

WOMEN IN BURNLEY CEMETERY

1. There are 93 WW2 Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones for service personnel buried in Burnley Cemetery, dating from 1930 to 1947, and two of these commemorate women who lost their lives in the service of their country.

1a Barbara Mary Hitchon (Church of England Plot 1, Grave NE10515), aged 22



served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as Aircraftwoman 2nd Class ('478331'). She was the daughter of Ernest and Ada Hitchon of 24 Lark Street, Burnley.



Prior to joining up she had worked at Bank Top Manufacturing Company and was connected with St. John's Gannow Parish Church where she was a Sunday school teacher and member of the Amateur Dramatic Society. She had been a member of the St. John's Ambulance Nursing Division for about five years and involved with the Civil Defence Corps. She is also commemorated on a plaque placed in St. John's Church in 1950 (now in All Saints Church, Padiham Road) commemorating all those from the church who lost their lives in WW2.

Miss Hitchon joined the W.A.A.F. at the outbreak of war and was said to have been killed in action in England, dying on the 19th March 1944 at Station Hospital, R.A.F. Hereford, Credenhill.

1b Edith Gee (Dissenter Plot 2, Grave NE1106) aged 23, served in the



Women's Auxiliary Air Force as Leading Aircraftwoman in the 950 Balloon Squadron ('2083015'). She was the daughter of James Henry and Maud Mary Gee, of 95 Lowerhouse Lane, Burnley. Before joining up she worked for Miss. B. Fairburn, tailoress, of Coal Clough Lane. She was connected with the Rosegrove Methodist Church and

Sunday School, being a member of the choir and a teacher in the primary department. She also took a great interest in the Girls' Life Brigade in Burnley.

Miss Gee joined the W.A.A.F. in 1941 and was discharged owing to ill-health just before her death. For 12 months she had been serving in the Orkneys.

During WW2 Barrage balloons were used to defend ground targets against aircraft attack by raising aloft steel cables which pose a collision risk to aircraft. In 1940, it was decided to train members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) instead of male operators to relieve more men for active duty. In December 1939 A Balloon Barrage was established in Orkney to defend the Naval Base, Lyness and the Home Fleet Anchorage in Scapa Flow. No. 950 Squadron was formed, mostly of volunteers from three Glasgow Auxiliary Squadrons and some English units. In the summer of 1943 there was a major event - the arrival of the WAAF barrage personnel. Approximately 150 women, all volunteers, came to Scapa to take up posts as cooks, clerks, batwomen and balloon repair crews. A website about the base [The Orkney Balloon Barrage \(bbrclub.org\)](http://TheOrkneyBalloonBarrage(bbrclub.org)) states that "Most of the girls were heavily built with strapping muscles, handpicked for the very heavy work of hauling in the barrage balloons".

The winter of 43/44 was severe and, in a period of just three months, over 350 balloons were lost or badly damaged. In autumn 1944, the use of barrage balloons finished in the UK.

2. Gladys Ray (Church of England Plot 4, Grave NE 6634)



Gladys Ray and her husband, Frederick Charles Ray, were appointed Matron and Master of Primrose Bank Poor Law Institution on the 24th April 1929. She was a native of Stonehaven, Scotland and was a State-registered nurse, trained at

Withington Hospital, Manchester. She and her husband had served as Matron and Master of institutions in Patrington, Howden and Bromsgrove before coming to Burnley.

She died on the 23rd September 1931, aged 33, after a serious operation a year earlier from which she never recovered, despite receiving treatment from a Harley Street specialist in London.

It was reported in the Burnley newspapers that her devotion, enthusiasm, pleasant and cheerful disposition made her a popular figure within the Institution. She had been instrumental in the development of a church at the Institution and one of her unfulfilled ambitions was to see it completed. In September 1932 after its completion a plaque was unveiled at the church in her memory.

3. Harriet Paisley (Church of England Plot Plot 4, Grave NE 7584, no grave stone found)



Harriet Paisley (28.4.1871-12.3.1951)
Hunger March "granny"

Harriet Paisley, 62, of Fullede, against the wishes of her family, set off on 12th October 1932, to walk from Burnley to London, one of about 40 women, who were the first women to take part in one of the Hunger Marches of the Great Depression. They were protesting about the Means Test and the 1931 Anomalies Bill, which restricted the right of married women to claim

unemployment benefit. They marched quite separately to the much larger contingent of Lancashire men. The marches were organised by the communist led National Unemployed Workers' Union. The Burnley women were led by Lily Webb and Maud Brown, both communist party activists. Harriet was not a communist, she described herself as a "Radical", and had been prominent in the collection and distribution of relief parcels locally. She lived with two unmarried sons, both out of work textile operatives. She had been a winder.

The group attracted considerable press coverage, particularly in local newspapers along the route, and Harriet herself became a story. She was by far the oldest of the group, known as "Granny" by the others, she was a widow, the mother of 16 children, 7 of them still alive, she was a great-grandmother, and of a cheerful disposition, making speeches at stops along the route, sometimes in dialect. Accounts of the walk still usually mention her, if not by name then as a 62 year old.

The group were looked after by members of local Co-operative Societies or the Independent Labour Party at the overnight stops, sleeping on floors, or sometimes at the local Workhouse. "They would march 12-14 miles every day in all weathers, singing enthusiastically all the way." 14 days later, they reached London, where they joined up with the men, numbering many thousands, from all over Britain. At a mass rally in Hyde Park, there was considerable violence with Police baton charging the protesters.

Trains were provided to take the marchers home a few days later. On her return, Harriet spoke to the Burnley News and said she was proud of herself and her children were proud of her. Her only regret was she forgot her specs so couldn't keep a diary.

The heavy rain had been no problem to her as she was used to standing on Turf Moor and had "a coat made of blue pilot cloth and rain hardly ever gets through that". She was also used to being on her feet, having been a textile operative for 45 years. She had worn out two pairs of clogs and blisters had been a problem until she learned from ambulance men to dress them with methylated spirits. She was unimpressed with London, and saw a lot of homeless sleeping on the embankment.

She said her mother Mrs. Ennis was well known in Burnley as a mid-wife, and lived to be 80 years of age. Harriet herself died on 12th March, 1951 also aged 80 years.

4. Sisters of Mercy (Roman Catholic Plots 1, 3 & 5)

The Sisters of Mercy are members of a religious institute of Catholic women founded in 1831 in Dublin, Ireland, by Catherine McAuley (1778–1841). On the 22nd August 1872, by the direction of Cardinal Vaughan, Bishop of Salford and the invitation of Cannon Rimmer, rector of St. Mary's, Burnley, three Sisters from the Convent in Commercial Road, London arrived in Burnley. They were Rev. Mother Mary Angels, Mother Mary Ignatius and Mother Mary Catherine. They lived at a cottage near St. Mary's Church for six months then moved to the house adjoining the Presbytery. They raised funds to build a convent, completing the main block in 1881 and a new wing just before the outbreak of the war. The sisters immediately took charge of St. Mary's girls' and infants' schools and later taught at St. Thomas' and St. Mary Magdalene's, and took charge of St. John's Schools, Ivy Street.



All three of the founding Sisters are buried, along with 20 other Sisters, in Roman Catholic Plot 3. Rev. Mary Angela (Rev. Mother Bridget Glisenan) on 16th May 1887 (Aged 65 Grave 8319), Mother Mary Ignatius (Sister Mary Ignatius Dillion) on 10th August 1906 (Aged 62 Grave 8320) and Mother Mary Catherine (Mary C. Alocaque Winship) on the 8th April 1928 (Aged 80 Grave 8316).

At the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1922 in a Burnley Express report it was said “During the past fifty years the sisters of Mercy have displayed a zeal and devotion in the spiritual and secular education of the Catholics in Burnley that have worthily entitled them to the deep affection and reverence in which they are held by the entire Catholic community in the town”. There were 31 Sisters in Residence at the Convent at that time.

There are 114 Sisters buried in Burnley Cemetery, in three grave plots:



Left, In Roman Catholic Plot 1 (26 burials from 1961 to 1999 plus one recent burial),

Above, In Plot 3 (24 burials from 1885 to 1958)

Right, in Plot 5 (62 burials from 1990 to 2018). In about 1988 the Sisters became part of the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph based at Ightenhill and one of the headstones in this plot is inscribed “Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph”



One relatively new gravestone which stands alone in Plot 3 remembers Sister Alphonsus Laumayer who died aged 29 in September 1862 (predating the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy). The burial register records her name as Emily Wilhelmina Margaret Laumayer buried in Grave 184 on 24th September 1862 and her address as Turf Moor. The 1861 census shows Emily Laumayer (born in Birmingham) as a teacher, boarding at St. Mary’s Catholic Chapel and

School Turf Moor, along with 2 other teachers, 2 assistant teachers, a head and 5 scholars, all females.

5. Eliza Alice Walsh (Roman Catholic Plot 2. Grave A16610)



One of the most terrible tragedies in the annals of Burnley's history took place on December 2nd 1904, when Eliza Alice Walsh was bludgeoned to death by her husband, Michael Walsh a 47 year old casual labourer, in the presence of their 12 year old daughter Annie. The family lived at 20, Stock Street which was in the Whittlefield

area of town. According to neighbours Michael Walsh was a brutal bully and had frequently assaulted his wife and served time in prison for disorderly behaviour and had only been out of prison for two weeks prior to this heinous act.

He was the father of six children, the oldest girl having already left home due to the violent nature of her father. Michael Walsh had never been in regular employment and had only been in the habit of working odd days here and there, drawing his wages, and drinking till his money was done. Walsh who was described as excitable and quarrelsome, had been regularly heard to threaten his wife and children, especially his eldest daughter who was twenty six and had moved out of the family home to escape his violent outbursts; in fact she had had a lucky escape on that fateful day as Walsh had sent for his daughter to come to the house, but she refused and this was believed to have saved her life.

On that fateful day he had apparently won some money at gambling and sent for his wife Eliza, who was at work, to join him in the local pubs in and around town. After both arriving home, and having been in the house only minutes, they began arguing, Walsh accusing his wife of robbing him of some money the night before. At this time there were three children in the house, two of the children were sent out and Annie their twelve year old daughter was ordered upstairs and he then locked the door. Annie then witnessed the most appalling savage attack on her mother and Walsh was heard to say to his wife "you robbed me of my money last night, are you willing to die?" Eliza in a terrified state replied "No ". Walsh then struck her about the head with an axe with such veracity the handle broke. Terrified and hysterical Annie screamed out, her father then ordered the little girl downstairs whereupon he struck her too with the shaft of the broken axe, fortunately she was uninjured and Annie was then subjected to seeing her father pull out a razor blade and cut his wife's

throat, he then unlocked the door and started to threaten people in the street with the razor. Returning back into his house he then proceeded to cut his own throat, Annie then ran past her father to make her escape and in doing so he made a final grasp at her clothing as she passed him leaving a bloodstained handprint on her dress.

A neighbour named William Pickhall who had witnessed Walsh's bizarre behaviour in the street had sent for the police. On reaching Walsh's house PC Heap made the gruesome discovery, Eliza was lying face down on the floor clearly dead in a pool of blood and Walsh was still alive, but died from his injuries some time later. The bodies were removed later that day to the mortuary and the offensive weapons taken away for evidence.

In the last act of this terrible tragedy, Eliza Alice Walsh was given a Roman Catholic burial at Burnley cemetery which took place from her daughter's house and mourners consisted of family members only. Owing to the verdict of "Felo de se" (suicide) the body of Michael Walsh was interred at Burnley cemetery without any religious rites. In a macabre aspect of this heinous senseless crime, the couple are both laid to rest in the same family grave!

6. Caroline Smith (Dissenter Plot 5, Grave A1761)



A dedicated temperance advocate who died 18th January 1931 aged 85. She was born at Ely, Cambridgeshire, came to Lancashire in 1876 and to Burnley in 1886. During her early years, as evidence of her strong attachment for the temperance cause, she attended Charrington's Mile End Mission in London for a

fortnight every year for ten years. She was vice-president of the British Women's Temperance Association for 30 years and was Burnley representative at the British Temperance League for many years. In 1907 Mrs. Smith became probation officer for women at the Burnley Borough Police Courts but resigned because of failing health in her later years. She was said to be one of the most forceful and convincing temperance lecturers, particularly in Lancashire and

Yorkshire. Her homely and practical illustrations were the means of reforming the conditions in thousands of the homes of those who came within the range of her voice and within the sphere of her influence.

She was connected with Wesley Chapel, Hargreaves Street and her interment at Burnley Cemetery was preceded by a service at the Chapel.

7. Octogenarian, Mrs Ellen Tattersall (Dissenter Plot 5, Grave A274)



Mrs Tattersall was married about 1870 in the cotton famine period, both she and her husband worked in the mill, and their joint earnings in the first week of their married life amounted to eleven shillings and six pence, and that with the working day extending from 6 am to 5.30 pm.

The most trying time of Mrs Tattersall's life, of all her life indeed, came long afterwards however. Burnley folk of that generation recall the terrible Tim Bobbin quarry accident. The quarry hole was in land off Park Lane, immediately behind the Tim Bobbin Inn. About Christmas time, in 1887, two boys were on the ice which covered the water in the quarry hole, when the ice gave way. Her nineteen year old son went to the rescue. He himself got into difficulties. Another son a year younger, went to help his brother. This son also got into difficulties and the final terrible issue of the affair was that two brothers and a nephew of Mrs Tattersall, as well as her two sons all drowned, whilst the two boys who were the cause of the trouble were themselves saved. The sad affair, made a profound painful impression in the town and district. The quarry was not used afterwards, and filled in.

Mrs Tattersall was born at Blacko and moved to Burnley as a two year old child, and lived in Burnley throughout her long, hardworking life, enjoying good health. There were twelve children of her marriage with Thomas, all other ten children surviving and living in Burnley, with some twenty grandchildren at the last count. For twenty-one years Mr and Mrs Tattersall lived in Ightenhill Park Lane, domestic duties were taken far more seriously then, than nowadays, and a good touch of humour was essential as the house was so crowded . She recalls, for a long period of years she never went into town from her Park Lane home. At the time Park Lane was very much in the country, there were no

houses between the Derby pub and the Tim Bobbin, and beyond that on Padiham Road there was just a house here and there.

Ellen Tattersall died in 1929 aged 87.

8. Margaret Alexander (Dissenter Plot 7, Grave 11882)



Margaret Alexander, RRC (Royal Red Cross), was matron of the Victoria Hospital for Burnley & District from 1921 until her death, after a short illness, on 30th May 1933, aged 51.

Miss Alexander, who was from Johnstone near Glasgow came to Burnley in June 1921. She trained at Birmingham General Hospital returned to Scotland as assistant matron at Larbert Asylum (Falkirk), then became sister of the children's ward at General Hospital Cheltenham



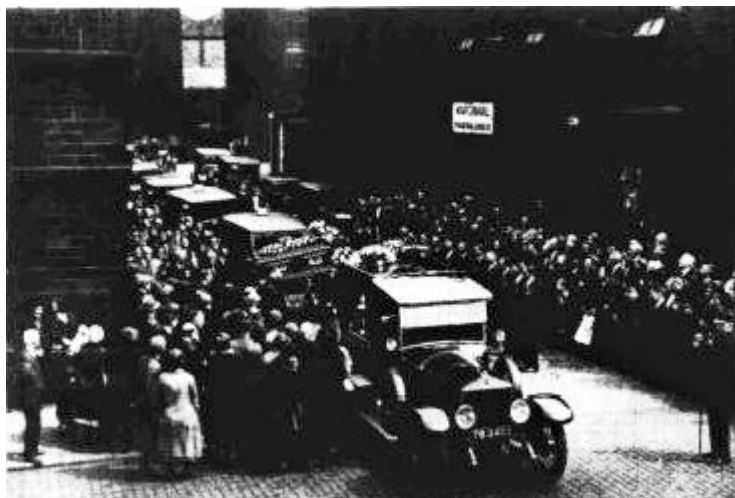
before returning to Birmingham as sister of a large female surgical and accident ward. On Nov 12th 1914 she was sent to France as a member of the Civil Hospital Reserve, serving until 1919 and holding several posts. She was three times mentioned in despatches and awarded the Royal Red Cross in June 1916 and 1919 and later

awarded a bar to the cross. The French Government presented her with a Médaille d'Honneur des Epidémies Argent (Silver medal of Honour for Epidemics.) The medal was inaugurated to reward devoted service during the cholera epidemic in France of 1884, and subsequent epidemics. The four categories bronze, silver, silver gilt and gold recognise different levels of personal risk and merit. In the "Spanish" flu epidemic they were given to French nationals and foreigners, who put themselves at risk to help others, and included many foreign nurses. It became defunct in 1962 but is now being revived to reward front line workers in the Covid Corona virus pandemic in France of 2020/21. Margaret Alexander was in Auberchicourt in Northern France with 23rd casualty clearing station where 67 men died of flu in November 1918.

She returned to Birmingham as home sister and assistant matron before coming to Burnley and was highly recommended for her position as Matron at Burnley. The chairman of Victoria Hospital Board of Management in his tribute to Miss Alexander said that she had come to the hospital at a time of both

internal and external changes with re-organisation in every department and her experience and aid had been invaluable. She had been capable in administration, energetic, tactful in handling staff, kindly and sympathetic in manner with the patients and she had held the respect of everyone.

This was borne out at her funeral service at Sion Baptist Church and at Burnley Cemetery where, as well as invited guests from a host of organisations, town's people and former patients gathered to pay their respects.



The scene at Sion Baptist Church (Burnley Express Photo 3rd June 1933)

9. Elizabeth Stroyan (Dissenter Plot 9, Grave 11797).



Mrs. Stroyan was born on 8th August 1822 in County Cavan, Ireland – Miss Elizabeth Tatlow - and met her husband Rev. John Stroyan, then fresh from college, when he took charge of a Congregational Church in Dublin. They were married in July 1852 and in August 1853 he took up duties in Bethesda Congregational

Church Burnley. They lived at 8 Brunshaw Road and remained there for the rest of their lives.

She had played a considerable part in local religious, philanthropic and social movements. A few years after coming to Burnley she set up a seminary for young ladies which she continued until a few years before her death, due to ill health. She held many offices including: president of the local auxiliary of the London Missionary Society; secretary to the local branch of the Mission of the Jews; president of the local branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society, president of the Burnley Women's Liberal Association; President of the Burnley branch of the British Women's Temperance Society. She was for many years the teacher of the young men's class at Bethesda. For years she regularly

visited the police stations on Sunday morning and spoke to the prisoners in the cells.

She was an avid writer and made frequent contributions to magazines, writing under many pen names and wrote a history of Bethesda Church and a memoir of her husband.

After her death a Memorial Fund was set up in her memory. The fund would provide:

1) Education for a child in a foreign mission school – to be administered by the London Missionary Society and,

2) Two prizes: an annual prize of £2. 2s. to be given to the head girl in the entrance examination to the Burnley Grammar School, and an annual prize of £1. 1s. to the first in a competitive examination in English Literature, open to girls in the Burnley Grammar School (this being a subject in which Mrs. Stroyan was especially interested).

The first prize was announced at the Burnley Grammar School prize-giving in November 1905 and the prize was still being awarded in 1954.

In 1939 a memorial tablet was installed in the church to commemorate Rev. Stroyan and Mrs. Stroyan, by bequest of a former worshipper who died in Boston, America.

10. Mary Lizzie Hedges (Dissenter Plot 9, Grave 11744/5)

Mary Lizzie Hedges (20.9.1860 - 1.8.1942)

A trailblazer for women in public office



Born Mary Lizzie Leeming, to William and Elizabeth Leeming, grocers, of Lowerhouse, staunch Methodists and Liberals, she was the second child and eldest daughter of the nine children who survived to adulthood. Lizzie's obituary in

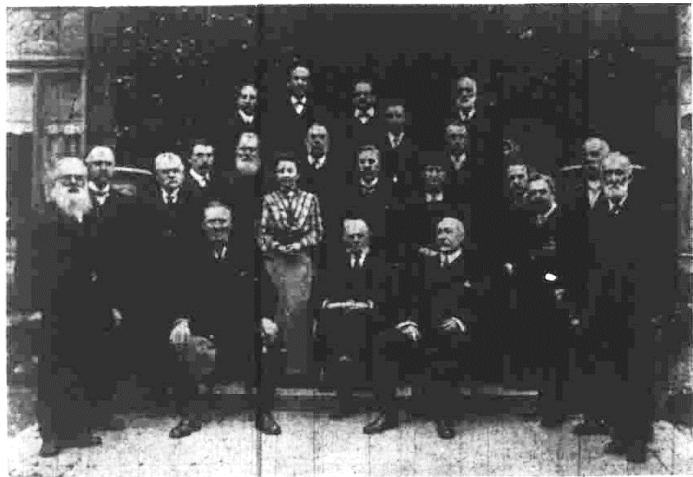
the Burnley Express 8th August 1942, summed up her service in the cause of helping the poor and needy:

"A well-known personality in Burnley social and political life for over 40 years, Mrs. Mary Lizzie Hedges was elected to the Burnley Board of Guardians in 1904, and became its first woman chairman in 1924, when she was also appointed magistrate for the borough. She occupied practically every important position on the Board.... During her term of office the extension to the nurses' home at Primrose Bank was carried out, a scheme which added considerably to the efficiency of the Institution.

Mrs. Hedges was also a member and former chairman of the Central Lancashire Association for Mental Welfare. The House of Help also claimed her attention, and other societies which she served were the Burnley and District After-care Committee, the Burnley Nursing Association and the Burnley Distress Committee. She was also connected with the National Insurance Committee.

During the Great War she was an indefatigable Worker for the Red Cross."

In 1904 in the face of much competition, she was the only Burnley woman elected to the Board of Guardians, along with two Nelson socialists Selina Cooper and Harriet Beanland. The Guardians remained predominantly male until they were disbanded in 1930.



An early photo of Lizzie and the Guardians, from the Burnley Express.

"She always made sure the woman's view was voiced with vigour" and could be quite sharp with her male colleagues on committees. In 1924 after serving as Vice-Chairman, she was proposed for election as the next Chairman of the Board of Guardians. One male Guardian opposed her election, saying it was too hard a job for a woman. When she came up for re-election for her second year, in 1925, he had the grace to admit that he had been wrong. She was the first, and only, female Chairman of the Burnley Board of Guardians, as the Board was disbanded in 1930 when the 1929 Local Government Act came into force.

THE BURNLEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS.



Lizzie on her elevation, sitting in the Chairman's big chair! The other two ladies will be Mrs. Greenwood and Mrs. Poppleton.

She became a J.P. at this time too, "tempering justice with clemency but never afraid to speak her mind". She was appointed to the first Juvenile Panel when it was set up in 1933, and although described by a fellow magistrate after her death as sometimes "sentimental", she certainly stood no nonsense.

In December 1928 she was knocked down by a car and quite seriously injured, and subsequently became less active in public life.

Wilfred Hedges, her musician husband of more than 40 years, died in September 1934. They were childless. His obituary spoke of his "lovableness and unfailing courtesy", and his kindness and patience as a music teacher. They were a partnership founded on their shared Methodist faith. Her floral tribute said: "A last red rose to Wilfred from Lizzie".

At the beginning of April, 1942, she was again knocked down by a car. This time she did not recover and died in hospital on August 1st, 1942. Her funeral at Fulledge Methodists, where Wilfred was organist and choirmaster for 38 years, was attended by representatives of all the many public bodies and associations she had been involved with.

She shares her grave plot with her husband Wilfred, her parents, their three children who died as infants, her tragic older brother John who was committed to Lancaster Lunatic Asylum aged 19, and died there aged 33, and other members of her extended family.

This document accompanies the 'Women in Burnley Cemetery' guided walk leaflet, providing more information about the women described in the trail. For

a copy of the leaflet visit The Friends of Burnley Cemeteries website at [Guided Walks - Friends of Burnley Cemeteries \(e-voice.org.uk\)](http://www.guidedwalks.org.uk)