, in their Circular 512 :-'Under the Act of 1870 a parent may withdraw his child from school on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which he belongs.'*

*A E Sorby. M.A. Rector*

The above circular seems to have been the last straw for the West Riding Education Committee, and in July Timothy Marshall and James Bell were charged with neglecting to send their children to school. Tim Marshall, then living at 70 New Street, was charged in respect of his son, 11 years old John Theodore Marshall.

The Rev<sup>d</sup> Sorby gave evidence in support of the defendants. However the magistrates decided that the authority of the Education Authority must be upheld and imposed a fine of 1/-, including costs, on each defendant. The Rev<sup>d</sup> Sorby was not a man to accept defeat and appealed to the King's Bench and, as a result of the subsequent action, won for the parents of Darfield, and for parents throughout the country, a judgement that came to be known as 'The Ascension Day Case' or 'The Darfield Judgment'. This judgement stated that - 'if a child attended church on Ascension Day, he or she could take the rest of the day off and be given a mark of attendance'.

Tim Marshall, who featured in the above case, came to be well known in the village following his trade as a cobbler. He spent his childhood in Shambles Street, Barnsley. In 1894 he



married Alice Stone from Monk Bretton and eventually settled in New Street, Darfield. He subsequently had premises for his cobbling business at the corner of School Street and Church Street, Snape Hill Road where the card shop is now, and finally on Snape Hill Road where the tanning shop is now.



Sadly, John Theodore Marshall, the 11 years old boy who featured in the Ascension Day case, was killed in 1909 whilst pony driving underground at Houghton Main Colliery. He was only 14 years old.

Timothy Marshall and John Theodore and John's sister Ida, who died aged 15 years, are buried in the churchyard. Their grave lies just below, and about midway along, the bottom path. Canon Sorby died October 1934. In the south aisle of the church is a window dedicated to his memory, the subject of which appropriately is The Ascension.

**Now all that remains is to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.**

And please spare a thought for FODCY when you make your New Year Resolutions - we desperately need workers to help with maintenance of the churchyard. Could you spare an hour or two a week - or even an hour or two a month? Spring, Summer and Autumn. Please have a word with John Kendall on 01226 759117.



Our newsletters (including back copies) are now also available to view on the FODCY pages on Darfield All Saints Church Web Site - [www.darfieldallsaintschurch.org.uk](http://www.darfieldallsaintschurch.org.uk)

This newsletter was written, and photographs were taken, by Glenice Smith, Sheila McMillan and Kay Valentine

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