

The Aykroyds of T. F. Firths & Sons Ltd. part 1

The majority of our articles have a direct link with the churchyard with the people we write about being interned there. Occasionally we find families with strong links to our local community even though family members were not buried in Lightcliffe. The Aykroyds are such a family.

The Aykroyd family owned the firm, T. F. Firths & Sons, Ltd. It was the largest employer in our area so many of their employees now rest in the churchyard. Members of the family lived in two of our principal houses, Cliffe Hill and Smith House, and the family were major benefactors of our community. Another link is the fact that an Aykroyd sold a parcel of land to extend our churchyard.

Sir William Henry Aykroyd JP, Bart, O St J. [1865-1947]

1st Baronet Aykroyd of Lightcliffe



William Henry Aykroyd was born in Manningham, Bradford on 8th May 1865, the eldest son of Alfred Aykroyd and his wife Ellen née Milnes. He was baptised at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, White Abbey, Bradford that June. His father was a cotton dyer and bleacher, and the family lived at Oakwood Villas, Toller Lane, Bradford. He attended Thorp Arch Grange School near Wetherby in Dr. Hiley's time. After school William Henry joined his father's and uncle's business, Messrs William Aykroyd and Sons, Oakwood Dyeworks.

In January 1890, William Henry Aykroyd married Emma Louisa Hammond [1867-1946]. She was the daughter of Alderman Ezra Hammond, Horton Hall Bradford, who later that year would become Mayor of Bradford. He was the owner of Hammond's Bradford Brewery on Manchester Road. Eventually after growing very large, this company merged to become part of Bass Charrington. By 1965 it had ceased to brew in Bradford. For a time, William Henry Aykroyd was chairman of the brewery.

Alfred Aykroyd died in March 1890. As a tribute his son, William Henry, gave a small ward, named after his father, to the Bradford Royal Infirmary. It was after the death of his father that William Henry Aykroyd went into partnership with his uncle, Mr William Edward Aykroyd of Ashwell, Toller Lane, Bradford, another dyer.

On the 1891 census William and Emma were shown as living at West View, Lilycroft Road, Heaton, Bradford with two servants. At the time William was another cotton dyer and bleacher. Two sons were born in Manningham, Bradford, Alfred Hammond Aykroyd in 1894 and Harold Hammond Aykroyd in 1896. It was clearly important that the Hammond name lived on. The next son George Hammond Aykroyd was born in Lightcliffe in 1900 as by then the family had moved to Cliffe Hill mansion. The move was made in 1899 when William Henry leased the house from Major Johnston Jonas Foster's widow, Hannah.



Cliffe Hill mansion, Lightcliffe

The house was one of the largest in the local area having been built by the Walker family, then tenanted by John Foster, Jonas's father, and finally bought by Jonas Foster as the sitting tenant. It was Foster who had the 'new' St. Matthew's parish church built. On the 1901 census, William Henry, then 35, was living with his wife and three sons, Alfred, Harold and George at Cliffe Hill. They had a governess, Ethel Edmunds, a nurse, Julia Depledge, a cook, two housemaids and a kitchen maid. Ten years later, the boys were at school and William and Emma were still living at Cliffe Hill with their daughter Mary Hammond Aykroyd who was born in 1902. Julia Depledge was still the nurse with two housemaids, a cook and a house porter.

By 1898, Oakwood Dyeworks had been sold to Bradford Dyers Association (BDA). William Henry Aykroyd was elected Managing Director of BDA in 1901. He resigned in 1910 from BDA when he bought a large financial interest in T. F. Firth & Sons Ltd in the then West Riding of Yorkshire. The Firth Company also had interests in New York State in the USA.

He probably knew a great deal about the company as he was a near neighbour of Sir Algernon Freeman Firth who lived at Holme House, Lightcliffe. Despite a few local references suggesting that William was the nephew of Sir Algernon, this was not the case. The Aykroyd Directors, in the Firth company's 150th Anniversary booklet, note '*although there was no Firth family connection, the firm was still, in many ways, a family-run concern*'. As previously mentioned, William Henry Aykroyd did go into partnership with his uncle William Edward Aykroyd which is perhaps the reason for the supposed incorrect relationship.

By the time William Henry Aykroyd became a partner in the company, T. F. Firth & Sons Ltd, it was a very large business. It had started in 1822 in Heckmondwyke and added the Clifton Mills, pictured below. at Bailiff Bridge crossroads, in 1867. More information about the Firths can be found in the article [Reverend Matthew Stanley.pdf](#) who was the minister at the Congregational Chapel in Heckmondwyke where the Firth family worshipped.



A few years later the company expanded into sites in the USA. The first at Firthcliffe (Firth plus 'cliffe' of our village of Lightcliffe) and then Auburn both in New York Stat. Read more at [Firth's Carpets in the USA.pdf](#).



The company produced many different types of carpet including Axminster, Wilton, and tufted versions. It was claimed to be the second largest carpet manufacturer in the UK, after Crossleys in Halifax. Its carpeting was used in prestigious projects such as the QE2 and Concorde. It also produced flooring for cars and coaches as well as seating in cinemas and railways and domestic furniture. It continually changed, targeting new markets and was the largest employer in the area. During both World Wars, the company turned its output to support the war effort. Its first priority in 1939 was the production of sandbags and tarpaulins followed by kit bags and shoulder bags for ATS girls.

From Sir Algernon Firth's time and throughout the Aykroyds' association with the company, it had a policy of looking after its employees and encouraging family recruitment. Social facilities and activities were part of being at Firths.



The main Clifton Mills at Bailiff Bridge from the air

During the Great War many of the Firth's workforce signed up as did the two eldest Aykroyd sons. They survived as will be told in more detail later. But many Firths employees, and other locals, were not so lucky.

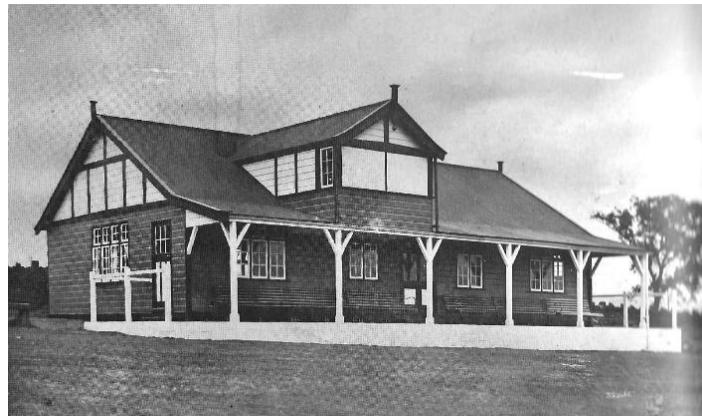
In 1920, William Henry became Chairman of the company. The following year, Sir Algernon Firth retired, selling his shares to Sir William, thus ending nearly 100 years of the Firth family's association with the company. By then William Henry Aykroyd had been created the 1st Baronet Aykroyd of Lightcliffe. The Order of St John, which was in the gift of the monarch, was announced on the 4th June 1920 in the London Gazette and then the Edinburgh Gazette. A few days previously, on 30th May 1918, King George and Queen Mary had visited the Flush mills at Heckmondwyke.

The citation read as follows.

**William Henry Aykroyd, Esq., J.P., Partner
in the Firm of Messrs. T. F. Firth & Sons,
Brighouse. For Public and Local Services.**

This was a popular decision as Sir William was a generous benefactor in the locality. Over his time associated with the Lightcliffe and Bailiff Bridge area, he served on the Hipperholme Military Tribunal during WW1, was a member of the Wakefield Diocesan Education Board, a governor of Hipperholme Grammar School and President of the Elland Division Conservative Association. Together, with Sir Algernon, he provided a bowling green in Bailiff Bridge. Sir William also covenanted £500 per year for seven years to provide a scholarship for cancer research. He was a church warden at St. Matthew's Church for several years and gave the church generous financial support. These gifts to the community are examples of Sir William's and Lady Emma's philanthropy.

In 1922 as a generous friend, and sometime vice president, of Lightcliffe Cricket Club he defrayed the cost of their then new pavilion which cost £600 and was much admired. It became an iconic part of the village and was only replaced in 2023. In his opening address (captured on camera below) he highlighted the value in terms of health and teamwork that the game of cricket provides.



After the Great War Sir William was determined to recognise the sacrifice of so many local men. He purchased land from the trustees of the Holme House Ripley estate on which was to be built the splendid Bailiff Bridge Memorial which still stands today. In 1921, Sir William and Lady Aykroyd gave the Bailiff Bridge War Memorial, and the land on which it stands, to the community. They were to be in memory of those villagers, and employees of T. F. Firth & Sons Ltd., including those who worked at the Flush Mills in Heckmondwyke, who died in the war. It was unveiled on 2nd April 1921. The chief guest was Field Marshall Sir William Robertson with the Bishop of Wakefield officiating. A guard of honour was provided by the 4th West Riding Regiment commanded by Captain Harold Hammond Aykroyd.



In Hipperholme decisions were being made about how to commemorate their fallen Great War heroes. Sir William made a donation of £200 towards the Hipperholme war memorial fund. Land belonging to the Smithsons of Lydgate House was eventually purchased and became the Hipperholme and Lightcliffe Memorial Stray. The initial donation of £100 towards a Roll of Honour in St. Matthew's Church came from the Aykroyds. This enabled the commissioning of the Percy Jackson carved War Memorial which can still be seen in the church today.

On the 1921 census taken on 19th June Sir William and Lady Aykroyd were at Ingerthorpe Grange near Harrogate with their daughter Mary, a butler and long-term employee Julia Depledge as a maid. This was possibly near his mother, Ellen Aykroyd née Milnes who died at Oakwood, Harrogate on 4th July 1925. But the Aykroyds seem to have kept Cliffe Hill as a residence, presumably because it was near their Bailiff Bridge mills. Up to at least 1925, it was the address given when William and different members of his family travelled almost annually to the USA. And it was also recorded as the place of residence when the sons, Alfred and then George, married in 1919 and then 1924 respectively.

In February 1925, for £120,000, Sir William bought the Grantley Hall estate near Ripon and moved there with his wife and daughter. The estate included the well-known Brimham Rocks and much of the villages of Grantley and Winksley and some of Sawley. There was a home farm, 62 other farms, 35 houses, two public houses and service cottages. The purchase also included the sporting rights over three moors and fishing rights on local lakes and rivers. In the Aykroyds' time they developed the extensive grounds and, on occasions, opened them to the general public.

Whilst in the Ripon area the Aykroyds continued their philanthropic works giving Grantley a village hall in 1929. Sir William was Patron of Ripon Cricket Club, President of the Boys Brigade, Ripon YMCA and St John's Ambulance Brigade and the chairman of the Ripon Housing Improvement Trust. He was also High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1926.

But Sir William and Lady Emma often with their daughter Mary did enjoy time away from Grantley Hall. In March 1930 they went on a month-long Mediterranean cruise and then in 1932 the three of them went to Lisbon in Portugal.

Back in Bailiff Bridge Sir William continued as Chairman of the Firth company overseeing the company's change into a public company on the London and provincial stock exchanges. In June 1936 T. F. Firth & Sons Ltd gained permission to deal in preference shares on the stock market. The share capital was £1,500,000 with Sir William and his sons named as the directors.

The fellow passenger list when Sir William and Lady Emma and their daughter went cruising again in early 1937 was noted in this newspaper article in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 23rd January 1937.

ULSTER PREMIER'S TOUR

SOME OF HIS FELLOW PASSENGERS

The Arandora Star on which Viscount and Viscountess Craigavon are cruising sailed fully booked for a 77 days' cruise to Madeira, Panama, Honolulu, California, Havana, Hiami [sic], and the West Indies. Other distinguished passengers include the Earl and Countess of Rosslyn, Brigadier-General Lord St. Leven and Lady St. Leven, the Right Hon. Viscount Valentia, Brigadier-General sir Claude de Crespigny, Sir William and Lady Aykroyd and daughter, Sir Montau and Lady Burton, the Hon. Mrs Robert Boyle, the Hon Francis W.G. Egerton and Mrs Egerton, Lady Katherine Hardy, Lady Evelyn Miller and many others.

On 14th September 1937 the Queen accompanied by the Princess Royal, Countess of Harewood, visited the Aykroyd family at Grantley Hall. The Royal party travelled from Harewood House to take late afternoon tea with the Aykroyds. Amongst those presented to the Queen were Major Alfred H Aykroyd of Linton Spring, Wetherby, Colonel Harold A Aykroyd of Hollins Hall, Shipley and Major George H Aykroyd of Toothill Hall, Rastrick. The press release suggested that the Queen might enjoy the gardens as she was known to be a garden lover. Mind you she was only there for an hour and a half! But apparently, she did get time to see the rock garden which had a stream running through it.



On the 1939 register the senior Aykroyds and their daughter Mary were staying with their son recently divorced son, Harold, at Hollins Hall. And then in June 1940, Sir William and Lady Aykroyd took six grandchildren; Patricia 15, Michael 12, Susan 9, John 5, Sally 5 and David 3, the children of Harold and George, to New York, USA via Montreal, Canada along with a 29-year-old 'Grace Aykroyd'. This does not appear to be a relative so it may be that she was mistakenly given the family surname on the passenger list. She may well have been a nursemaid or governess whose job was to look after the children for the Aykroyd grandparents who were in their seventies. They crossed on the *RMS Duchess of Atholl* the Canadian Pacific ship which had been converted into a troopship the previous year. It would have been a difficult family decision balancing the risks of remaining near Ripon during the war against those of crossing the Atlantic at the beginning of the U-boat campaign.

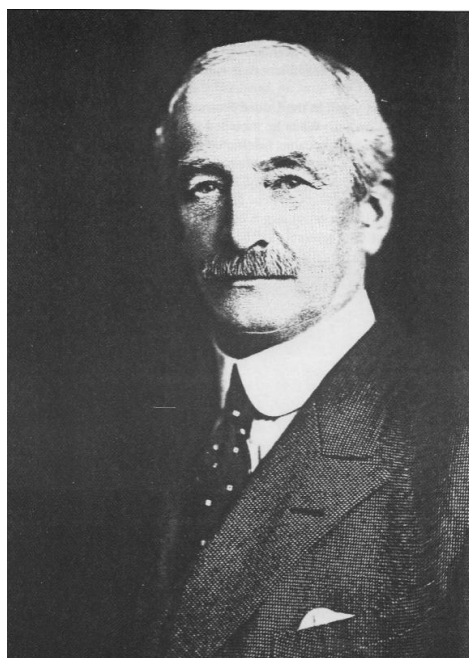
On 5th November 1943 the *Yorkshire Post* reported the return of at least two of the children to Hollins Hall explaining that they had been brought back by their grandparents after a stay in the USA of over three years. The return journey had taken nine weeks with a three week stay in Lisbon because of the understandable transport difficulties in war time.

Lady Emma Aykroyd had founded and supported Ripon's Central Hospital Supply Association presumably at the beginning of the war. Grantley Hall was then used as a convalescent home for American, Jamaican and Canadian airmen and soldiers. The last of them and the nurses who cared for them left in February 1946. During the five-year period from 1941 to 1946 over 6,500 patients were looked after there.



Red cross nurses in front of Grantley Hall

Not long after, on 5th September 1946, Lady Emma Aykroyd née Hammond died. She was buried at St Cuthbert and St Oswald, Winksley. North Yorkshire. Sir William died on 3rd April 1947. His funeral was conducted by the Vicar of Winksley. Choristers from Ripon Cathedral formed the choir. The chief mourners were the family, others included Sir Frederic Aykroyd, Viscountess Mountgarret, representatives of both Clifton Mills and Flush Mills, Hammonds Brewery, Martins Bank and other business interests. There were also many from the Grantley estate. Following the service, Sir William was buried alongside his wife.



Sir W. Aykroyd's Estate Sold

Grantley Hall Estate, near Ripon, the home of the late Sir William Aykroyd, Bart., formerly of Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe, has been sold to a financial syndicate whose plans for the future of the estate are not yet disclosed. The assumption has been given that security of tenure for tenants, and the service of all servants on the estate will not be interrupted.

The estate bought 20 years ago by Sir William Aykroyd from Lord Furness comprises 6,500 acres, and there is an annual rental of £4,800. In addition to the Georgian mansion, and the home farm, are 62 farms, 35 houses, two public-houses, and several service cottages. The popular rendezvous Brimham Rocks and shooting rights over Eavestone, Lumley, and Brima=ham Moors are included. The sale price is said to run into six figures.

Miss Mary Aykroyd, Sir William's only daughter will leave the Hall in September for the South.

£74, 206 DEATH DUTIES

Sir William Aykroyd, who died on April 3, left £187,593 gross, with net personalty £184, 480, on which duty of £74,206 has been paid. After leaving various bequests to those in his personal service, and saying he made no charitable bequest because in his lifetime he had made many such contributions, he mentioned that in view of the disastrous effect which might result from the forcible realisation of a considerable holding in the capita, he had taken steps to ensure the least measure of disturbance at his death to the continuance of the business of T.F. Firth and Sons Ltd., of Brighouse and Heckmondwike, and the Firth Carpet Co., New York, of which he was chairman. Toward the end he had distributed the bulk of his estate during his lifetime.

Lady Aykroyd, who died on September 5, last year, a daughter of the late Ezra W. Hammond, brewer, left £80,189 gross, with net personalty of £75, 672 (duty paid £22, 894).

From the *Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian* 31st July 1947



At some point Grantley Hall itself and the land immediately surrounding it were bought by West Riding County Council and used as an educational base.

Sir Alfred Hammond Aykroyd [1894-1965]

2nd Baronet Aykroyd of Lightcliffe



Alfred was born in Manningham on 3rd June 1894 the first child of William Henry Aykroyd and his wife Emma Louise née Hammond. He was named after his paternal grandfather Alfred Aykroyd and given his mother's maiden name when he was baptised at St Barnabas Church, Heaton, Bradford, the local Anglican parish church, on 24th July 1894. At the time his father was described as a 'Dyer and Finisher'.

By the 1901 census he was living with his parents and two younger brothers at Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe with a governess, Ethel Edmunds, a nurse, Julia Depledge and other staff. Alfred then went away to boarding school, to Charterhouse School, Godalming, Surrey, where he was on 2nd April 1911. During his time at school, he was in the Officer Training Corps (OTC) Immediately after school he accompanied his father on a business trip to the USA almost certainly to visit the Firth carpet mills in New York State.

When war broke out in 1914, he, like many young men who were the right - should that be wrong – age, joined up. He served in the Royal Field Artillery as part of the West Riding Brigade and was mentioned in dispatches in 1915. The following year he had a special promotion to Lieutenant, in 1917 to Captain and had a further promotion to the rank of major by the end of the war.

After the war on, 12th November 1919, he married a war widow Sylvia Ambler Thorne née Walker of York Place, Harrogate. His address was Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe. The wedding took place at Christ Church, High Harrogate. The witnesses were Alfred's brother Harold and sister Mary as well as a near neighbour Sir Algernon Firth of Holme House, Lightcliffe who at the time was still chairman of T. F. Firth & Sons, Ltd.

Sylvia was born on 18th May 1892 in Huddersfield, the daughter of Frank Walker. She had married Foster Newton Thorne on 2nd December 1914 in Peshawar, then in India. They had a daughter Vivien Sylvia Thorne whose birth on 2nd March 1916. was registered in the Wetherby district of Yorkshire. Lieutenant-Colonel Foster Newton Thorne of Peshawar North West Frontier Province India served with the 1st Royal Sussex regiment attached to the 6th service battalion North Lancashire regiment. He died on 18th April 1917 in Mesopotamia.

Alfred's, Sylvia's and Vivien's new home was Hargreaves Head, Northowram, near Halifax. This was an old building with the initials and date, SBM 1693, carved prominently. It was substantially rebuilt around 1740. The house still stands and is on the western side of the Coley to Shelf Road. The couple's two children, Ann Prudence Aykroyd and William Miles Aykroyd were born there on 28th November 1920 and 24th August 1923 respectively.



Hargreaves Head was Alfred's and Sylvia's address on the 1923 Electoral Roll. It was also Alfred's address on the 1927 Kelly's Directory and on passenger lists when he, like his father and brothers, crossed the Atlantic to visit the Firths carpet factories in the USA.

But on 2nd June 1936 when the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* published a notice about the Firths company the address of its vice chairman, Alfred Hammond Aykroyd, was Linton Spring, Wetherby, Yorkshire. The same paper on 3rd October 1936 advertised the sale of

HARGREAVES HEAD ESTATE, COLEY
(By direction of Major Alfred H Aykroyd)

It is described as an old Georgian residence built of stone. The sale included a farmhouse, outbuildings, a lodge and about 20 acres of land.

On the 1939 register Alfred was again recorded as being the Vice Chairman of T. F. Firth & Sons Ltd., carpet & blanket manufacturers. He was living at Linton Spring, Wetherby with his wife and daughter Ann Prudence. They had a female cook, a head maid and a housemaid living with them. His son William Miles Aykroyd has not been found on this register he may well have still been at school, possibly his father's old school, Charterhouse, Godalming, Surrey.

During the war in 1943 Alfred was appointed a member of the Manchester board of Martins Bank. The official notification states that he was also a director of Hammond's Bradford Brewery. At the end of the war, Colonel and Mrs Aykroyd endowed a bed in the women's surgical ward of the Harrogate and District General Hospital. The gift of £1,000 was in gratitude that their son, Lieutenant William Miles Aykroyd had survived the war.

On his father's death on 3rd April 1947, Alfred succeeded to the baronetcy as 2nd Baronet Aykroyd of Lightcliffe, and he also took over as Chairman of the Firths carpet company. The *Brighouse Echo* in 1950 records that Sir Alfred was being considered by the King as High Sheriff of Yorkshire. The newspaper links Sir Alfred Aykroyd through his former homes at Cliffe Hill and Hargreaves Head. He became High Sheriff in 1952. He was Master of Fox Hounds of the Bramham Moor Hunt from 1948 to 1953 and President of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society in 1954.

In November 1964 he was still living at Linton Spring where he had amassed a large collection of porcelain as well as an art collection. In January 1965, he resigned from most of the positions he held. He may well then have moved south for medical reasons. Sir Alfred Hammond Aykroyd died on 29th April 1965 at Mount Alvernia Hospital, Guildford, Surrey. He was buried in the churchyard of St Oswald's, Collingham near Wetherby.



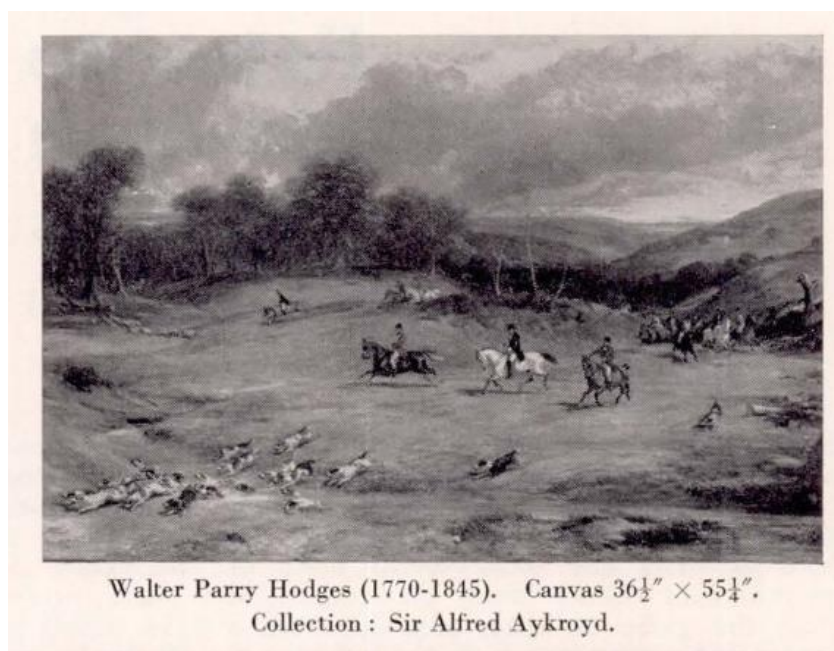
In his will he left his art collection to his wife, son and daughter. A porcelain sale at Sotheby's raised nearly £100,000. The Ben Marshall painting of two hunters startled by a dog raised a world record for a sporting picture of £18,500.



He also left £5,000 to his stepdaughter, Vivien Russell-Roberts. There were generous gifts to his loyal staff, gamekeeper, chauffeur and groom, handyman, cook and a kitchen maid. Sir Alfred commented that he had been given pleasure during his life in giving to his family. He would have liked to have left them more, but taxation did not allow for this – the duty was over £170,000.

His only son William Miles Aykroyd became the 3rd Baronet of Lightcliffe.

In early 1967 the painting below featured in THE LEDGER GALLERIES LTD exhibition THE GRACIOUS AGE



Lady Sylvia Ambler Aykroyd died on 20th June 1992 at Marley House, Winfrith, Newburgh, Dorset.

Colonel Harold Hammond Aykroyd, OBE., MC, TD, JP. [1896 – 1974]

Harold Hammond Aykroyd was born on the 7th April 1896 in Manningham, Bradford, the second son of William Henry Aykroyd, and his wife Emma Louisa née Hammond. On his baptism record from 28th May 1896 at St. Barnabas Church in Heaton, Bradford his father was described as a 'Dyer & Finisher'. A year or so later he moved with his parents and older brother to the Cliffe Hill mansion in Lightcliffe where another brother was born. This was where the parents and three sons were on 31st March 1901. Ten years later Harold was a boarder at Rugby School, Warwickshire. During his time there he was in the OTC as his older brother Alfred had been at Charterhouse. In the summer between finishing school and planning to go up to Pembroke College, Cambridge he played cricket as a debutante for Lightcliffe Cricket Club. But his university career and sporting pursuits had to be abandoned when World War 1 started as he joined the 1st/4th Battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).



In September 1916, as a Second Lieutenant, he was awarded the Military Cross. The citation said: -

‘For conspicuous gallantry. Since taking charge of the Scouts of the Battalion, he has done fine work, notably when he led two patrols during operations to discover the enemy's position and movements. He led these patrols with great skill and determination and brought back valuable reports.’

This action was on the banks of the River Ancre immediately before a major attack in the Battle of the Somme. He was promoted to Captain in the same year.

Returning home Harold was again involved with Lightcliffe Cricket Club. An accomplished batsman, Captain Harold Aykroyd scored a vital, and winning, contribution of 66 in a game in 1920. He was no doubt very pleased that his father was helping to fund a new cricket pavilion. And he was personally involved with the creation of the new tennis section of which he was the chairman. Whilst at the same time his military career continued.

After the war, Harold served in the Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding), Territorial Army. The first line of the 1921 census list for those at the Drill Hall, Wakefield Road, Clifton, Brighouse reads '*Harold Hammond Aykroyd Captain T.F.*'. This may well have been where he was on the night of 19th June 1921, but other documents give his permanent residence as Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe. This was their address in 1922 when he accompanied his father on one of the many business trips to the USA. And in 1924, he was listed as residing at Cliffe Hill along with his father, mother and younger brother George on the Electoral Roll.

By 14th December 1926 he had been promoted to Major which was the title the *Derby Daily Chronicle* used when they announced the marriage of :-

Miss Nina Marguerita Hulse, younger daughter of the late Mr. E. J. Hulse and Mrs Hulse of Oakdene, Duffield Road, Derby to Major Harold Hammond Aykroyd M.C., the second son of Sir Wm. and Lady Aykroyd of Grantley Grange, Ripon.



The couple lived at Smith House, Lightcliffe. This was conveniently just up the hill from the Clifton Mills at Bailiffe Bridge where he worked at the by then Aykroyd owned T. F. Firths & Sons Ltd. Harold also continued to be involved with the Duke of Wellington's Territorial Force being promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1930. As the Officer Commanding, 4th Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding), Territorial Army he was awarded the OBE (military division) in 1935.

Whilst residing at Smith House he was also able to continue his association with Lightcliffe Cricket Club being President of the club from 1928 to 1943. In 1937 he passed the deeds of the pavilion to the club. Clearly the family had been very supportive of the cricket club. In March 1933, he sold a plot of land for £278 10s. to St. Matthew's Church to extend its graveyard. This area is at the northern end of the churchyard where burials still take place.

Two daughters, Susan and Sally Mary, were born on 17th February 1931 and 3rd August 1934 at Smith House. In 1938, their parents divorced after Nina admitted adultery whilst on holiday in Madeira. Harold was granted custody of the girls. After the divorce, he moved with his daughters to Hollins Hall, near Ripon. This was where he was when the September 1939 register was taken with his parents, Sir William and Lady Emma Aykroyd and his only sister Mary Hammond Aykroyd visiting.

For the duration of WW2 Harold served as the Officer Commanding the Home Guard for the Ripon area. The family firm T. F. Firths & Sons Ltd were involved in the war effort making sandbags and tarpaulins followed by kit bags and shoulder bags for ATS girls. Harold was a member of the Rationing Committee for the Carpet Industry and was involved in the distribution of raw materials and served on other government committees.

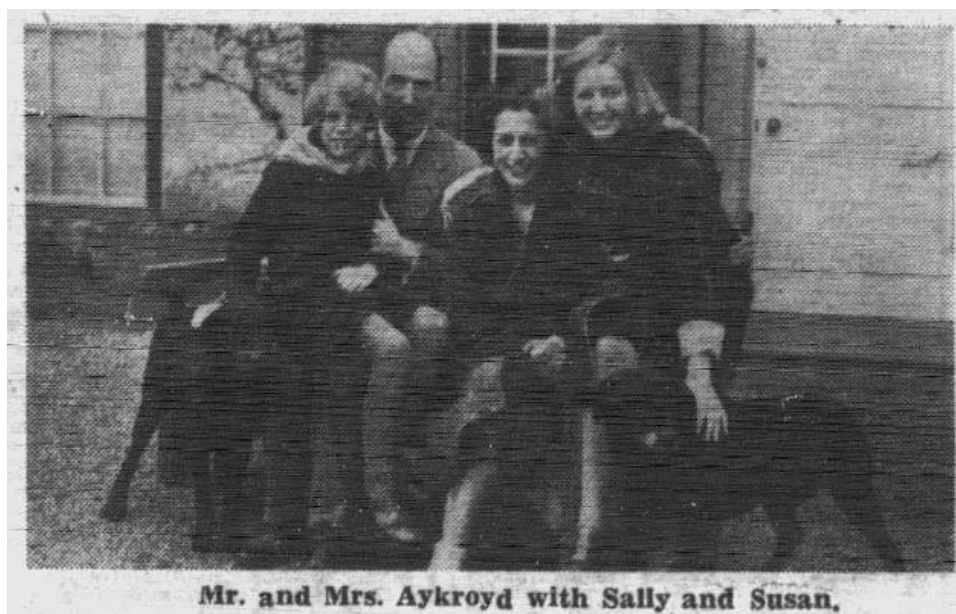
One thing that Harold did not have to worry about was looking after his two daughters. At the end of June 1940 his parents took six grandchildren: Patricia Jean 15, Michael David 12, Susan 9, John Richard 5, Sally Mary 5 and David Peter 3, across the Atlantic. Although their Canadian Pacific ship *RMS Duchess of Atholl* was destined for Montreal, Canada they eventually went to an address in New York, USA.

E31/172475	Montreal	Aykroyd	William	1	Cabin	75						Grantley Hall, Ripon, York.	Master
"	"	"	Emma	1	"	73						"	H's wife
172476	"	"	Grace	1	"			29				"	H's wife
"	"	"	John	1	"			5				"	Child
"	"	"	David	1	"			3				"	"
172477	"	"	Sally	1	"			5				"	"
"	"	"	Susan	1	"			9				"	"
"	"	"	Patricia	1	"			15				"	"
"	"	"	Michael	1	"			12				"	"

Passenger list for the *Duchess of Atholl* which sailed from Liverpool on 26th June 1940

The 29-year-old 'Grace Aykroyd', housewife, looks to have mistakenly been given the family surname on the passenger list. It is thought that she was employed by the Aykroyds to help look after the children for the Aykroyd grandparents who were in their seventies

In December 1941, Harold Hammond Aykroyd married Kathleen (known as Kitty) Ellen Tyrell-Gray. It would be two years before she would meet her stepdaughters when Sir William and Lady Emma Aykroyd brought the girls home in 1943. The *Yorkshire Post* on 5th November 1943 reported the homecoming which had taken nine weeks including a three-week stay in Lisbon due to understandable transport difficulties in war time.



Mr. and Mrs. Aykroyd with Sally and Susan.

Sometime after the war the family moved to Whixley Hall, Ripon, which Harold had purchased for £32,000. His third daughter, Harriet Louisa Aykroyd, was born there on 15th October 1951.

Harold continued to travel to the USA presumably on business trips. In the 1950s he and Kathleen crossed the Atlantic on the *Queen Elizabeth* which was, of course, carpeted by Firths. In April 1956 'having attained the age limit of liability to recall' Lieutenant-Colonel Harold Hammond Aykroyd retired from any further connection with the Army.



But he still had plenty of other interests. From 1945, he was Chairman of the Yorkshire Association of Boys' Clubs continuing his pre-war interest. From 1948 to 1966, he was president of the Federation of British Carpet Manufacturers. Like his father and older brother, he served as High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1957. An article in *The Sphere* in 1963 lists his interests as shooting, playing golf and antique furniture.

Harold Hammond Aykroyd died on 6th January 1974 and was buried at the Church of the Ascension, Whixley, Yorkshire. He left £350,000 primarily to his family with small gifts to his personal servants.

Continued in

The Aykroyds of T. F. Firths & Sons Ltd. part 2

Dorothy Barker and Ian Philp

December 2025