



undertakings

Sheffield General Cemetery Trust



Angus Hunter with visiting children from
Porter Croft School

SAFER COMMUNITY ROUTES



LOTTERY FUNDED



CommunitySpaces

Those of you who visit the Cemetery on a regular basis will have noticed a big improvement to the paths in the upper part of the site. This was made possible with the award of a Community Spaces Grant of £49,000, section 106 money and a donation from the Rotary Club. Community Spaces is a £50 million open grants programme that is managed by Groundwork UK as an award partner to the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Places initiative. The programme helps community groups create or improve green and open spaces so that the quality of life in neighbourhoods across England is enhanced.

The Safer Community Routes project was conceived after an audit of the paths found that those in the upper part of the site leading from the Cemetery Road entrances, which also access the more historically important areas of the site, were not suitable for users with mobility impairments. A Green Spaces Conference held at Sharrow Community Forum in 2008 highlighted the need to improve the links between, and through, local green spaces due to Sharrow and Nether Edge having a green space deficit with less open spaces than any other area of Sheffield; the Cemetery being the largest at 15 acres.

The Trust worked in partnership with Groundwork Sheffield (GWS), who acted as the accountable body, and Sheffield City Council Bereavement

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Services. The Project was managed by Helen Batt, Open Spaces Development Manager (GWS), who some readers may recall from her time at the Cemetery as the Friends' first Project Manager.

The path work was undertaken by Legacy Habitat Management Ltd with guidance from Andy Wimble, the Head Landscape Architect for English Heritage in Yorkshire. The work was done during the winter to ensure impact to the wildlife on the site was kept to a minimum.

The project enabled the Trust to strengthen its links with the local community by engaging Sharrow Sure Start, Porter Croft and Hinde House Schools in the project. Porter Croft School came to the Cemetery to partake in a "Bodger's Camp" jointly organised with the Community Forester, Angus Hunter, who readers may also recall was the Friends' second project manager after Helen. Activities included pole lathe turning, basket weaving and tours of the new paths.

The grant also enabled the Trust to produce a new leaflet and to fund the Sharrow Lantern Carnival where the new paths, lovingly adorned with lanterns created by Sharrow Sure Start, were officially opened.

I would like to say thank you to all who supported and contributed to the Safer Community Routes Project.

Michael Steadman, Landscape Coordinator

SHEFFIELD BLITZ REMEMBERED



This December sees the 70th anniversary of the Sheffield Blitz, when Sheffield suffered two nights of devastating bombing from Germany's Luftwaffe. More than seven hundred people died, several of whom are buried in the General Cemetery. We would like someone to volunteer to do some research about those people who died and are buried in the General Cemetery, and to produce an article for the next newsletter. If you are interested please contact me on Julia.duggleby@blueyonder.co.uk, or ring the office.



Gardening Volunteers Required

We're looking for help on Friday afternoons with the maintenance of the General Cemetery's ornamental garden.

As well as a desire to create a pleasant floral vista within the cemetery, some knowledge of gardening would be helpful.

No very heavy work is entailed!



Anyone interested in helping should apply for further information at the office in the Gatehouse at the end of Cemetery Avenue, off Ecclesall Road.

Telephone 0114 268 3486 or e-mail sgct@gencem.org leaving your name and contact address and/or telephone number.

THE BURIAL RECORDS: TWENTY YEARS OF WORK NEARLY COMPLETED



The 87,000 burials at the General Cemetery have been transcribed from the original registers and are now entered on a database on the Cemetery computer. Most of the entries have been checked against other records and numerous mistakes found and amended. As a result two more CDs have been compiled.

- ◆ Anglican burial records 1911 – 1927,
- ◆ An index of burials in the General Cemetery, including Nonconformists from 23.5.1836 to 16.12.1975 and Anglican, from 16.6.1850 to 19.8.1978.

There are still many records to be checked and amendments will be added to the index as these are discovered. When the

'Friends' were formed in 1989, the first Burial book, containing just under 5800 entries, of the Nonconformists burials, was transcribed by members assisting Professor Newton and a book printed in 1991 was left at the Sheffield Archives. A copy of these transcriptions together with a list of Nonconformist Plot owners was later put on the website of the Sheffield General Cemetery Trust (www.gencem.org). After a short break the transcriptions of the rest of the burial records were then undertaken and put onto a computer database, together with an index of Monumental Inscriptions and Grave records of the Anglican burials. In October 2002 the first discs of these records were compiled and sold to raise funds for the Cemetery and the 13 lots of discs sold have raised approximately £3,500. These discs have been sold via the Sheffield and District Family History Society and the latest two were on sale at the S&DFHS Fair held at Norfolk Park on Saturday 24th April 2010. The last 5300 records have still to be checked before being put on a disc and it is anticipated that this will be available before the end of 2010.

Frank Cooper, Database Coordinator

CEMETERY ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Over the past few years there has been increasing incidence of car accidents on Cemetery Road, and several times cars have crashed into the Cemetery wall, causing great damage. Repairs sometimes take years. The planned January retexturing of the top end of the road was postponed because of the snow, but has now taken place, so it is hoped that once the current breach is repaired the wall will stay undamaged in future.



EXPLOSION IN SCOTLAND STREET!

At about 12 o'clock, on 5 February 1858, James Corbidge had shut up shop and was sitting down to his dinner. Suddenly there was a loud explosion! Mr Corbidge jumped up and ran out of his grocery shop, and into Scotland Street. He saw smoke and flame billowing from *The*



Queen, the pub owned by his father. Mary Brenni came running down the street, hand-in-hand with two of her children. She lived in a room above the pub, and had fled the devastated building - leaving her youngest infant upstairs. Asking after his father, Corbidge was told that he and his wife had already been rescued and were safe. A heavy pall of smoke - punctuated by licking flames and screeching rockets - was obscuring the building. Determined to save Mary Brenni's baby, James Corbidge by-passed the burning kitchen and managed to make his way to the upstairs room. Taking hold of the infant, still in its cradle, he threw it down to Brenni. He then concentrated on salvaging as much furniture as he could. Unbeknownst to Corbidge, his father had not been rescued, and was in fact trapped in the burning kitchen. A passerby, William Kirby, saw Mr Corbidge (senior) struggling to open the kitchen window; severely burnt, amid flames and exploding fireworks, but he struggled in vain. Assisted by three other men who were on the scene, Kirby was able to brave the heat, smoke, and fusillade of crackers. They dragged the pub landlord - his clothing aflame - to a place of safety. He begged them to rescue his wife. Fire-engines arrived on the scene, and began to play their

hoses on the flames. As soon as the fire-brigade had doused the flames, they began to search for bodies. Amongst the debris of the ruined pub, they found the badly-burned corpse of George Bywater, firework manufacturer. Nearby, were the charred remains of

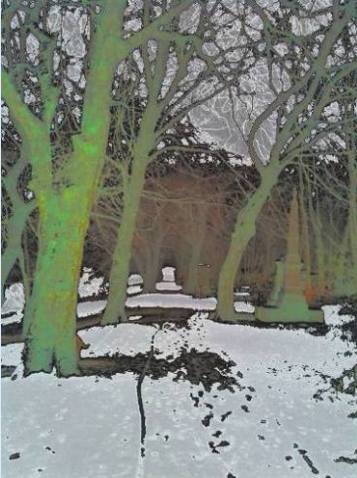
Ann Corbidge, the landlords' wife; and of Harriet Walker, Mrs Corbidge's sister.

Mr Corbidge, landlord of *The Queen*, had inherited Mr Bywater as a tenant. For several years Mr Bywater had rented a room at the pub, and used it for the purpose of making fireworks. Bywater made his living by providing displays at theatres and public events. The previous landlord, a Mr Glover, had seemingly no qualms about having great amounts of gunpowder stored under his living quarters. The new landlord *did* have qualms; in fact it troubled him greatly. He asked Bywater to quit the tenancy, but the latter declined to do so. After many anxious months, Mr Corbidge and his wife could no longer tolerate the situation. When the firework maker offered rent, Mr Corbidge refused to take it. He gave Bywater notice to quit. Two days later, when the Corbidges, and Harriet Walker, sat down for their mid-day meal, the room below them exploded with such force that Mary Brenni - in the room above them - feared that an earthquake was imperilling her and her children. At the inquest into the deaths of Mrs Corbidge, Harriet Walker, and George Bywater, the latter was described as 'a *worthy respectable man*'. Maybe!

Jim Buck



Art in the 21st Century



Rarely a week goes by without my spotting someone taking photos in the cemetery: its got that romantic crumbling edge that people love to capture in photographs. Its especially photogenic in the Autumn with the mix of golden colours and when fresh snow has fallen, and all sorts of amazing white shapes smooth over the shrubbery and headstones. The contrast with the dark stone is striking. So, the cemetery has been, for me, a source of inspiration since I moved to the neighbourhood, some 25 years ago. I walk round it with my dog every day, nowadays with an iPhone in my pocket, which serves as a sketchpad as well as a phone, as well as a camera. I'm doing a project on my iPhone at the moment, capturing photos of peoples' dogs, and then doing sketches on my iPhone from these, but I also take photos of cemetery views and manipulate them on my phone, and also stand in the shrubbery sketching trees, views and gravestones. People never know I'm drawing, they probably think I'm a mad 'texter'. The advantage of sketching on an iPhone is that it's like having a big bag full of art equipment in the palm of your hand, a huge range of colours, paintbrushes and papers. I can't resist, I am a bit of a geek and can't wait till the iPad comes out, because this will give me an even bigger sketchpad to work on. If you'd like to see more of my iPhone art I am taking part in Open Studios in June this year at 4 Grange Road, so come and see the images there. Otherwise log on to <http://tinyurl.com/392etng> to see them there.

Jane Horton

Sharrow Lantern Carnival - 11 April 2010

This year's Sharrow Lantern Carnival attracted almost 1,500 people, with around 1,000 of those descending on the Cemetery for a musical celebration of the recently restored paths.

Leading up to carnival day were many lantern making workshops

based around the theme of "music". With a bit of basic tuition, for those who had never made a lantern before, it was possible to quickly turn an idea into something magnificent.

There were many lanterns paraded along London and Cemetery Road such as a yellow submarine (portholes painted by children from Byron Wood and Porter Croft Schools), an "Owl and Pussy Cat" in a pea green boat and a giant gramophone. Also there were static lanterns



A butterfly lands on Mark Firth's monument

placed at various points, such as an illuminated butterfly in the Firth Memorial and smaller lanterns made by children from Sharrow Sure Start.

Thanks go to Luisa Golob of Creative Action Network and many volunteers for organising a peaceful,

charming and community building event. We're grateful to those who came the day after the carnival to clear up the site and leave it in good order.

The Carnival day raised over £300 in donations, to be shared equally between Creative Action Network and SGCT.

Please visit www.creativeaction.net for photographs of the workshops and the carnival.

Alex Quant, Office Manager

ARCHIVE SNIPPET

Though this is not about the General Cemetery, Tanya Schmoller passed this interesting snippet to me which seems worth publishing in Undertakings.

VWM19 at Archives (Wentworth papers) has a note dated 1809 by Henry Vernon, one of the Wentworths, to be opened after his death, addressed *For my Emma or my son or whom ever may out live me and possess my property. In a Bottle within this Case is the Heart of my poor dear Wife Penelope, which I brought Home with me from Naples where she died in January 1782.*

Her Body I have since removed from Naples and have burred it in the --- Ground, F(?)eather Field, Marshall (?) Lagonier (?) at Cobham in Surrey. I request of my Son to let this heart of his Mother be buried with me. I beg to be buried near my Emma whom I heartily love at Wentworth Castle or where she pleases.'

Adds Tanya: "Henry Vernon seems to have been an amorous type, as there is another letter where he makes stealthy arrangements to pay for the education of an illegitimate child."



A good send-off: Funeral Biscuits

Serving refreshments to the mourners at a funeral is an established courtesy, and by the eighteenth century it had become customary in the North to serve at least funeral biscuits and sherry, either before or after the interment. The fashion started amongst the upper classes, but by the time that the General Cemetery opened in 1836, the habit had spread to the middle classes.

Further North, funeral biscuits took the form of a type of shortcake, often with the addition of caraway seeds. They might be stamped with a mould like a butter stamp, but can be identified by a heart motif, symbolising love for the departed. But in Sheffield and wider South Yorkshire, the format was different and the biscuits are described as “Savoy rusks” or “crisp sponge”. Local confectioners manufactured these to order, wrapping a pair in white paper, sealing the parcel with black wax, and adding in a business card or wrapper, advertising their services as “funeral furnishers”, who were willing to provide not just the biscuits, but also the accompanying wine and black mourning garb and drapes.

The biscuit wrappers are often decora-

tive, and as well as advertising the funeral furnisher concerned, often have an appropriate engraving, or at least a suitable verse. Some contained a space into which the name of the deceased could be added, thus doubling as a funeral card.

For those unable to attend the funeral, a pair of biscuits might be delivered, by a gentleman clothed soberly in black, with black gloves and a top hat with black drapes, handing out the biscuits from a basket lined with a white cloth. The name of the recipient might be written onto the wrapper.

Surviving funeral biscuit wrappers are not common, but there are a number in Sheffield Central Library’s Local Collections; these illustrations come with permission from Miscellaneous Papers 6735, but there are others.

There are recipes for the two types of funeral biscuit in *Traditional Food in Yorkshire* by Peter Brears (John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1987), but read the quantities carefully first: they are designed to cater for an entire funeral and not just a single family!

Ian Roberts, SGCT Secretary



WHAT'S ON IN THE CEMETERY THIS SUMMER

As well as our regular, first Sunday in every month, tours we have a few special events coming up:

Saturday 22 May 2 pm
Sudden Death!

Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 July 1 to 4pm
Victorian Murder Mystery

There has been a death! Can you help the detective find the killer? Additional events for the day to be announced.

Friday 11 June 12.30 pm
Desk to Death lunchtime tour

Thursday 26 August 1 - 4 pm
Summer Surprise

Arts and crafts for young children and families.
In conjunction with Sharrow Sure Start

Unless stated otherwise meet at the Cemetery Gatehouse, at the end of Cemetery Avenue off Ecclesall Road

Nether Edge's 10th Farmer's Market & Summer Fair - Sunday 13th June 2010. 12 noon to 4pm on Nether Edge Road and Glen Road and the local Sainsbury's car park. The Cemetery has been nominated by the Nether Edge Neighbourhood Group as beneficiary of the day's fund raising and we'll be hosting a stall at the event.

Members' Meetings

Members' meetings take place in The Gatehouse, Cemetery Avenue, every other month; normally on the third Thursday of the month. They start at 7.30 pm. The Members' Meetings for the next few months are:

17 June
19 August

If you have issues or ideas and want to contribute to the work of the Trust, come along to the meetings.

Please note any member of SGCT may attend these meetings. However, there isn't much room so it would be helpful if you could let us know in advance if you wish to attend. Ring the office on 0114 268 3486.



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Undertakings is produced by the Sheffield General Cemetery Trust, Charity Number 1103158. The Trust's objectives are:

- ♦ to develop the site for the long-term benefit of the public as an environmental, historical and educational amenity;
- ♦ the conservation of the General Cemetery, Sharrow, its monuments and buildings and its wildlife, and the natural beauty of their setting.

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