



Friends of Darfield Churchyard

Newsletter - Winter 2014

In 1973 an agreement was made with Darfield Urban District Council that they would cut the grass in the vicinity of the main path through the churchyard. This agreement was taken over by Barnsley MBC and continued to this year. However, in May, Barnsley Council informed us that they were ending this agreement as part of their general cut-backs. We were now faced with a huge increase in our workload and needed a suitable mower if we were to have any chance of keeping the grass under control. Thanks to a grant from the Community First Fund, we have been able to obtain such a machine and continue to keep the churchyard looking well-cared for.

'One Man went to Mow.....' In the interim period, one of our members, Robert Taylor, did a superb job, bringing his own machine and cutting the grass throughout the summer. He spent hours doing this and we would like to record our thanks for his work at just the time when the grass was growing at its quickest.

Of course the new mower needs people to run it so we are lucky indeed to have a willing band of workers, usually numbering about four (always room for more).



Financial support has continued to encourage us with generous donations from near and far. One such donation came from two members of the well-known Hammerton family, Andrea and Daniel, sister and brother of Holin who did so much for music in this area. As Andrea was working in a local charity shop in Wells where she lives, she recognised the Yorkshire accent of two visitors. This resulted in her making contact with Martyn Johnson and she was delighted to receive copies of our FODCY newsletters. As it is 50 years since Andrea and Daniel left Darfield, they wanted to show their continuing care for our church where the three Hammertons were choir members and so sent a cheque for £100. In her letter Andrea wrote, 'I hope one day to visit Darfield Church again, when I always go to see my Great-Grandfather Daniel Rooke's tombstone which stands on the right at the top of the churchyard path

'Scruffy Looking Gentlemen' or 'Good Fairies'?

Another donation, for the same amount, came recently from relatives of the Hanmer family. I quote here from their letter:

"My mother Iris Reilly died last year and along with her wishes her ashes were added to an existing grave containing her mother, Lilly Wagstaffe, and her aunt Violet and uncle Richard Hanmer. When we arrived last year to inter her ashes we noticed that the headstone (a small cross on a plinth) had been broken, so we planned to have this repaired. As usual, nothing was done by us, so imagine our surprise when we revisited last week on the first

anniversary, to find the headstone repaired! The four of us attending denied all knowledge, and were wondering which other family member may have sprung a surprise on us, when three scruffy looking gentlemen (their description!) passed by with gardening tools. They confessed it was all their work, and were pleased to see and briefly meet the beneficiaries of their endeavours! We were also very pleased to meet the men responsible - especially as we had intended to visit much earlier in the day but were delayed or would not have met them or been able to solve the mystery."





Our team of workers (scruffy or not!) have been busy working with local monumental mason, Roberts of Barnsley, in repairing and re-erecting a large number of gravestones which had been laid low either by the ravages of time or by the health and safety visit from Barnsley Council a couple of years ago. This work was helped by a grant which we received as noted in our last newsletter. Quite a number of visitors to the churchyard have been pleasantly surprised to find their particular family grave has been restored. One lady

asked me what good fairy had been at work, which reduced me to helpless laughter as I envisaged our own churchyard workers in fairy costume!

Evening Events of 2014Over the summer, we held three evening events which were all very well supported and enjoyable -

- In May, Linda Hutton a local historian gave a well-researched talk about '**Local Soldiers in the First World War**', an appropriate subject in this centenary year of the outbreak of The Great War. It gave instruction on how to carry out research into soldiers of the First World War as well as an insight into the impact of the conflict on local communities.
- Our next event was in July when our own member, author Martyn Johnson, entertained us with **stories about his work as a bobby on the beat** when he was a young police constable in the 1960s. He has since been among the mourners at the recent funeral of the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire of Chatsworth, who we also counted as one of our generous supporters, so Martyn and his wife Christine, were able to sign the Book of Condolence on behalf of FODCY.
- In September, it was time to welcome another home- grown speaker, **Ian McMillan and musician Luke Carver-Goss**. We laughed until we cried at Ian's hilarious stories and anecdotes and together composed a unique song (it may be unwise to ask someone to sing it for you!) Here, for posterity are the lyrics!!!

Chorus:

Who's that walking up the churchyard?

Who's that walking up the path?

Ebenezer Elliott! Carrying a lamp and a staff..... up the path

Verse

I can see a mouse in his pocket,

I can see a hole in his sock,

He's carrying an ancient locket,

*Is he the one who moved the clock? **

Repeat Chorus

Dramatic Interlude:

Ebenezer! What did you do with our timepiece?

Ebenezer, nobody in Darfield knows what time it is-

So that's why we miss the X19!!!

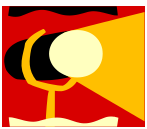
Repeat Chorus

**Note - this question arose on the night after Ian noted that he did not know what time it was so someone asked whether the clock on the back wall of the hall was not going. Ian responded 'It's not going - it's gone!' The clock had disappeared!*

As Ian said, many who were not present at this event will try to claim that they were!

Time will tell.





Spotlight on Two More Darfield Soldiers World War 1 Graves



Horace Venables

Stoker 1st Class HMS Queen Elizabeth - died 1 July 1918, aged 25

Horace lived on School Street, Darfield, and joined the Navy in January 1913. His first ship was HMS Suffolk, on which he served until being transferred to the King George V class battleship, Audacious, in October 1913. On 27 October 1914 Audacious hit a mine while conducting gunnery exercises off the coast of Northern Ireland. Fortunately, none of the ship's company were lost, the greater part of them being taken off by boats from the light cruiser, Liverpool, and the White Star liner, Olympic.

Christmas 1914 saw Horace joining the brand new battleship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, which, on completion, took part in the Dardanelles campaign as flagship of the Dardanelles fleet. Horace served on Queen Elizabeth throughout the campaign and stayed with her until October 1917. In 1918, while serving on a shore-base station, Horace fell ill and sadly died following an operation at RN Hospital Haslar.

The funeral service, conducted by the Rev. A E Sorby, was carried out with full military honours. A firing party and bearer party attended and buglers sounded the last post. The local press of the time noted that 'the Village Club and the Wesleyan Chapel were represented and there were a great many mourners and a great many wreaths.'



Joseph Wigley

72711 Machine Gun Corps - died 29 September 1917, aged 31

Joseph enlisted at Darfield in October 1915. A small man, he was 5ft 3½ins tall and weighed less than 9 stones. He was a miner and gave his address as High Street, Great Houghton.

Joseph was a family man with wife, Alice Maude, and three children, Beatrice, Florence and Granville. Following his medical (conducted in Darfield by Dr Castle) he joined the 8th KOYLI's and embarked for France at Folkstone June 1916. In December 1916 Joseph was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps (70th Company) and it was while serving with this unit that he was seriously wounded in action in August 1917. Initially he was treated at Le Treport base hospital in

France, his wounds being gunshot wound to his right forearm and a less serious gunshot wound to his leg. The arm wound was so severe as to require amputation. Joseph was brought back to Keighley Military Hospital in September 1917, where the arm had to be re-amputated. However his condition rapidly declined and pneumonia became a factor.

Joseph Wigley died on 29 September 1917 and was interred October 1917. The coffin was borne by a military party from Silkstone. A firing party attended and the last post was sounded. The funeral procession consisted of family and friends, Houghton Main officials and workmates, club members and wounded Darfield soldiers. The service was conducted by the Rev. A E Sorby and the Rev. A Thomas.

Note- by coincidence Kay visited Le Treport whilst on holiday this year. This first photo is of the site of the hospital (only the steps left now) and the other photo is of the town from the hospital. It lies 20 miles northeast of Dieppe and has several WW1 cemeteries.



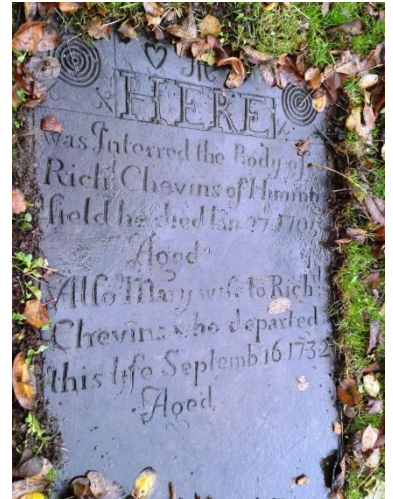
Richard Chevins and the Mystery of the Missing Ages

Glenice writes -

Since I have been a churchyard volunteer, Richard's grave, which is laid flat on the piece of grass opposite the church tower, has always been a puzzle to me. It is one of our oldest gravestones. On the stone it shows when he and his wife died and it has an entry for each of them which reads - 'Aged ...', but no age is given for either of them - just a blank space. So I began to research their lives and found that Richard was born in October 1670 and his wife, Mary, in 1673. They were married at Wath-upon-Dearne in November 1695 and they had five children, Richard, William(died age 8), Ann, Jane(died age 9) and Mary.

Richard Chevins died January 1706 and Mary Died September 1732. Therefore the ages missing off the gravestone are Richard 35 years and Mary 59 years. Puzzle solved.

(But why did nobody know this at the time? Or was there some big secret there???)



In October, we had to say 'Thank you and farewell' to our treasurer Pat Myers as she left for pastures new. She held the post since the formation of the group and has worked hard and we wish her all the best. Thankfully Marie Taylor has taken over the role and we are grateful for her willingness to do so.

We are sorry to have to report that one of our long-standing helpers, Gordon Warrington, sadly passed away in summer. Gordon did a lot of work for us in recording and photographing the memorial inscriptions in the churchyard.

When you get your diary for 2015, turn to Friday 24 April and book the evening (7pm) to come to hear the popular speaker Janet Stain tell us about secrets behind some fashions. She is a very informative and amusing speaker who has been another good friend to Fodcy. More details in the New Year.

It is lovely to receive such generous donations as mentioned on page 1, but equally lovely to receive the many smaller amounts which you all so readily offer to us. You can continue to help us as Christmas approaches, by buying our Christmas cards which are available from members and in the library (at reduced price of 50p each as they are the same design as last year).



Our next project is scheduled to be the paths at the west end of the tower. We are currently in the process of obtaining quotes for this work.



**Thank you for your continued support.
Wishing you Joy and Peace at Christmas and throughout 2015**

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
Articles on the two WW1 soldiers are by Michael Smith.