



Friends of Darfield Churchyard

Newsletter: Spring - Summer 2011

The Houghton Main Cage Disaster Memorial Restoration Project

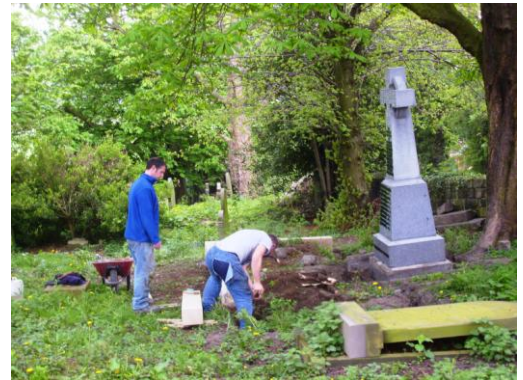


The money was raised. The faculty was granted. The stone was quarried. And the wet winter weather conditions improved sufficiently for the restoration work to take place.....At last it's complete!

Yes, after two years of fundraising and planning, our project to restore the Houghton Main Memorial has been successfully realised.

The firm of Roberts, Barnsley, have worked hard in cleaning and straightening the Celtic cross, repainting the inscription and laying the specially quarried edging stones.

Now the grave is in a fit condition to tell the story of the disaster of 1886 for all who come to visit and to remind us of the real cost of the coal industry for our forbears.



The significance of all this will be acknowledged at the special service which will be held on
Sunday 26 June 2011 at 11am
in Darfield Parish Church

Among our guests we are privileged to have Houghton Main Male Voice Choir who will contribute special musical items. We have also invited past speakers from our fundraising events to be with us so that, along with our many loyal supporters and church congregation, we can remember our mining heritage as the memorial is rededicated.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all of you who have given so generously to our project appeal. It is good to see the memorial looking so smart and once more a fitting tribute to the miners who lost their lives. It is also a tribute to, and reminder of, all the very many miners who have lost their lives or their health in the local mines over the last 100 years or so.



Past and Future Events

>>> People seem to enjoy being part of FODCY's work. Following a chat with one of our members, Mr Frank Morley of Doncaster asked if we would like him to give an illustrated talk, free of charge, to boost our funds. So, on a May evening, we held another event which was enjoyed by all who attended and which raised £180 for our funds. We would like to thank Frank for his very interesting, informative and amusing talk on 'Interesting Burials in South Yorkshire'. It

was a real delight. And thank you to all who came along.

>>> Our next FODCY meeting will be on Wednesday July 6th at 7.30pm in the Church Tower Room, and this will be our AGM. Come along to find out more about our plans for the future.

Work in the Church Yard

- ❖ Thanks to T Valentine and G Harrison the churchyard boundary wall adjacent to the memorial has been skilfully repaired (free of charge) and now provides a fitting backdrop for the memorial. We are really grateful for the gift of their time and expertise, as well as some of the replacement stone. Another example of the generosity of our supporters!



- ❖ Earlier in the year the area to the north side of the church had been cleared by workers from the Community Payback Scheme. They did a fantastic job. This allowed us a rare opportunity to see details on the gravestones piled up since 1973. One day we would like to return the stones to their original positions for everyone to see.

- ❖ And we must not forget the week by week maintenance work carried out by our willing (but tired) small

team of volunteers. Here is John Kendall clearing the paths ready for a funeral. We really do need more helpers with this physical side of the work.



- ❖ Following the clearance of brambles, weeds and ivy which had covered a great many of our graves, we have now had a wonderful show of spring flowers - snowdrops, daffodils, bluebells, celandine - some of which had not been seen for years. Make a date for Spring 2012 to see the flowers in full bloom, starting in February and going through to April. You certainly won't forget them.



- ❖ Please also give some thought to lending a helping hand. We need volunteers so that the churchyard can be kept in good order. Otherwise it will quickly start to deteriorate back to its former jungle state. We work in the churchyard Monday and Thursday afternoons. If you can only join us every few weeks, that will be enough. There are things to be done all the time, even picking up rubbish. **PLEASE** contact John Kendal with offers of help.

An interesting extract from a recent letter from Mr Frederick Carr Upton....

"For some time in the 20's I was Canon Sorby's dog walker! He kept Cairn Terriers and twice a week I took them for exercise. I used to take three or four dogs down past the Green Pond, across Darfield Bridge and along Quarry Hills to the bend in the River Dearne. My pay was sixpence a week, collected from the Rectory back door on a Saturday. The "pay" was good for a young boy. Five pence went into the family exchequer and I always took a penny to Billy Camplejohn's grocery shop at the corner of Vicar Lane and bought a big bag of sweets.

They were much simpler times then!

Do keep up the good work in the churchyard. Both my parents and grand parents are buried there. My grandfather, John Carr, built the houses along School Street.

I understand that the Friends keep an eye on the graves and this is a great comfort to people like me who can't get over to Darfield very often.

Thank you."



Spotlight on Miss Emily Wraith

In the early hours of January 23rd 1909 the White Star liner, *RMS Republic*, was in collision with the Italian liner, *Florida*, fifty miles off the coast of Nantucket USA.

The White Star liner, *Baltic*, New York bound from Liverpool, alerted by the recently invented Marconi wireless telegraph, altered course and steamed to the scene of the accident. Eventually the *Baltic* took on the passengers of both stricken ships as well as the crew of the *Republic*, which sank the next day whilst under tow to New York. On her return journey to Liverpool the *Baltic* carried, along with her passengers and the crew of the *Republic*, also, sadly, the remains of a young Darfield woman who had died whilst working in America.

Miss Emily Wraith was the daughter of Mr and Mrs J Wraith of York Cottages, Low Valley and had been in the service of Mr C H Taylor of Middlewood Hall before emigrating to America. At the time of her death Emily was in the employ of a member of the millionaire Vanderbilt family at Randolph Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts - a hall of residence at Harvard College. She had just returned to Cambridge after a visit home when she fell victim to appendicitis and, although an operation was performed, Emily sadly died.

Emily Wraith's funeral took place at Darfield Church on Tuesday 9th February 1909. A service had been previously conducted at her usual place of worship in America, attended by all the staff of Randolph Hall and the many friends that she had made in Massachusetts.

One newspaper report of the time described - "a pathetic scene, the funeral taking place amidst a large gathering of friends and relatives, including her fiancé, Mr Henry Ballard, who had also travelled over on the *Baltic*. The embalmed body of Emily lay in a solid brass coffin with silver fittings and lined inside with fawn cloth, the breast plate bore the inscription 'Emily Wraith, died January 26th 1909'. The grave being adorned with wreaths from family and friends, a cross from Mrs C H Taylor (Ladies Sewing Committee) and a cross, seven feet in length, composed of lilies, evergreens and ferns, and two wreaths from the staff of Randolph Hall".

The grave lies at the junction of the bottom path and the path leading down the churchyard from the church porch and bears the following inscription -

*We lay her down in the land of her birth
The land she loved best in all the earth
God called her from a distant shore
To reign with Him for evermore*



Quite a number of people have asked us in the past about the story of 'the lady buried in a glass coffin and wearing her wedding dress'. It would appear that Emily is that lady - but it was not a glass coffin and we have no evidence to show that she was buried in her wedding dress. However a descendant of Emily's cousin contacted me last year and said that she had once seen a photograph of Emily laid out in her coffin. (It was not unknown for such photographs to be taken around the turn of the century, especially where the deceased was a young person). The photograph showed a pretty young woman wearing a long dress and surrounded by two huge crosses of lilies.

Don't forget our next restoration project which we have already launched - the grave of Ebenezer Elliott, Corn Law Rhymer. All donations for this project will be gratefully received. More about this in our next newsletter.

Great Great Great Grandchildren visit the grave of George Turton

In 1881 George Turton, a coal miner, was living on Snape Hill, Darfield with his wife, Annie, and son, Fred, aged 7 months. In September 1882, at the age of 25, he was accidentally killed by a fall of coal at Darfield Main Colliery, as reported by the Deputy Coroner for Yorkshire, Mr Bagshaw, who held an inquest into the death at the Victoria Inn, Darfield. George by then had another son, Arthur, just a few months old. It was quite likely that George was a member of the Miners' Permanent Fund and that his wife, Annie, would have received some welfare payments until she married Thomas Bailey and lived at 11 Victoria Street, along with sons Fred and Arthur and the children of her new marriage. George's headstone in the churchyard can be found alongside the path to the right of the church.



In October 2010 the grave was visited by members of George's family, including his great great grandsons, Paul and David Turton, and his great great great grandchildren, Jessica, Luke and John. At the same time John Turton, great grandson of George and son of the late Bill and Winnie Turton of Darfield, came along to Darfield Church with his wife Mary, as they were celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary that month, having been married at Darfield Church. Mary was a Norton before her marriage

and was 'born and bred' in Darfield. Two years previously members of the above family from Blackpool had visited in search of the grave one Monday afternoon and fortunately we were working in the churchyard and so were on hand to help them to find it.

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

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

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