



Friends of Darfield Churchyard

Newsletter: Winter 2008-2009

Another path renovation



In 2007 you will remember that we had the bottom path of the churchyard covered in tarmac. This has proved to be a resounding success and has made access to the bottom part of the churchyard so much easier and safer. In fact that path was so good that it then put to shame the 'middle path' - ie the path which branches off to the right from the main path just by the church porch. This path had previously been surfaced many years ago but was now in very bad repair and, as it descends fairly steeply, was proving quite hazardous on occasion. Because it already had a hard surface on it, it was not going to cost as much as the bottom path. John Kendall obtained quotes for its repair and the price came out at around £1600. We made enquiries about obtaining a grant and discovered that we could possibly get an award from the Area

Forum. We ended up being awarded £900 and made up the rest with money from donations which we have received over the last couple of years. The path was resurfaced in January 2009 and looks extremely good. So, if you have given us a donation, you can now walk down that path knowing that a little part of it is yours. Thank you to all of you.



Plans of the Churchyard Graves

It had become apparent that we did not hold a full plan of all the graves in the churchyard.

This is not surprising as there have been burials in and around the church since probably Saxon times. The actual burial records start in the 1500s, but the plans of the burials did not start until the 1890s. Therefore the only way that we can locate the people buried before 1890 is if they have a headstone. To add to the problem, a number of the headstones were taken down in 1973 under a project to make the churchyard safer. Over the last couple of years we have tried to gather whatever plans we could find and this year we decided that it was now time to fit them all together. Mr G Warrington had also photographed all the headstones still in existence (apart from the last few which are still under the undergrowth) and he volunteered to undertake the mammoth task of amalgamation. The result is that we now have our own plan of current and former headstones in the churchyard and also a fuller plan of ALL the burials in the bottom part of the churchyard. This plan is HUGE and covers 2 A1 size sheets so I cannot copy it here. However it will be available for consultation by anyone interested. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Doncaster Family History Society, whose 1988 plan of the headstone locations in our churchyard has been of great use up until now in order to locate the various headstones. But most thanks go to Mr G Warrington for his work on these new plans. Please let us know if you would like us to try to find any of your ancestors on these plans.



Spotlight on Canon Albert Ernest Sorby

He was Rector of Darfield from 1892 to his death in 1934 - a span of 42 years.

During that time he masterminded many great changes to the church and the village of Darfield. He was behind the great restoration of 1911 when the church was stripped of all its plaster and the old stonework was allowed to be seen in all its glory. He was behind the rehanging of the bells in 1928. He was behind the merging of the jobs of Rector and Vicar at Darfield in 1906, which freed the Vicar to become Vicar of Wombwell.



Most famously he was behind the 'Darfield Judgement' - probably the only law to be named after our village. This came about as follows. In 1906, on Ascension Day (which always falls on a Thursday), John Marshall was absent from school to go to church with his father Timothy. The Education Authority said that Mr Marshall could not allow his son to miss school in this way and called him to account. However Canon Sorby supported the case for Mr Marshall all the way through to the High Court, where the decision was that, if a child attended church on Ascension Day, he could take the rest of the day as holiday. I remember well, as a child at Darfield Church School, that we all went to church every Ascension Day and then went running and laughing from there, after the service, on our extra day's holiday. We loved it all the more as no other school took that holiday. I think that this practice continued until the 1970s.

There are many reminders of Canon Sorby in the church. One of Canon Sorby's sons, Charles, was killed in WW1, near Ypres, in 1915. He was aged 20. The wooden cross which was on his grave in Ypres is now in Darfield church. The window next to this is in memory of him. The next window down the aisle is in memory of Canon Sorby himself and, of course, features the Ascension of Jesus. The pulpit was donated by Canon Sorby and his wife in memory of their son-in-law and Canon Sorby copied the cresting from the font cover. The screen between the chancel and the south chapel was carved at the rectory by volunteers. These included several carpenters, several miners, a few gentry and the rector himself.

Canon Sorby died 1st October 1934 as he was about to go out in his car on parish business. He was serving his church and parish to the very end. His grave, shown above, is situated at the west end of the church. Turn left as you go through the main gates and you will see it immediately.

From One Empire to Another

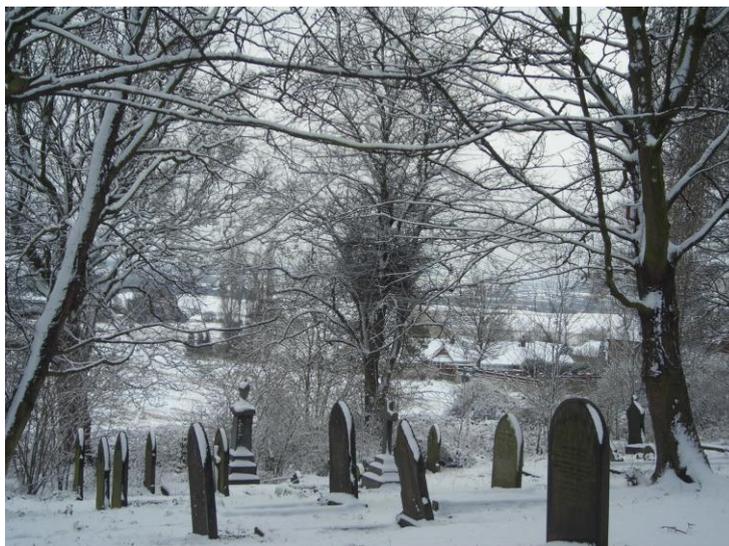
There was standing room only when Martyn Johnson came to show his 'Ramblings of a Local Metal Detector' back in October 2008. His talk centred on the importance of Darfield during the time of the Roman Empire and gave the audience plenty to speculate about. There is to be another evening with Martyn who (along with his family) is a keen supporter of FODCY although he no longer lives in Darfield.

The date is Friday 8th May 2009 at 7.30pm and the place....

Darfield Church Hall (formerly Darfield Empire)

Winter in the Churchyard

The workers, John, Mike and Trevor, have continued to carry out some clearance of undergrowth even throughout the winter (in spite of them saying that they would take a break from it until Spring). They have been joined on occasion by Gordon. Because of this extra work they have managed to clear several more graves, one of which was not even on the plan of the headstones which we hold. Another of the uncovered graves was photographed so that we could send the picture to a descendant living in Alaska. This gentleman was over the moon to receive the picture and is hoping to visit this country, and our churchyard, in May 2009.



I cannot imagine that the workers, however hardy they are, have done any work in there these last couple of weeks. See my pictures taken 2 February 2009.



However, now that the weather is improving, you should take a walk down the churchyard. I am writing this in mid February and the snowdrops are just coming to their full glory. They will be quickly followed by the daffodils and then will come the bluebells.

The churchyard really does look beautiful in Spring.

Next meeting of FODCY is scheduled for Wednesday 4 March 2009 at 7.30pm in the Tower Room at the Darfield All Saints Church. We would love to see you there.

**And don't forget our next evening with Martyn Johnson ~
Friday 8 May 2009 - 7.30pm
Darfield Church Hall**

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 by Kay Valentine and Sheila McMillan.
Photographs were taken by Kay Valentine.

We would welcome any suggestions for inclusion or improvement in this newsletter