



Friends of Darfield Churchyard

Newsletter: Winter 2009-2010



The trees in Darfield Churchyard looked magnificent in Autumn.....

But now the leaves are all gone and 2009 had turned into 2010. The snow started before Christmas and, as I write this in January, it has never really left the churchyard. This of course makes for some lovely photographic opportunities - see the back page.



Throughout the recent changing seasons our emphasis has been on raising the necessary funds for the restoration of the Houghton Main Cage Disaster Memorial in Darfield Churchyard. If you have read our previous newsletter, you will know all about our current project to raise £4,200 to restore the memorial. Details of some of our fund-raising events follow in this newsletter.

But in addition we would like to take this chance to thank all you individuals who have so generously given donations towards this restoration. Cheques and cash have arrived by hand and by post. Many have been given with an explanation that the donor, or a loved one, worked at Houghton; others with the sentiment that it is important to keep memories of our mining heritage alive. Whatever your reasons, we are truly grateful for all these donations. The current fund stands at £2728, and we have some other money available in our general fund. If we can just have one good last push we are very hopeful that the actual restoration work may be carried out in Spring 2010. If you would like to make a donation to our appeal fund, please send any cheque, made payable to 'Friends of Darfield Churchyard', to Mr J Kendall, 8 Meadow Drive, Darfield, Barnsley, S73 9HL.

Recent Fund Raising Events ...

Back in October 2009, Ian McMillan, the well known writer and radio presenter, gave us an entertaining and hilarious evening which certainly exercised the old chuckle muscles! Everyone who came along had a great time and many took the opportunity to obtain a copy of his latest book, 'Yorkshire Humour'. Ian's flow of humour continued as he drew the raffle tickets. Prizes were donated by FODCY members and by the local business, CJ's sandwich and coffee bar of Garden Street, for which we are grateful.



In a completely different vein, **Brian Elliott was our speaker in November 2009**. His theme was South Yorkshire Mining Disasters. The audience gained an insight into the reality of the lives of the miners who were, until recently, the backbone of the community.

We were honoured to have the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Barnsley, Councillor and Mrs Sanderson, as our special guests. At the close of the event Mrs Beryl Sanderson told us how her own dad had been killed in a pit accident when she was just a girl of 13. A personal reminder of the tragic consequences of the fatal accidents which occurred.

Brian was also signing copies of his latest book, South Yorkshire Mining Disasters Volume 2. The story of the Houghton Main cage disaster of 1886 is recorded in his book, South Yorkshire Mining Disasters Volume 1. I would like to take this opportunity to express an apology and an acknowledgement to Brian. In our last newsletter we had an article on the actual events of the disaster. Quite a large part of that article was taken from Brian's book (without us realising it!) I would highly recommend both volumes of the book to anyone at all interested in the mining history of the area. Both books are extremely well researched and very readable.

Both Ian and Brian very generously gave us their time freely and we presented each of them with a pen made from the wood of the old church organ by FODCY member, Trevor Baxter.

Update!

As the result of Mrs Beryl Sanderson's contact with the Asda store in Barnsley, a further £237 has been donated by customers there in the run-up to Christmas. We are grateful to the store manager, to the events co-ordinator, Sue Hall, and to the generous customers in Barnsley Asda.

Clearing the bottom corner of the churchyard

Over the last few months some workers from the 'Community Payback Scheme' have been working one day a week in the churchyard to clear the final part of the 'jungle' undergrowth. They finished the task just before Christmas and the transformation is amazing - as can be seen from the 'before' and 'after' pictures here.....



This has enabled access to the many graves seen in the 'after' picture. Some of these were not on the records of headstones which we held. It would appear that the undergrowth has long been so dense that previous headstone transcribers were not even aware of the existence of these stones. If you have not been down the churchyard recently I would recommend that you take a trip down there as soon as weather permits. You will be very pleasantly surprised at the transformation. And the wildlife have been considered - all the chopped down branches have been piled by the bottom wall to provide cover and a habitat for our wildlife.



Spotlight on George Skilbeck Maude

On the wall of the south aisle, next to the porch door, there is marble headstone with the inscription 'Sacred to the Memory of George Skilbeck Maude BA of Middlewood Hall'. George's father, Daniel, bought the Hall in 1830 from the Honourable Henry Savile for £11,000, and moved in, bringing his wife Janet, his son George who was then eleven years old, and his three daughters - Matilda, Elizabeth Ann and Jane. George was sent off to St Catherine's College Cambridge, and matriculated there in 1838. Unfortunately his father died in the same year but the Estate was held in trust until George reached his maturity. He took possession of the Estate in March 1843 at the age of 24 and, having continued with his studies at Cambridge, obtained his BA in the same year. It was in his undergraduate year at Cambridge that his artistic leanings developed and he began buying works of art in both Cambridge and London.



In October of 1843 he travelled to Rome, where his collection of art work continued to expand. It is here that we get the first indication that all was not well with young George, because he decided to over-winter in Rome, finding it better for his health. He returned home to Middlewood in 1844 and must have been suffering considerable distress for he made his will on the 9th of August, and died on the 5th September from tuberculosis. In his will he directed that the Estate be sold and he left considerable sums of money to his friends and family and many charities. He also bequeathed a statue called 'Silence' to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, which they still have. His bequest of ten of his best pictures to the National Gallery, London, was refused, and, in a very revealing letter to the Gallery, his Uncle John (his executor) said he had tried to guide his nephew's choice of art work but without success. In fact his letter was expressed in very strong terms! A very interesting feature of his will however concerns his bequest of £1,000 for the repair and improvement of the Parish Church of Darfield.

We are fortunate to have a reasonably detailed account of the work carried out with the money, supplemented by a further £1,000 donated by his uncle, John Maude of Moorhouse near Wakefield, 'a gentleman of refined taste, great public spirit and true Christian benevolence', according to an article published in *The Patrician* in 1848. Four unsightly galleries were removed from the nave, the tower arch (which had been blocked up so that the tower base could be used as a coal store and rubbish dump) was opened up to allow a view of the full length of the church, and the hearse house that had been built onto the north side of the tower was removed thus opening out the west window of the north aisle. The plaster ceilings, 'more fit for a ballroom than a church', were destroyed and the exposed roof timbers were oiled, and the plaster was scraped from the pillars and arches. The vestry which projected from the east end of the church, thereby obstructing the east window, was removed and a new one built on the north side. A new handsomely carved pulpit was erected and the old oak sittings of the nave repaired. The east window and the heads of all the other windows were fitted with richly stained glass, and various coats of arms mentioned by ancient heralds as having formerly existed in the windows were placed in the west window of the tower. The coat of arms of the Maude family is portrayed in the head of the centre window of the south aisle.

In addition to the beautiful restoration that we now see, George's father Daniel Maude had paid for the needed extension to the churchyard where George is interred.

(We are grateful to Dr T Gladman of Darfield History Society for this interesting article).

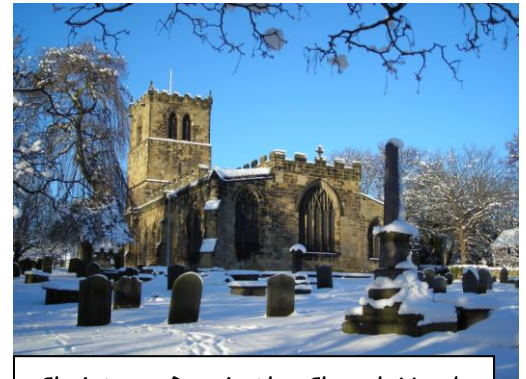
Monument in the churchyard to *George Skilbeck Maude*



Snippets....

- ❖ We must thank Martyn Johnson for suggesting and obtaining the services of Brian Elliott for the talk in November.
- ❖ FODCY are displaying photographs of the churchyard in the

Maurice Dobson Museum café throughout March 2010. Give it a visit and feast on scrumptious cakes whilst learning more about our work. Throughout March the museum is open from 1pm to 4pm on Wednesdays and from 10am to 2pm on Saturdays

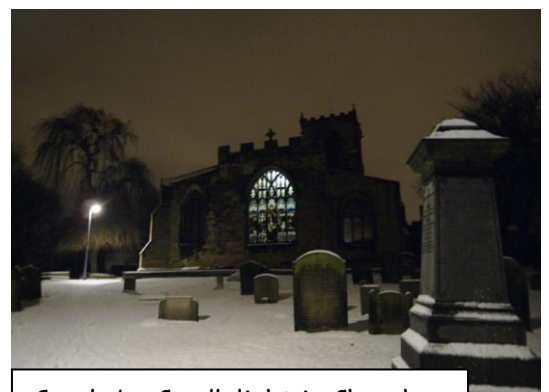


Christmas Day in the Church Yard



- ❖ Future Events - We hope to get Steve Smith to do a talk for us. He is the well known local solicitor ~ author ~ public speaker. We are also hoping to hear from our own Martyn Johnson when his own book, on his experiences as a policeman, is published later this year. Both events should be highly entertaining.

- ❖ You will see that we have a guest writer for our 'Spotlight on' article in this issue. If you have a favourite grave or character in the churchyard please contact us. You can either do the article yourself or give us the main details and we will prepare the article. All suggestions would be gratefully received.
- ❖ Now that the last part of the jungle has been cleared at the bottom of the churchyard, Gordon Warrington has been down again taking more detailed photographs of the headstones. Don't forget that if you would like a photograph of any particular headstone he can supply it. Just let us know which headstone and we will pass on the details to him.



Carols by Candlelight in Church,

As this newsletter was about to go to print we heard the sad news that Trevor Baxter, one of the founder members of our group and a regular worker in the churchyard, died on Thursday 28 January 2010. He will be greatly missed.

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 (except Middlewood Hall photograph by C Walton)

