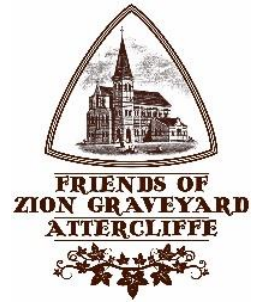


Zion – the Forgotten Graveyard

Photographic Record of how we spent the Heritage Lottery Fund grant and what we did from January 2018 to February 2019



Saving the Graveyard



Chair of Friends of Zion Graveyard, Penny Rea, signing the contract 25/01/2018 .

Photograph by Joseph Desforges, Voluntary Action Sheffield

After a tense six months campaigning, bid writing and waiting, we were overjoyed when a fantastic grant award of £9,800 was confirmed by the Heritage Lottery Fund on 9th January 2018. Generous match funding of £3,700 raised from Crowdfunding donations made up the balance of the project total of £13,500. We knew we had all that we needed to save the graveyard and learn how to look after its history and its wildlife.

The contract to purchase the freehold site of Zion Graveyard from Yorkshire Congregational Union was signed minutes before the deadline on 25th January 2018 at Voluntary Action Sheffield,

witnessed by solicitor Keith Arrowsmith from Counterculture Partnerships whose team had helped us establish an incorporated company with charitable aims so that we were an appropriate legal entity to own the graveyard. We are in the process of registering with the Charity Commission.

During the previous 9 months since we had rediscovered the forgotten graveyard many visitors had come to help clear the graves and paths so we invited them to return in February to celebrate the funding award.

In February 2019 we have a confirmed membership of 189, with 335 Facebook followers and 108 on Twitter.



Volunteers celebrate the successful HLF Grant Award 11/02/2018

The grave of Mary Anne Rawson

Our main aim in purchasing Zion Graveyard was to preserve the memory and grave of anti-slavery campaigner Mary Anne Rawson who is buried in a family tomb. She had also supported many other reforming campaigns including religious freedom and the drive to provide education for the poor.



The grave of Mary Anne Rawson 2017



Memorial Celebration at the grave of Mary Anne Rawson

Following the announcement of the HLF grant a Memorial Celebration was held at the graveside to mark her anti-slavery campaigns. From this event an Anti-Slavery Past and Present Group was established with a link to Sheffield's Snowdrop Project which supports survivors of modern-day slavery. A successful garden party later in the year raised awareness and support as well as much needed funds for the Snowdrop Project..

We continue to provide information on modern-day slavery and snowdrops have been planted near the grave in recognition of the work of the Snowdrop Project.

We were puzzled as to why there was an ugly industrial fence across this important grave which also blocked the legal access point to the graveyard.

With legal support we were able to establish our right of entry and then

the neighbouring firm who own the pathway agreed that we could remove the and open the back gate onto Ferguson Street giving improved level access for the less mobile.



Removing the fence. July 2018



The grave of Mary Anne Rawson and the path to the Ferguson Street entrance

The ledger stones over the tomb had been prised apart by vandals. We have consulted an archaeologist; a local funeral director whose firm made the last burial in the graveyard, as well as a memorial mason whose stamp was on some of the headstones. They agreed that we could close the ledger stones up ourselves and then apply for listing of the grave.

Habitat Management Plan



The graveyard had been locked up for 20 years prior to rediscovery. In February 2018 we started working with Julie Riley from Wildscapes to develop a Habitat Management plan that will protect and attract wildlife whilst giving access to the memorials.

Over the course of the year Julie visited the graveyard many times to carry out an environmental survey of the flora and fauna alongside volunteers. She also created a questionnaire to establish a range of views on how the site should be used. The results of the interviews were reported back to the committee and showed a general agreement that the graveyard should retain its wild and slightly overgrown feel whilst looking cared for. Volunteers have planted wildlife friendly native shrubs from a recommended list along the boundary fence between a new car storage facility lot on the site of the demolished church.

Julie has produced an amazing, detailed 65 page report, which contains a survey of current flora and fauna, a plan for each of four zones, an extensive list of suggested planting of native species that will encourage biodiversity and an annual workplan which reflects the values and aims of Friends of Zion Graveyard that will give us a framework for the next 25 years.

The full report can be downloaded from the front page of our website: www.ziongraveyard.btck.uk



Wildscapes have provided a sturdy bat box and two bird boxes all of which have been fixed high in the trees by Mick Bruin, one of our trustees who is a wildlife conservation professional. We also now have a bug hotel fixed to the back wall. With funding from the grant we also purchased two trail video cameras that work by sensor to record any movement, day or night.

So far, the cameras have recorded several foxes, a cat, a rat, various birds including a blue tit, great tit, chaffinch, longtail tit, black bird, a goldcrest, and a wren. A pair of black caps have nested in a tree, an unusual event in such an industrial area. We also regularly see and hear our resident robins who get friendlier with each visit.

Learning from Wardsend Cemetery

One of the objectives of the project was to help FoZGA members understand more about exploring, researching, tending and promoting a neglected graveyard so we visited three interesting sites and talked to the volunteers about the challenges and success they had experienced.



Wardsend Cemetery, Sheffield. Anniversary Celebrations.

In June 2018 members visited Sheffield's inspiring Wardsend Cemetery where volunteers have been rediscovering and researching graves in the council's huge cemetery on the hill behind Owlerton Stadium. Many are graves of soldiers posted at Hillsborough barracks and their stories have been told through a series of dynamic events including performances, film shows and tours as well as through quality publicity material.

Two Wardsend committee members are founder members and trustees of FoZGA and have brought invaluable experience and ideas to our group. Other Wardsend members have visited Zion Graveyard and have been very encouraging.

Sheffield General Cemetery Learning Visit



On August 25th Janet Ridler, former heritage officer at Sheffield General Cemetery, nobly led a group of 12 FoZGA members round the General Cemetery in the pouring rain, the event having been cancelled once before due to bad weather.

It was a carefully researched and well-prepared tour which gave us a detailed

history of the extensive site and its Nonconformist beginnings as well as a good lesson on leading a tour.

The elaborate monuments to philanthropists such as Mark Firth were a complete contrast to the modest tombstones of Zion where the most lavish embellishment is an ornamental vase on the headstone of two tiny grandchildren of Jonathan Wood. This highlighted the difference in culture between the two sites and reinforced the impression of the devout congregation of the Zion Church in a small, tight knit community before it rapidly expanded.

Raikes Road Burial Ground, Skipton

We were recommended to visit this cemetery by the Heritage Lottery Fund as it was felt to be a good example of a neglected burial ground which is also a nature reserve.

We found that it was very different to Zion being an open expanse set on a hillside. There are several particularly interesting graves including that of the grandparents of Rudyard Kipling and the volunteers made a feature of these with laminated information sheets on the memorials giving additional information. We thought this was an easy idea that we could replicate as well as the map of the site.

We have purchased a set of A4 perspex display stands to place on the graves with a brief summary of the information we have found about the occupants, their work, family relationships and role within Zion Church. Visitors have found this a helpful alternative to a guided tour.



The interpretation boards were particularly interesting with information on both the history and the wildlife. We also liked the entrance sign at the gate. Our setting is more urban with more risk of vandalism and we do not own our exterior fences and gates so we now have vinyl banners that we can display when the graveyard is open.



Raikes Road Burial Ground , Skipton

Capturing the memories of a dispersed community



Having completed British Library accredited Oral History training, our team set out to capture the memories of some of the people who remembered Attercliffe in former times.

We were invited to the Attercliffe Residents Reunion at Banners and talked to guests who shared their stories. We took notes at this event and then held a special Community Get Together at the premises of PJ Taste a local catering firm. Unfortunately, this venue proved

unsuitable to make recording due to the echo, however, we made some trial recordings and notes from the conversations.

We have compiled a list of potential interviewees and have conducted some recordings, but these have proved quite complicated to organise as all interviewees now live at a distance due to all the housing having been demolished last century. Although making the initial contact in the graveyard it is necessary to make appointments to visit the interviewee's home in order to get a good quality recording.

One gentleman, Brian Smith, has given a particularly interesting interview. He attended Zion Congregational Church from birth until it closed in 1976 was able to draw a detailed plan and describe the Zion Education Institute which was built in 1910 over the top of Mary Anne Rawson's grave resulting in the fence across the grave when the building was sold on.

We will be continuing to develop this project through this year, hopefully making a set of high-quality interviews that will be lodged with Sheffield Archives. In the meantime, we have been delighted to see the pleasure of people who have returned to the area and really appreciate the work of the volunteers.

Sheffield Archives Research Training

We were very pleased to be joined by ten volunteers including three signed up members who had not yet participated in any of our activities.

Archivist Tim Knebson gave us a very useful introduction explaining where material is located and how to use the indexes. We then spent several hours studying the wide range of material relating to Attercliffe and Zion Chapel. Participants wrote up their notes and have shared them on to a Dropbox folder which can be accessed by the research group.



Tim has provided us with a comprehensive list of resources at the Archives and in the Local Studies and is looking forward to more visits from Zion researchers – the reference list can be obtained through ziongraveyard@gmail.com and on our website www.ziongraveyard.btck.co.uk.

We had also held three research sessions at a local community centre with a computer suite. This to enabled volunteers to share research information and learn how to use Ancestry.Com. The group has continued to exchange information through Dropbox and email. The information is collated in a file and is being added to the website by volunteers.

Remembering and Acknowledging



We are indebted to volunteer Joseph Desforges for offering to design a logo for us. He was able to incorporate an image from a Victorian woodcut of Zion Congregational Church which we felt was an important piece of local history that should be remembered.

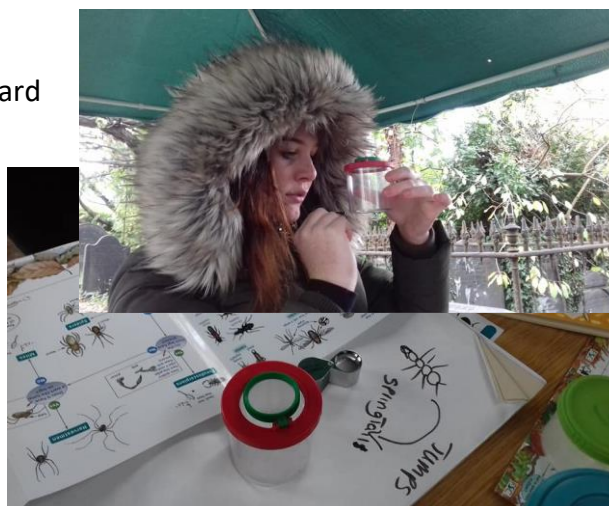
We were then able to work with others to use this logo on a bronze commemorative plaque which will be a permanent acknowledgement of the generosity of individual donors and the National Lottery. The plaque was manufactured at cost price by a neighbouring firm, Brass Founders. The funding for the plaque did not come from the grant, but is nevertheless a permanent acknowledgement of the contribution made by those who buy Lottery tickets.

We have worked with a local graphic designer to design information leaflets and a pull up banner to promote the graveyard at events such as the Sheffield Heritage Fair. These items, along with flyers for events, all carry the HLF logo.

Family Learning

It has taken us some time to clear the graveyard and ensure it is safe for children.

After a training day with an activity leader from Sheffield Wildlife Trust we launched our first Family Learning Day in the autumn half-term holiday. The afternoon was well attended by four families with children ranging from babies in prams to teenage twins who all had a lovely time with an afternoon of bug hunts, bark-rubbing and, as it was October 31st, we included happy Halloween crafts. We feel it is important that children feel comfortable in the graveyard and do not think of it as a scary place.



Mini-beast hunting at Halloween

As the weather was cold, we warmed up around a log fire and served, soup, hot chocolate and marshmallows. This activity was led by two trustees one of whom is a qualified teacher and forest school leader, and the other an experienced childcare worker and special needs support assistant.

We have now purchased our own mini-beast hunting equipment and will be running more art and science activities in the Easter holidays when the weather is warmer.



We currently have four students from Sheffield Hallam University who are helping to research information as part of their History BA (Hons) course. We had underestimated the amount of support and input they would require which in turn has made us realise how capable some of our volunteers are. We will work with the course leaders to gain a better understanding of the students' skills and needs so that we can offer ongoing opportunities.

In May, we expect to be having a group of Archaeology students from the University of Sheffield helping map the graves again and we have suggested they help excavate some of the banking where we think there is rubble from the demolished church covering more graves.



Raising Awareness and Securing the future of the Graveyard

We are particularly delighted that so many of our visitors have joined FoZGA and come back as volunteers to help with fund-raising, gardening or uncovering new graves. The interest across the city has been phenomenal and uplifting.

Volunteers help pick up litter inside and outside of the graveyard, keep the paths clear, bake cakes and welcome visitors. Local workers have been friendly and interested.

The Attercliffe Development Action Group gave the committee free use of a meeting space for a year and along with the local MP and councillors, have been very helpful. The Council Planning Officers have taken an interest and ensured constraints were placed on a neighbouring development to protect the graveyard from adverse effect. The saving of this historic graveyard has brought fresh hope to an otherwise forgotten and neglected area.

We have opened the gates for visitors every second Sunday in the month and for gardening on every second Wednesday. Volunteers also go in every week to check the cameras, collect any litter that has blown in, water the plants in summer and ensure the site is secure. In addition, there have been several guided tours for organisations and special visits arranged for individuals. We also give illustrated talks around the city to other groups. While the graveyard is remembered, it is safe.

The graveyard is not just for the dead but for the living: from two sides of a family meeting for the first time at the grave of an ancestor, to the grandma who brought her family back to the graveyard where she had played as a child, the robin who greets volunteers, chaffinches nesting, hedgehogs hiding and foxes foraging. Zion with its history dating back to 1793 is now a celebrated element in the rejuvenation of Attercliffe.

We have kept a log of the project on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Zion-Graveyard-Attercliffe

There is supplementary material posted on our website www.ziongraveyard.btck.co.uk

We have also posted out updates to members who do not use the internet.

We have received generous media coverage from Sheffield Telegraph and Star as well as Radio Sheffield and have always acknowledged the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as the generosity of the public who donated match funding. Our flyers have carried the HLF Logo.



We have also produced a short film **Zion - the Forgotten Graveyard** which gives an overview of our achievements over the year. This can be viewed on YouTube <http://bit.ly/zionattercliffefilm>

Thank you to all visitors and volunteers who have given such encouragement and have given permission for use of photo and film to promote the graveyard. Penny Rea. 21/03/2019