

**Friends of Raikes Road Burial Ground
Restoration Project**



**RESEARCH VISIT TO LISTER LANE
CEMETERY, HALIFAX**

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The aim of the research visit to Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax was to see:

- (a) How their Friends' group planned and managed its restoration project
- (b) To look, in particular, at the archaeological work involving geophysical surveys

Two of the Friends of Raikes Road, Jean Robinson and Audrey Crossley, visited Halifax on 23rd July 2014.

They joined a pre-planned visit which the Lister Lane group had with the Calderdale Civic Trust.

Discussion also took place with David Glover, Chair of the Lister Lane Friends, and Stuart Wilkinson, another of their Friends.

This paper aims to show the Friends of Raikes Road what can be learnt from an older established Friends' group about their restoration project.

Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax



Lister Lane was Halifax's first general cemetery, opening in 1841. It covers an area of three acres with 20,000 burials and around 4,000 stones. It is sited in an urban area just off the centre of Halifax. The Friends have a website at <http://www.listerlanecemetery.co.uk>.

The Friends' group was formed in 1999 and works in collaboration with Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council. All the Friends are volunteers and their aim is to help preserve and maintain the cemetery as an historic site and local nature reserve. The Friends make a small charge for being a Friend, with a reduced rate for those who live within in the Calderdale area. They also make a small charge to anyone seeking information about those buried in the cemetery. The Friends open Lister Lane by appointment and one afternoon a month, usually on a Sunday.

Unlike Raikes Road, Lister Lane is not linked to a Church or religious denomination and was a general cemetery for all people.

On the site, there are large monuments and a ruined, roofless Chapel, which is cordoned off from the public because of its condition. The Friends say that its

renovation will cost, roughly, in the region of £250,000. A lodge which had once existed at one of the three entrances, has been demolished. The site also had a stonemason's yard attached to it.



Ruined Chapel

Much research and work has been done by the Friends, who have produced leaflets, at a price of 30p. each, a booklet on Benjamin Rushton, a famous Chartist buried in the cemetery, as well as a burial plan and have recently installed interpretation boards with the assistance of Lottery funding.

The ground itself has its original cobbled footways, which have been kept open but much of the cemetery still lies undisturbed under close-growing foliage such as brambles. Other areas have been cleared, including unearthing flat gravestones over which earth has grown. Because the Friends have the original cemetery burial record, they are able to identify where all the incumbents are. Work is ongoing.

There are many people of significance and wealth in the cemetery who have become interested in it. For example, the carpet manufacturing family of

Crossley, who owned much of the area around the cemetery, take an interest in their family graves to the extent that one of their number who died in 2003 has been memorialised on one of their stones.

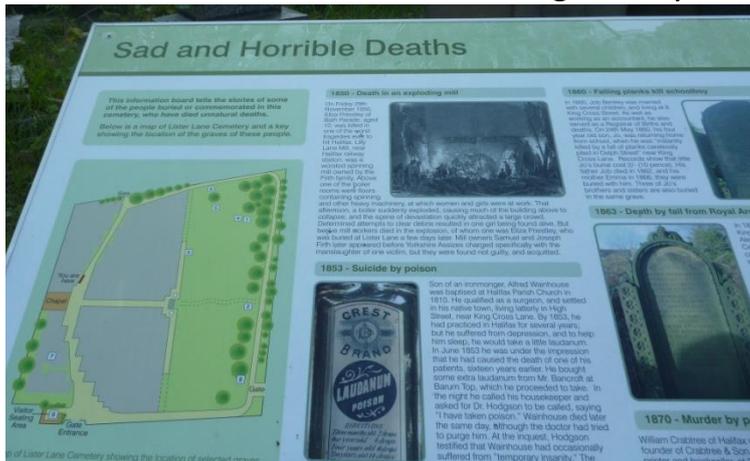
The Crossley family tombstones:



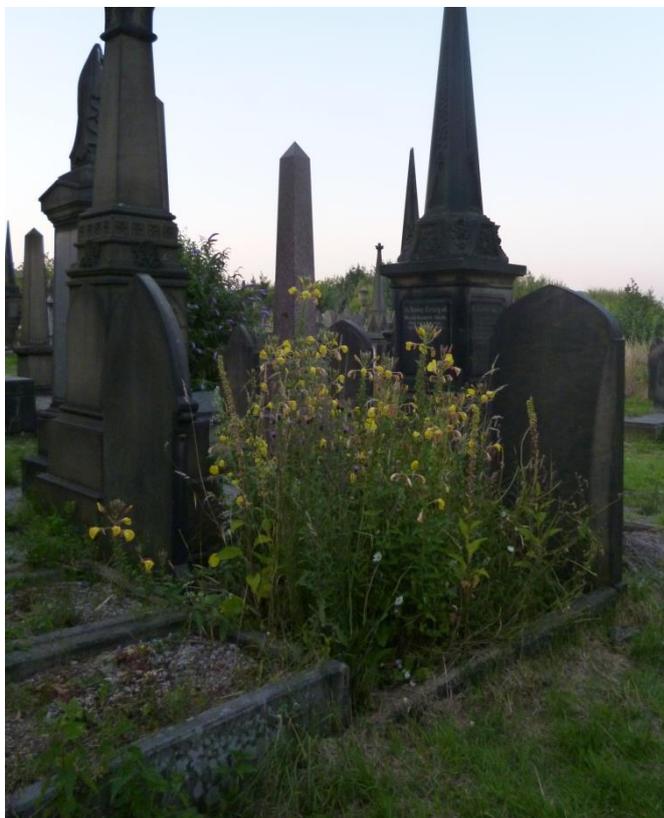
What was learnt from Lister Lane?

- By the time of the visit, the geophysical work in Raikes Road had been done under the auspices of Raikes Road Friend, Ann Wilkinson, who is also part of the Friends' group for Lister Lane. Because of the nature of Lister Lane, geophysical work has not been either needed or possible.
- Their Chapel site has not been investigated because of its poor condition, but unlike Raikes Road, sufficient information is still extant to be able to provide general details. Should Lister Lane receive any funding in the future, archaeological investigation may take place.
- Where records exist, as in this case, it is clear that the impetus for archaeological investigation is not as acute as at Raikes Road, where so little is known.
- Archaeological work on the gravestones themselves show that complete clearance of the stones and other grave furniture can not only identify the full extent of the history of the site, e.g. identifying all people on stones, stonemasons (usually at the bottom of the stone or on the plinth), but also how they interrelate with the monuments alongside each other. This is particularly important in Raikes Road where there is no burial plan.
- Once the full gravestone has been cleared, the Lister Lane Friends have looked at the importance of the gravestone and/or the person(s) buried, to consider how to manage it. For example, some of the graves have had pebbles and soil laid on top and suitable plants and/or herbs put in which can then self-seed to other graves, e.g. evening primrose.
- Management of information collected from the burials can be used in leaflets to attract people to the historical, cultural and wildlife aspects of Lister Lane.
- Specific people of interest can form their own leaflet/booklet.
- Specific areas, e.g. the Chapel, can be used on interpretative boards.

- Groups of historical/archaeological information can also be used on interpretative boards. For example, Lister Lane has a board entitled “sad and horrible deaths”.
- The visitors from the Calderdale Civic Trust were asked what they thought of their visit. All were intrigued by the size of the cemetery and the amount of historical information which the Friends had already found, as well as identifying specific graves for families seeking their ancestors. All were interested enough to say they would visit again.



Interpretative board showing grouped information



Evening primrose cultivated on grave in shale/soil covering

What information gathered from Lister Lane can be used at Raikes Road Burial Ground?

It is suggested that the following points can be considered for Raikes Road:

1. A set of leaflets on differing issues such as people, wildlife, Friends etc. could be drafted for Raikes Road.
2. Individuals could form the basis of their own leaflet/booklet, e.g. the Kipling family for their connection to Rudyard Kipling and/or the entrepreneurs such as the Birtwhistles, Mitchells and Lockwood.
3. Consider using (2) above as part of the interpretative boards, including use of groups of people/stones/information.
4. Consider using geophysical and archaeological work on Raikes Road to inform the interpretative boards of work done to show emergence of features not otherwise recorded.
5. Where so little is known on Raikes Road, consider further clearance of gravestones to identify each plot layout.
6. Once graves cleared, look at managing each in terms of ease of maintenance coupled with work on wildlife.
7. Keep in contact with Lister Lane Friends to gain future information regarding archaeological work and/or management as both sites continue with their restoration work.
8. Consider whether individuals making general enquiries about residents of the Ground should attract a small charge to assist with work of the Friends.
9. Continue publicity on Raikes Road to seek to interest local groups, schools and those who are interested in finding out if they have relatives in the Ground, as information provided by families can add to the historic and archaeological database.
10. Consider at what times the Ground can be open in the future.