

# UNDERCLIFFE UNCOVERED

## TALES FROM OUR TOMBS



### • Chair's Comments •

It's been another busy quarter. Our groundwork team has been busy as usual, but what an unusual year for the weather. Grass has grown at an incredible rate and ragwort has sprung up everywhere. Although this is good news for insects, it's blooming difficult to strim so we had to pull it out by hand to stop it spreading even more seeds around the Cemetery. Well done everyone for your valiant efforts.

Our dedicated flora and fauna team has been successful this season in getting the new raised bed to look good, our spring bulb display to add colour and interest, and our new wildlife border has started to establish itself. Well done Andrea and Irene H. If you have an interest in bringing floral displays back to the Cemetery please get in touch.

The three events that stood out amongst others were the Festival of Flowers, the Cemetery Trail Boards and the Heritage Open Day. What a team to organise all this. Plenty of visitors enjoying the day and new people who have never visited the Cemetery before. Thanks especially to Zahabia, our youngest volunteer.

Our bat walk was a great success. It was so interesting to hear the bat detectors chattering away and see the bats flying overhead. Thanks to the Bradford Urban Wildlife Group for organising this.

The new Quaker boundary stone, paid for by the Quakers, is a new feature in the Cemetery, and it looks great.

Our new database is coming on extremely well with over 100,000 records photographed and nearly 90,000 transcribed. It's an amazing project and thanks to all who are involved.

Welcome to our new registrar Aoife Sutton-Butler. There are lots of new ideas to work on, including the four seasons scattering of ashes area. Jaime has moved on and we thank her for all her hard work over the last eighteen months.

Now the so called 'Cromptons' area has been cleared, we can start work on making the area ready for burials – and what a nice spot this is. After we have tackled that, we will start the 'T' section; this will be a greater challenge, but it has the potential to be developed into a woodlands burial area with new shrubs and planting.

Wildlife continues to visit us. Deer have been spotted and filmed and a fox made an appearance on the Heritage Open Day.

We are pleased to announce we have funding agreed for several 2025 City of Culture events. Planning is underway to make 2025 another successful year. Thanks especially to Rebecca for her work on this and to Jacqui, Irene L. and Sue.

Last but not least, thanks to Graham Swain and his team for restoring Stafford Heginbotham's monument and others in the area.

There are other issues that continue to challenge us but we will keep working on these. Keep up the good work volunteers and everyone please keep supporting the work of the charity.

**Steve Lightfoot**



### • Heritage Open Day •



For the first time in five years, we decided to participate in the national Heritage Open Days' scheme. This ten-day celebration of all things 'heritage' is England's largest festival of history and culture and supported by the National Trust. Being part of such a high-profile event meant that Undercliffe Cemetery received free publicity (we were featured as a place to visit in *Yorkshire Life* magazine) and were given an interview on Bradford's local radio.

The Cemetery was open to visitors from 10 a.m. till 4 p.m. on Saturday, 14 September and we conducted two tours, one in the morning and one (the same tour repeated) in the afternoon. For those who didn't want a formal talk, there were three self-guided tours (with maps) available. The café was open all day and we did a fabulous trade in hot drinks and home-made cakes. One of the conditions of the HODs is that tours and such like have to be free, but we were able to sell refreshments and books and receive donations, so raised a good sum for the charity.

*cont.*



cont.

More than seventy visitors turned up, most of whom had found the event through the HOD website and were new to the Cemetery. The feedback suggests they were absolutely amazed by the place and the work of the groundwork and research teams; some have already signed up for membership and we're hoping some will join us as volunteers. All-in-all a successful day. Thanks go to Steve Lightfoot, John Jackson, Tim Hardy, Aoife Sutton-Butler, Deb Stirling, Andy Joyce, and café team Andrea Lightfoot, Jane Sargent and Graeme Rushmer. Special thanks to our 'volunteer of the quarter', Chris Dewhirst, who was on hand as a qualified first-aider. Luckily, his new skills weren't put to the test!

**Gaynor Haliday**

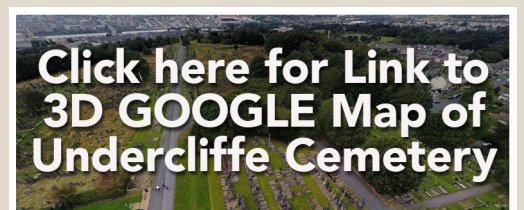
## • Trail Boards/Tour Update •

We had a tremendous and very well-attended day in June hosted by Christa Ackroyd, formerly of both BBC and ITV local news channels, to introduce and explain our new Trail Boards. There are twenty boards spread throughout the Cemetery, each covering a different theme, including Sporting Greats, Worstedopolis, Company Graves and Bradford - Most Filthy Town. Clearly, the boards have become a major focal point for new and experienced Undercliffeites and we often see visitors concentrating hard on a particular subject; there's plenty to read. Thanks also to Eyecatchers of Bradford for their installation. If you haven't seen the Trail Boards yet, please come along and have a look; you won't be disappointed.



## • Drone Footage •

On our recent Heritage Open Day event, one of our guests, Dunc Hughes provided us with some drone footage taken at the time which, as you can see, provides a spectacular panorama of the event and the talks taking place at the time. It really brings home the sheer size and scale of the Cemetery and re-emphasises the old Forth Rail Bridge analogy that our work, both in groundwork and research, is never complete. Please come and join us in any way you can; **all help is greatly appreciated!**



## • Ragwort Weed Infestation •



This year, more than any other, we've noticed a real infestation of the invasive and territorial ragwort weed. It's vivid yellow with a large spread.

Our Tuesday groundwork team got stuck into a section and here's the before and after, don't worry, James is still with us!



## • Volunteer of the Quarter - Chris Dewhirst •

I started volunteering in November 2023 whilst off work with stress. I was finding things hard and being out in the open air and having people to talk to really helped me mentally.

Since starting, almost a year ago, I've done many things. In the months when nothing is growing I've helped to clear areas of scrub and rubbish, removed branches from trees damaged by storms, repaired damaged monuments and prepared war graves for Remembrance Day. When the grass is growing, I spend most of my time on various mowers keeping the paths and main areas of the Cemetery neat and tidy. I also cut and trim hedges. These are just some of the things I've done - there are so many other jobs that the team do. I have also gained an outdoor first aid qualification.

The task I'm happiest with is reclaiming around 500 sets which we hope to use to edge paths in an area that is currently being renovated.

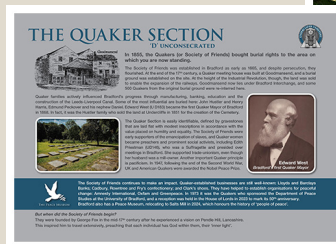
I do worry a little about the future of volunteering as I'm one of the youngest at 59! Hopefully, Bradford 2025 might spark some interest.

I would encourage anyone who reads this to come and see what we get up to every Tuesday; there are many roles for all levels of fitness and you will meet a diverse group of very interesting and friendly people. **Come and join us!**



## • Quaker Plot •

A recent Undercliffe newsletter confirmed that the Bradford Quakers/Society of Friends recently used their section in Uncon D & E for the burial of a 92-year-old gentleman. His headstone has now been installed and is very much in keeping with the surrounding Quaker headstones. These have a distinct style and presentation of the dates (see photos). As mentioned in the Chair's comments, the Quakers have also paid for a beautiful stone, which has been placed in the area (see photo) to show that this is the Quaker section. As we get a lot of curious visitors who want to know more about the unusual format of the engravings on the headstones, we have placed one of the Trail Boards in the area to explain more. If you can't get down to the Cemetery in person, you can read it here:



Quaker Trail Board Link

## • Bat Walk •

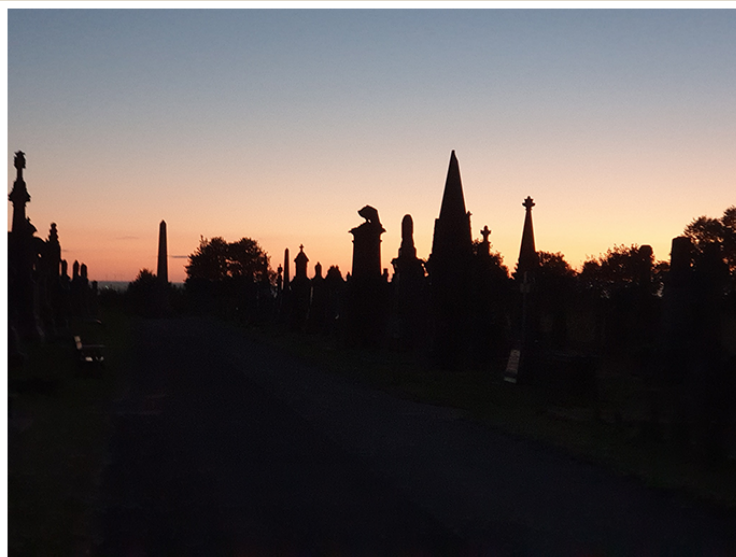
I know it's probably not the first time that bat detectors have been used in the Cemetery, but it may be the first time we have held an official bat walk. How could we refuse when the Bradford Urban Wildlife Group offered to conduct a walk for us? With their expertise and their bat-detecting equipment, we knew we were in for an interesting night. Paul and Chloe from BUWG led the walk. Paul, an expert on bats, gave an introduction, and we set off on the outer path, through the car park towards the Quaker section. As soon as we passed the old beech tree, we came out into a more open area, and all of a sudden, all six bat detectors started their chattering. Looking up, we could see the bats circulating overhead.

cont.



cont.

They didn't seem bothered by the forty or so visitors, some with torches and some chattering away themselves. The bats had more on their minds: juicy insects and moths. We were told by Paul that the bats were common pipistrelles. They might be called common, but it's the first time I have seen any bats at Undercliffe. One of our volunteers who lives locally said he had seen bats many times before. As we continued our walk past the Quaker burial ground and past the T section, there was the occasional blip on the detectors, but it was when we got near to the Joseph Smith monument that the bats started appearing again, this time flying very low. One almost hit me on the head, but despite it being very dark by now, we knew the bats were there as the detectors gave us an early warning of their presence. We were blessed with a wonderful sunset over Bradford, and all the camera phones came out to capture the view.



**A very interesting walk and an education for us all, thanks to Paul and Chloe from the Bradford Urban Wildlife Group.**

## • Groundwork Equipment Donation •



We're delighted and very grateful to be the recipients of a generous donation of equipment from Greg Smith, a local chap who's retired from running his gardening business following some ill health. The photo shows Greg on the right and our groundwork team practising with the 33in Bolens Mulching Deck which will be invaluable to us. We've been given several other items too and the icing on the cake is that Greg will be joining the team once his health situation allows. Come and join him and us! Thanks very much Greg; a fantastic addition to our much-used equipment.

## • Thomas Crompton & New Burial Area •

Thanks must go to Thomas Crompton Demolition Ltd for all their work removing and clearing lots of surface material and overgrowth from a large area of unused land in Consecrated I section - eight large truckloads to be precise. Undercliffe, despite the view of many and some who should know better, is still a working Cemetery and burial ground and we're keen to identify areas for new burial plots. We've started the process of reclamation of this area and, in time, we intend to allocate over a hundred new plots. There's lots of work still to do but sales of burial plots are a crucial factor in generating income for the Cemetery. The money raised goes towards keeping it a beautiful place and the time given by Cromptons helps enormously in achieving our aims.

