



# Friends of Darfield Churchyard

## Newsletter: Spring - Summer 2010



*Spring seems to be flying by and we are well on the way to Summer. The churchyard has once again been awash with colour from the variety of Spring flowers - Snowdrop, Daffodil, Crocus, Celandine, Bluebell, Dandelion (hundreds of them) and now the Laburnum trees and Horse Chestnut.*



### Every Cloud has a Silver Lining....

The speaker had been booked weeks earlier, the venue planned, the posters were in place, all the arrangements were made.

Then..... far away in Iceland, a volcano erupted and all the preparations were in danger of coming to nothing when our special speaker, Stephen Smith, was unable to get back from Spain as air travel was halted.

After many phone calls, a car dash across Spain and literally the last available seat on a flight, Stephen landed back - but on the wrong side of the Pennines only three hours before he was due to begin his evening event with us. Another car journey enabled him to arrive, 'neither shaken nor stirred', in Darfield. We are so glad that he did!

The large audience of friends and supporters enjoyed the promised hilarious evening of anecdotes from Stephen's career as a criminal lawyer. Two special items on the accordion showed Stephen's musical skill and were an extra bonus from a very talented man. Stephen then signed copies of his various books.



None of this would have happened without Martyn Johnson's help. He was our 'link' who arranged for Stephen to come, he was in close contact throughout the days of uncertainty over travel and it was Martyn who drove over to Manchester Airport to bring him home.

The event raised £450 towards the Houghton Main Memorial Restoration appeal and we are now in a position to get the project underway less than a year from its launch last summer. What an achievement!

We are grateful to Stephen, who gave his time freely, to Martyn and to all our members, friends and supporters. When the memorial restoration is completed, we hope that there will be a special service to commemorate the event and to remember the mining heritage of which we are now custodians.



## Spotlight on ..... James William Hall 1884-1932

Older Darfield residents may remember their parents telling them about, or even remember themselves, Darfield schoolmaster, later to become headteacher at Darfield Church School, James Wm Hall. To the south of the path at the bottom of the churchyard lies the grave of Mr Hall, his wife Mary Annie and their daughter Gwendoline Anne.



James W Hall, Jammie the children called him, but very likely not within his hearing, for by all accounts J W was something of a disciplinarian. He spent his younger years living at no. 19 Havelock Terrace and later at 53 School Street, the house in which he went on to bring up his own family.

The stories about J W related by the older generations all seem to do with corporal punishment, marching children up and down the schoolyard singing patriotic songs, or other less pleasant aspects of school life. If we look a little further into the life of J W Hall we find more than just the strict disciplinarian. He was superintendent of the Church Sunday School, a Churchwarden, and treasurer of Darfield Cricket Club for many years. A keen sportsman, he was a member of Darfield Sports Club, Conservative Club and a member of the British Legion.



James served his country in France during the First World War, indeed he was wounded in action during that conflict.

Sadly Mr Hall died in 1932 aged 48 years. His wife, Mary Annie, had died two years previously in 1930. Their daughter, Gwendoline Anne, died in 1940 aged 35 years.

His funeral service was conducted by Canon A E Sorby, at Darfield Church on a Saturday in February 1932. Flags were flown at half mast at The Conservative and British Legion clubs and Darfield Scholars, carrying flowers, formed a guard of honour at the church gates.

Even though he was known as a strict disciplinarian in his profession, he must have been respected within the community as contemporary reports of his funeral state that hundreds of people lined the streets.

There can be no doubt that James William Hall was a man of England, a man of Darfield and, certainly, a man of his time.

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### Cuckoo

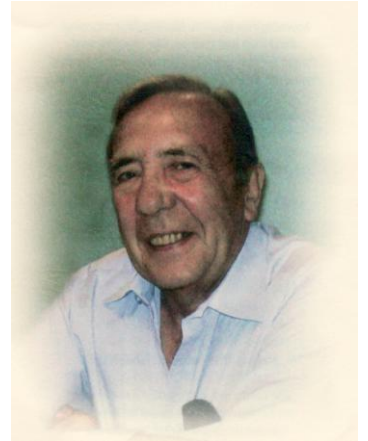
Whilst sheltering under a tree from the rain on 17 May 2010 a cuckoo was seen and heard by our volunteer workers. Has anyone else heard it this year? Let us know if you heard it before we did and we will try to pinpoint the earliest date.



### Jack Trevor Baxter 1937-2010

A founder member of Friends of Darfield Churchyard (FODCY) Known to us as Trevor, he was a most generous man with a wonderful personality. He never said 'no' to any job, all jobs were a challenge. The present, restored, state of the churchyard is in part due to his vision and efforts. A remarkable transformation. His enthusiasm, energy and humour are greatly missed.

*This tribute was written by John Kendall and reflects the feelings of us all at FODCY. Of course the most fitting tribute to Trevor is to walk through the churchyard and to admire what his handiwork has helped to create. Thank you, Trevor.*



### Nest Boxes and New Plant Life

There were 30 nest boxes installed in the churchyard two years ago and, this nesting season, tenants have been seen in some of them!

The fully cleared area in the lower graveyard is now revealing the extent of plant life there as well as the tomb stones lost for so long.

Have a walk and see it for yourself and maybe try out the seats incorporated into the stone walls.

Did anyone else see this owl? We saw it around 3pm to 4pm on Easter Sunday, sitting very still for its photograph, but by 6pm it had gone.



### Grants

We have been the recipients of two generous grants. One, from the South Yorkshire Community Foundation's 'Grassroots Grants', has covered the cost of our last three editions of this newsletter, paid for hiring the Church Hall for our fund raising events and helped with our running costs. Recently a grant from the Community Support Fund will give us a year's insurance premium, enable us to host another event, contribute to our postage costs in sending newsletters far and wide and help us to do some new planting in the churchyard.

### News from the Annual General Meeting held 24 May 2010

- ❖ The treasurer reported that funds currently stand at £5,564.96, of which £3,572.06 is 'ring fenced' for the Houghton Main Memorial Restoration Fund.
- ❖ Quotes for the restoration work were discussed and it was decided to accept the quote of £4,200 from Roberts of Barnsley. The £3,572.06 is to be topped up with money from our general fund and Roberts are to be asked to undertake the restoration as soon as possible. When the work is completed a service of dedication will be arranged. Thanks were expressed to all who had contributed in any way.
- ❖ Two events hopefully coming up in September 2010 - dates to be arranged: firstly a Heritage Weekend, where the church will be open and a display set up by FODCY, as well as guided tours of the churchyard; secondly a talk by Martyn Johnson on his recently published book, 'What's Tha Up To?', the story of his policing work in the Attercliffe area.

- ❖ The secretary reported that FODCY had met 6 times in the last year with an average attendance of 10 members.
- ❖ The chairman reported on the clearing of the lower part of the churchyard. He expressed the sadness of the group as a whole over the death of Trevor Baxter. And he thanked all who had played their part in any way to help with the work of FODCY.

### Which is the oldest gravestone in the churchyard?

I was asked this question recently by someone who had seen a headstone dated 1705 and wanted to know whether there were any which predated this. So I checked our records. I found that the oldest dated gravestone still in place in the churchyard is indeed 1705 and is for Richd Chevins of Hemingfield, died 27 January 1705. However I also discovered that there had been two gravestones from 1699 until the re-ordering of the churchyard in 1973. And it must not be forgotten that there are a number of medieval gravestones which have been re-used in the walls and windowsills of the church building itself - however these do not have names or dates on them.



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 (except Trevor Baxter and J W Hall) were taken, by Glenice Smith, Sheila McMillan, Kay Valentine and Christopher Walton

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