



# Friends of Darfield Churchyard

## Newsletter - Winter 2015



Photo by William Smith

Another year almost over, and the churchyard is looking as lovely as ever. We have just had the glorious colours of the trees in autumn, and soon we shall no doubt be seeing the first covering of snow, but already the spring bulbs are starting to peep through.



Our Christmas cards are on sale at 75p each with views of the church and churchyard in snow. They are on sale at Darfield library or card shop. We sincerely thank Robert and Marie Taylor for once again paying for our initial run of cards. We also thank all of you who have been buying the cards and supporting FODCY once again in this way.



### **Our ongoing projects.....**

#### **Felling four dead trees**

As explained in our last newsletter, four trees in the churchyard are dead and could become dangerous, and therefore need to be felled. This is specialist work. One tree has been felled but we still are waiting for work to be carried out on the remaining three. This work is now scheduled for January 2016

#### **Repair of Gravestones**

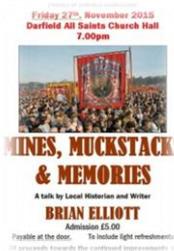
Our churchyard workers have been busy carrying out minor repairs to the gravestones where needed and ensuring that the stones are safe and upright where possible. It is lovely to see so many of the stones once again looking in good repair.

#### **Maintaining the grounds of the churchyard**

Since Barnsley Council stopped their grass cutting in our churchyard, our own workers have been solely responsible for the maintenance. I am sure that those of you who have been down there recently will agree that they are doing a marvellous job.

### **Our last 'Evening Event' of 2015 ....**

took place on Friday 27 November 2015 when Brian Elliott gave an illustrated talk on 'Mines, Muckstacks and Memories'. We welcomed over forty people to the Church Hall for this really interesting talk. Brian is widely regarded as a leading expert on the history of our area and, as the son and grandson of miners, he has a particular interest in preserving and recording our mining heritage. His talk at Darfield had been specifically written



for the occasion and brought back many memories. We were reminded of the crucial role of the coal mining industry in the life of the nation and of the hardships endured by the miners, their wives and children which held our communities together. The images of our nearby pits, Houghton Main, Dearne Valley and Darfield Main, triggered our own recollections of those who worked underground all their lives. We heard again the voice of one such local man, Johnny Williamson, in an interview that he recorded with Brian some years ago, when he told of his first day at the pit aged just 14 when he was set on as a 'nipper'. The changes in the industry which followed its nationalisation in 1947, the strikes and the eventual demise of the pits gave us food for thought about the changes which followed in the community. Brian rekindled our sense of pride in the hard work and the community spirit of our mining forbears whose stories must be preserved and passed on to future generations.

We are sincerely grateful to Brian who gave his time and shared his knowledge freely, enabling us to raise the amazing sum of £246 to support the work in the churchyard. Thanks to all of you who came along and on whose support we know we can rely.



**Now for our future evening events to which you can look forward!** We have three excellent and varied events in the pipeline.....

Our own Kay Valentine is to share the research done by Mike Smith and herself in an illustrated presentation entitled 'Darfield Soldiers in the First World War'.

Martha Hayward, the granddaughter of one of our regular supporters, is a soprano singer who has offered to come to give a concert here next year, to which we can look forward. Find out more about her on her website [www.marthahayward.co.uk](http://www.marthahayward.co.uk) (She has even sung for royalty.)

Barnsley born Professor Joann Fletcher, one of the world's leading Egyptologists who curated the recent Roman exhibition at Barnsley museum (which featured coins from the Roman hoards found in Darfield) is coming to share her expertise and enthusiasm and remind us of more reasons to be proud of our past! Read more about her on the internet too.

**Watch out early in the New Year for details and dates for these events.**

The posters which publicise our events are designed and printed by Geoffrey Hutchinson and we are very grateful for his help.



**The Powell Family Grave**

It is interesting to know that so many people came to our area in the late 1800's because of the opportunities provided by the opening of the local coal mines. Many instances of this can be found in the inscriptions on graves in our churchyard: for example Benjamin and Alice Powell, whose grave is shown here.



Benjamin's parents, William and Elizabeth Powell, were both born in Nottingham and were living in Normanton when he was

born in 1852. He had two brothers and three sisters, and two grandchildren were also living with the family.

Benjamin married Alice Turton in York in November 1872. They were probably working in the area at that time.

Alice's parents were George and Sarah Turton of Gawber Hall, Barnsley, who had married in 1849 at Darton. George had been born in 1826 in Gawber to John and Martha Turton and had eight brothers and sisters. Sarah came from Lancashire, from a mining family.

At the 1881 census, Benjamin and Alice were living in York, along with their two sons and two daughters, all of whom were born in York. At this time Benjamin was employed as a railway engine driver. His sister, Elizabeth Hannah, was also living with them and was working as a dressmaker. The family continued to live in York and the eldest son became an engine cleaner.

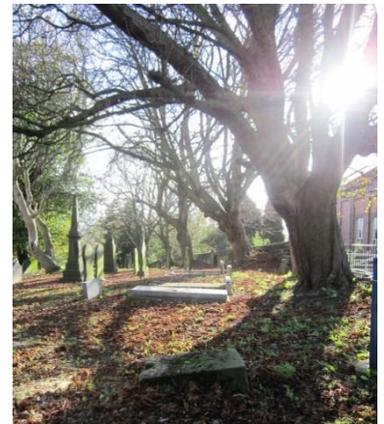
By the 1901 census Benjamin and Alice were living at New Street, Sandhill, Great Houghton, with their family of four sons and three daughters. Benjamin and his sons were all working in the local coal mines. He was still at the same address and working in the mines at the 1911 census.

In 1927 Benjamin passed away, aged 75 years, and the following year his dear wife, Alice, died aged 76 years. Also buried in the grave with them is their grandson, George A Adsetts, who also died in 1927, aged just 16 years.

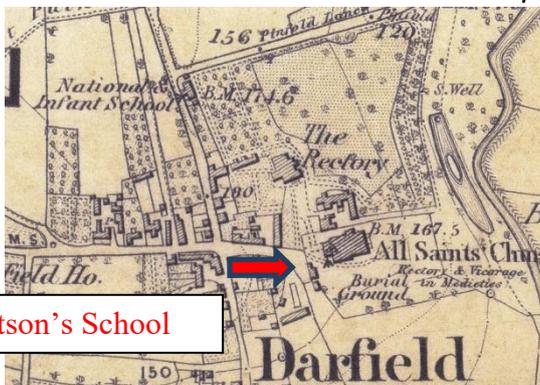


**Spotlight on ..... Edward Watson**

In 1932 Mr William Jobling, said to be Darfield's second oldest resident, celebrated his 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday. On being interviewed for a local newspaper he recalled the Darfield of his early years. He spoke of his father, a miller who worked at a little mill in Woodall Lane, and of his schooldays at the Church School on School Street. He said that this school was now closed and also that that the only other school in the village in his young days had been Watson's School in the churchyard.



The site of 'Watson's School'.



Watson's School

This school building stood within the churchyard boundary to the right on entering the church gates. The schoolmaster was Mr Edward Watson. This parish school (as it was called) was funded, or rather the master's salary was funded, fully or in part by one or more of the several charities distributed to the parish at this time. Eventually it was decided that the school should be pulled down sometime around 1878, and the ground on which it had

stood was re-consecrated for use as burial ground. The Rev H Bowen Cooke had a small reading room erected to be conveyed to the parishioners in lieu of the old school.

Edward Watson was a much respected member of the community and was, for many years, schoolmaster and Registrar of Births and Deaths for the district. He was born in Newmillerdam and married Sarah Kemp of Little Houghton in 1829. They had 7 children, all born and baptised in Darfield. Formerly of Pinfold Lane, he and his family moved to Elm House, a detached stone building which stood at the Inkerman end of Hill Street, off Snape Hill. Several of his daughters remained unmarried and became schoolmistresses, presumably at his school. An entry in the 1857 Post Office Directory states that Edward Watson was running a 'Boys' Day School'.

Edward died in 1883, aged 80, and his wife, Sarah, died two years later aged 78. He had asked to be buried 'beneath the ancient yew' and their grave lies roughly midway on a line between the Lundhill monument and the north east corner of the church.

Some interesting information about Edward Watson and his school appears in the Sheffield Independent newspaper of 4 August 1849. It tells of how



