

Newsletter Summer 2021



Committee News

Everyone's fingers are crossed that final lockdown restrictions ease on 21st June. With this in mind, the committee have arranged a committee meeting on 2nd July 2021.

Unable to meet since September 2020, there is a full agenda, with much to discuss and decide, including a date for an AGM. Hopefully, the committee will have details of our next steps and future plans to share with you very soon!



We now have a full complement on the Committee with all three officer posts filled again.

Verity Brack has become the new Secretary to the Committee.

Her background in IT has already proved to be a great asset as Verity hit the ground running with her first job to sort out FoLC email address problems. Unfortunately, we had found that emails sent to loxley.secretary@yahoo.com address were not getting through and many enquiries had been inadvertently ignored.

This has now been rectified and where appropriate, apologies have been sent and communications restored.

Thank you, Verity & Welcome!

*Our contact email now works well
– so please keep in touch with us!*

loxley.secretary@yahoo.com

or by phone to the Treasurer Mike Ford

07879075619



April / May / June 2021

FROM THE CHAIR

They say that every cloud has a silver lining, well, after months of being bereft of a secretary, our quest to fill the post has finally been successful.

I am pleased to inform you that **Verity Brack** volunteered her services and following an email vote of the Committee, she was unanimously co-opted onto the Committee and elected Secretary.

Despite not being able to organize formal Group activities at the cemetery, as previously reported, some individual members have been doing some sterling work in clearing part of the Long Lane section.

I wish to thank all involved and in particular Committee member Jane Pratt for facilitating the removal of the mountain of shrubbery that had been cut down.

Once government restrictions allow, organized Group clearing days will be announced.



Over recent months, some FoLC members have incorporated giving their time and energy into starting work on clearing the cemetery as part of their lockdown lives.

One of these fantastic individuals, Anne Ramsey, has shared a before & after photograph of some graves at the west end of the older part of the cemetery, by the boundary wall.

The impact of their work is clear to see and is very much appreciated.

Many thanks to Mark Pickering, Hannah Isherwood, Anne Ramsey and all the other volunteers.



Recently, our publicity officer, Trisha Childs, appealed for personal stories concerning Loxley Cemetery for inclusion in future editions.

As members know, my mum, Jean Gregory, passed away last December and was buried at Loxley Cemetery on 14 January this year.

Around the time she was involved in the first attempt to set up a Friends of Loxley Cemetery Group (2000), she wrote a short autobiographical piece at my request in which she included the story of how her mum came to buy a family plot.

I have extracted that story to share with you:

'Over the years, mam had been in and out of hospital for different operations, then the next time she was in, the doctors said that there was nothing more they could do for her and sent her home.

A few months later, she found a lump on her breast and was admitted to the Royal Infirmary, where they removed her breast.

That was in November and, two months later, on 19th January [1959] she passed away.

Our Treasurer, Mike Ford, has gathered information regarding the history of Loxley Cemetery.

His research has led him to provide a presentation to Meersbrook Hall Family History Group.

Part of his presentation is shared with you here.



Loxley Cemetery Location

- Loxley Cemetery is accessible from both Loxley Road & Long Lane, Loxley.
- It is approximately 10 acres in overall size and sits above the current Loxley Nurseries at the junction of both roads.
- The cemetery includes the remains of a chapel which is known locally as 'Loxley Congregational Chapel' to distinguish it from Loxley Methodist Chapel, further down Loxley Road (which has now been converted into apartments).

Loxley Cemetery & Chapel

- Loxley Congregational Chapel (LGC), is in the diocese of Bradfield, with the Parish Church being St Nicholas at High Bradfield.
The site of St Nicholas has had a church for over 900 years, with the present building thought to be 500 years old.
- Loxley Congregational Chapel was built as a 'Chapel of Ease' by the diocese, at a cost of £1,000 in 1787, to provide easier access to parishioners in the Loxley, Storrs, Worrall & Wisewood areas.
- Its use as a Chapel of Ease was short lived, as it was being rented to Protestant Dissenters by 1798.

During September, previous to this, Betty [mum's sister] and I went with mam for a walk up Loxley to pick some blackberries.

While we were walking through Loxley Cemetery, mam said that she wished to be buried there.

Little did we know that only four months later, her wish would be granted; she was only 51.'

My grandma, Lillian Elizabeth Pridmore, must have made arrangements to buy the plot very soon after their visit to the cemetery in September 1958.

I was just 6 years old when grandma passed away and remember very little about it. I didn't attend the funeral but I remember her coffin being in the front room of her house, a room reserved for special occasions, as was the custom at that time. Grandma was joined by my grandad, Ernest William Pridmore, in 1985; the service was held in Loxley Chapel.

The plot is now full and my next job is to arrange for a fitting memorial in accordance with my mum's wishes.

Mick Drewry, Chair



Photo Malcom Nunn

Origins of Loxley Cemetery & Chapel

Loxley Chapel has had at least 3 different 'lives' in its history.

The original footprint of the Loxley Congregational Chapel and access to same from Loxley Road did not provide much space for burials.

The situation was improved by the acquisition of "3 acres & 16 perches of good land in Loxley, near the Chapel & adjoining the road leading from Storrs to Worral", which was advertised locally in 1791 (sources: Sheffield Register, 7 October 1791, 29 July 1791 & 19 August 1791).

The first recorded burial was of Mr Elias Crapper in 1806 (source: Index of Burials taken from Grave Registers, Sheffield Indexers, 2010).

Over 5,000 burials have been thus recorded, but this does not include those still being interred in the part of the churchyard which is currently in use to this day.

The graveyard is thought to be unique in the Sheffield area, as it is privately owned & permission to carry out internments has to be obtained from the current Landlord (Mr M J Ali).

Previous Lives of Loxley Chapel

In 1820, having been declared surplus to requirements by the C of E diocese, it was offered for sale.

An advert in one of the local newspapers read "This large substantial & commodious building is intended to be sold by auction. The building 75 1/2 feet long & 51 1/4 feet wide" (source: Sheffield Independent, 23 September 1820).

Previous Lives of Loxley Chapel

The purchasers were the Protestant Dissenters who had been renting the property since 1798. They named the building & grounds **'The Loxley Independent Church'**.

There followed a period of growth, with congregations numbering 200 by the middle of the century (source: Religious Census of 1851).



Photo Malcom Nunn

Following the formation of the 'United Reformed Church' (URC) in London in 1972, the former Loxley Independent Church became one of its first churches.

The URC is a union of Presbyterians & Congregationalists in England, Scotland & Wales, with links around the world. It is probably best known for the blessing of same-sex marriages in 2012 & the hosting of actual marriages in 2016.

Unfortunately, Loxley Chapel did not get the chance to hold any of these marriages as it was closed in 1994 & was then destroyed by fire in August 2016.

The circumstances surrounding the cause of this fire have never been fully explained & the building today consists of a shell, which has been declared structurally unsafe.

The site subsequently changed hands between private Landlords 2016 for £86,000 (source: Sheffield Star, 9 May 2019).

The Upper Chapel is Grade 2* listed & has been placed on Sheffield City Councils (SCC) 'At Risk Register'. The intention was that the building would be 'saved' by 2020. For one reason or another this commitment has yet to be delivered. Meanwhile, the property continues to receive attention from vandals.



Photo Malcom Nunn

Loxley Chapel in the present day

The current Landlord of Loxley Chapel & surrounding cemetery has put forward plans to convert the chapel into a visitor centre & hostel for ramblers & bikers attempting the nearby Pennine Way. The Landlord is also keen to build a Respite Centre for up to 6 children on adjacent unused land (source: Sheffield Star, 9 May 2019).

However, at the time of writing, there is a lack of evidence of the commencement of any of these projects.

Friends of Loxley Cemetery

Since acquiring the site, the current Landlord has embraced the creation of the 'Friends of Loxley Cemetery' (FoLC) group. Formed in October 2019, the FoLC has been stymied by the recent pandemic but is now preparing to undertake its main aims, which are:

- (a) Maintain the physical upkeep of Loxley Cemetery so as to ensure, where reasonably practicable, safe access for visitors to all areas.*
- (b) Maintain the aesthetics & environmental integrity of the Cemetery in keeping with the Loxley Valley.*
- (c) Create & maintain records of social & historical interest connected to Loxley Cemetery, thus providing a unique research resource.*
- (d) Work with the owner of the site to restore Loxley Church [LCC] & to preserve the memorials within the building" (source: FoLC Constitution, Aims & Objectives).*



Photo Mark Pickering

Friends of Loxley Cemetery

At the time of writing, works have already commenced on site by volunteers aligned to FoLC.

A formal start for organised 'Site Works' is hoped for this coming July, subject to government lifting current restrictions on 21st June 2021.

Membership of the FoLC is £5 pa, payable in January each year.

Membership is worldwide & all-inclusive, with many of the Friends having family members interred in the Cemetery. However, many interested parties are also keen to be involved to support the Loxley locality, its heritage and history.

With approximately 100 'Friends' and 50 members whose membership supports the work of FoLC; members receive Quarterly Newsletters, an information service provided by committee members regarding identifying and locating family burial plots, as well as the benefit of insurance cover when undertaking formal, FoLC works.

A website is currently being constructed & a grant application is underway to assist with the structuring of the group.

Mike Ford, Treasurer

