

Drought, drones & missing graves.

The long dry spell in the summer of 2018 brought many hidden things to light across the country. At St Matthew's churchyard in Lightcliffe we knew that there were about 20 old gravestones buried below the surface around the site of the old church we but didn't know where they were. Most of the memorial stones had been recorded in 1930 by a Bradford man, Arthur Blackburn. We had found and recorded all but this small number.

We asked Gary Edmondson, one of the Friends, to fly his drone over the oldest part of the churchyard. Distinct rectangular shapes could be seen on some of the images – look in the oval - where the grass was a much paler shade of yellow as the roots had only a few centimetres of soil to grow into.



This gave us the confidence to dig a little deeper than normal. Five graves were up to 30cm deep although others were quite shallow. We have cleared the top soil to reveal the memorial inscriptions. Having identified the inscribed names, the stones have been photographed, mapped and recorded in our system. We will have to back fill and recover some of these gravestones so as not to interfere with the mowing.

The graves uncovered so far belong to Bancrofts, Taylors, Petty, Hemmingway, Hepworth, Lumb, Smith, Binns & Hanson. Family members searching for the graves of these ancestors will be able to trace them using the *Burial Records* search engine on our website [lightcliffechurchyard.org.uk].

The photo shows Gary Edmondson the owner of the drone, which can be seen flying in front of the tower, & Ian Philp, Chairman of the Friends of St. Matthew's Churchyard.



Our final challenge is to find the remaining graves. It would be particularly pleasing to find that of Elizabeth Mallinson who died in 1789. She was clearly a paragon of womanhood, inscribed on her stone we should find a long epitaph, “..In mental abilities exceeded few, in industry by none...” and so on for another 8 lines!

The photo below shows where the graves were found.

