

Very early, pre parish register burials

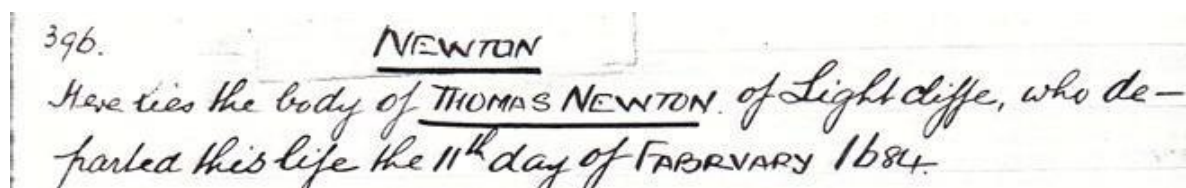
The Lightcliffe parish burial records begin in 1704 but there were clearly some earlier burials around an earlier building called Eastfield Chapel built in 1529. We know of these earlier burials thanks to the visible memorial inscriptions we can still see today. And where they have worn away or bits of the stone have cracked, we also have copies of Arthur Blackburn's transcriptions of the memorial inscriptions. This was the gentleman who in the late 1920s / early 1930s visited about a hundred churchyards and cemeteries in the West Riding of Yorkshire, recording what was inscribed on ledger stones and headstones.

If there is a transcription of the memorial inscription on a grave plot it will show up when using the [Burial Records Search](#) button on our website.

Searching for Thomas Newton who died in 1684 will result in getting this screen.

NEWTON Thomas 1684
Surname NEWTON
Forenames Thomas
Relatives
Abode Lightcliffe
Burial date 11/2/1684
Age
Occupation
Notes
Date of death //
Grave location N*22
View map of graveyard [open map](#)
View a transcription of the headstone text [view transcription](#)

Clicking on [open map](#) gives where the plot is on an Excel grid and clicking on [view transcription](#) will bring up the page with the inscription's transcription on it. Below is the one for Thomas Newton.



Arthur Blackburn recorded what was written, underlining the name, but he did not attempt to set the wording out as it was carved. He expanded abbreviated words and usually corrected minor spelling mistakes but left some of the more idiosyncratic spelling. Notice in what follows the wrapped around words, the use of superscripts, y^e for 'the' and Vs for Us.

1674 is the earliest date on a Hanson ledgerstone. Some of the lettering has worn away. But from what Arthur Blackburn recorded nearly a century ago – [shown in Blue](#) - and using a bit of guess work – [shown in Green](#) it might have said what is quoted in the panel next to the two images.



Was there another daughter as well as Judith?

HEARE LIETH
THE BODY OF
ESTER HANSON
WIFE TO ROBERT
HANSON OF
HOVEEDGE WHO
DEPARTED THIS
LIFE THE 5TH DAY
OF JUNE IN THE
YEAR OF OVR
LORD GOD 1674

Also the body of Mary
daugh^{hter} of Robert Hanson
who Dep
arted this life january ???? 9

LIKEWISE WERE JUDITH
DAUGHTER to RO
BERT HANSON
departed this life

R 1674 H

Allso the body of
Robrt Hanson of
Hoveedge who was
Buried y^e 31 of October

16  88



HERE LIETH THE
BODY OF THOMAS
NEWTON OF
LIGHTCLIFFE WHO
DEPARTED THIS
LIFE YE 11TH DAY
OF FABRVARY

1684

ALSO Martha Wife of
William Fearnley who
died March y^e

31st 1752 aged 38

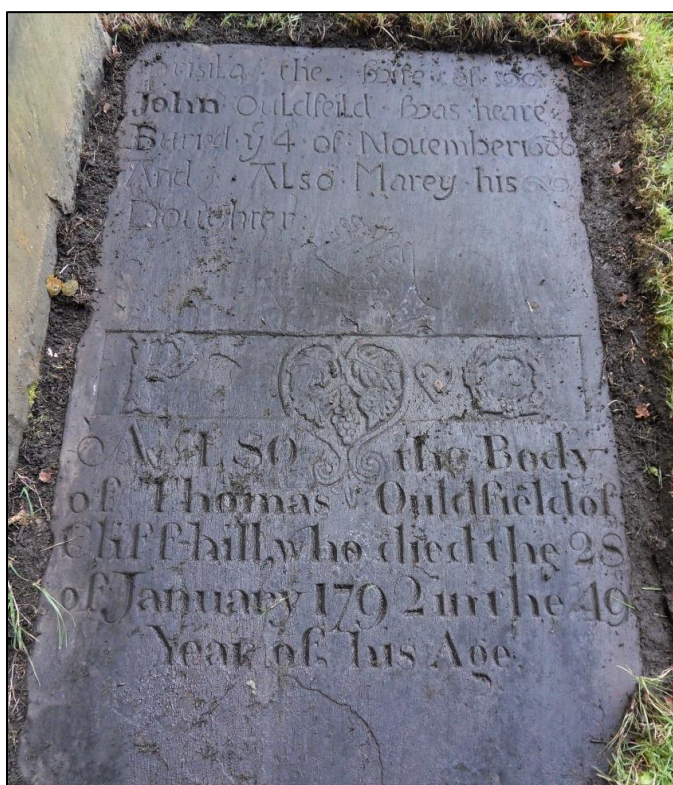
Also the Remains of
Five Children of y^e
above William Fearn
ley viz Betty Fanny
Sally, Willian Fearnley
who all died in their
ALSO Infancy the Body
of William Fearnley
Husband & Father to
the above said who de
parted this life the 1
of Dec 1806 Aged 85 Y

ALSO Mary Wife of the said
Wm Fearnley who died Nov^r
17th 1809 *Aged 81 Years*

There is little information about Thomas Newton, apart from his name, where he lived and when he died. With no parish record to go back to his age and so possible year of birth is unknown. He was probably an adult, almost certainly a member of the congregation at Eastfield Chapel.

As you have seen his long ledgerstone then records the deaths of members of a Fearnley family who died between 1752 and 1809. It is impossible to tell whether they were relatives or had any connection with Thomas Newton. As it was a while after his death it is possible that the grave plot was simply used by another family. There was certainly room for all the details about the Fearnley children and William's two wives on the ledgerstone. Although it was clearly a squeeze to get his second wife's details in! Notice too, the change in the font over the years.

All these early graves are in the front section of the churchyard on the right as you enter using the Wakefield Road gate. They may have been near the path to the entrance door of Eastfield Chapel.



Prisila the wife of
John Oulfeild was heare
Buried y^e 4 of November 1686
And Also Marey his
Doughter

P ♥ O

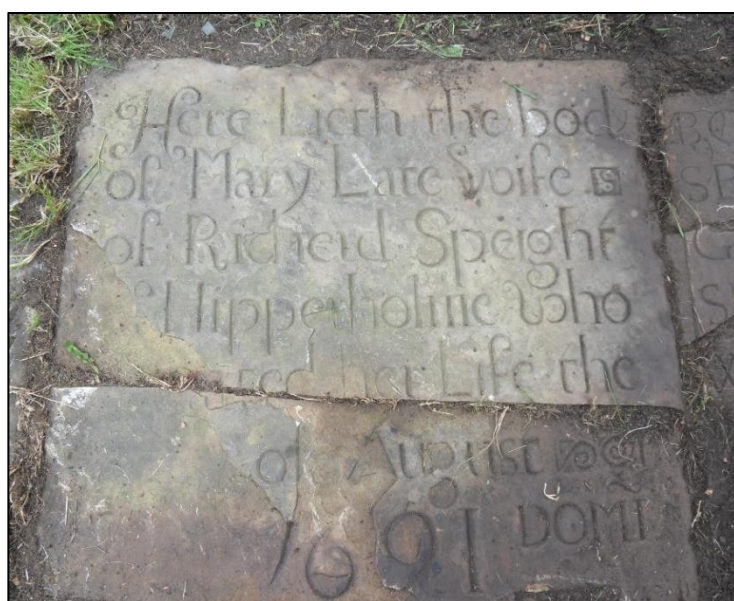
ALSO the Body
Of Thomas Oulfeild of
Cliffhill who died the 28
of January 1792 in the 49
Year of his Age

In the side panels an attempt has been made to show the layout of the wording on these early ledgerstones. Many of them, and later ones, have very similar carvings e.g. a heart shape between the initials, the digits of the year split between an intricately carved shape, Anno Domini around the years digits. They were probably carved by local stone masons following the same or similar templates.



Here lies the body
Of John fflather
which departed this life
y^e 13 day of September
ANNO 1688 DOMINII

Here Lieth the body
of Mary Late wife of
Richard Speight of
Hipperholme who
departed her Life
the ??? of August
ANNO 1691 DOMINII



This John Whittaker ledgerstone is near the path that starts to go round the tower. It is getting more and more difficult to read. But again, thanks to Arthur Blackburn we know what it said a century ago.



HERE LIETH THE BODY
OF JOHN WHITTAKER
OF LIGHTCLIFFE WHO
WAS HERE BURIED YE
?2 DAY OF FEBRVARY

16

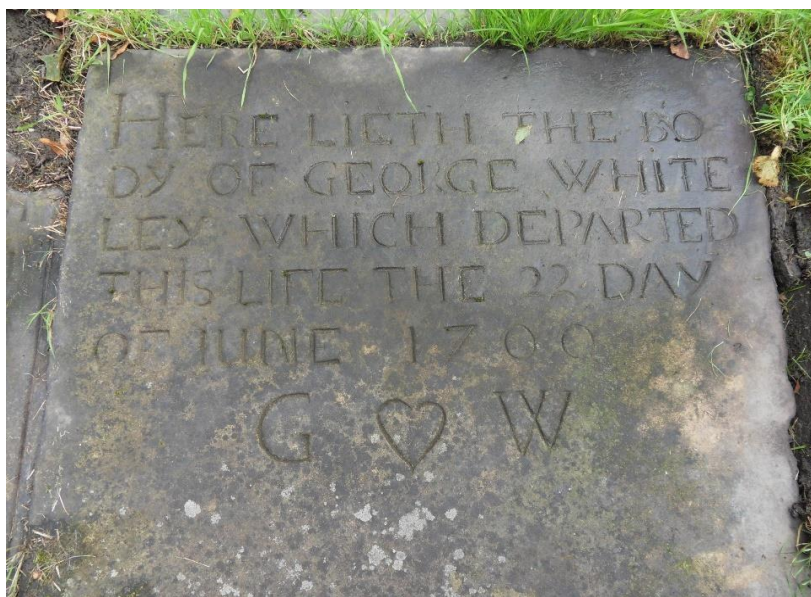
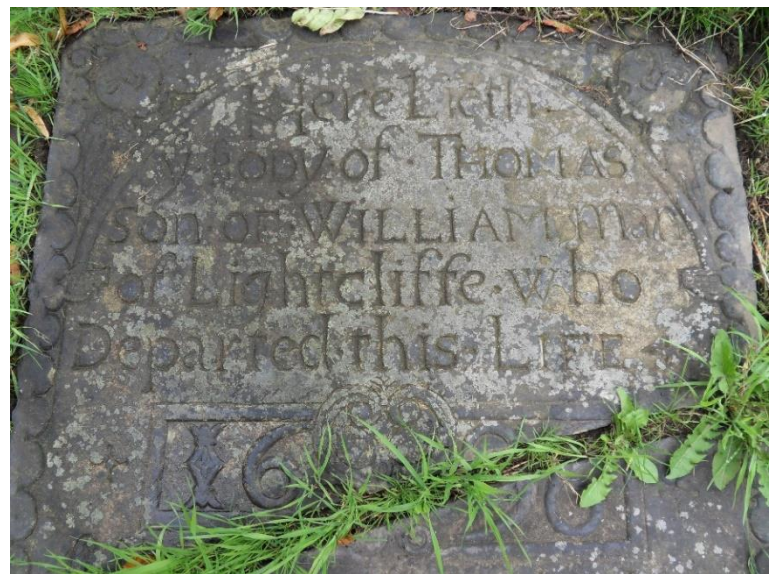
92



HERE LIETH THE BODY OF
MATTHEW CAYGILL WH
ICH DEPARTED THIS LIFE
THE 11th DAY OF JULY AND
31st YEARE OF HIS AGE
ANNO 16 96 DOMINII

Here Lieth
y^e Body of THOMAS
Son of WILLIAM MANN
of Lightcliffe who
Departed this LIFE

16 96



HERE LIETH THE BO
DY OF GEORGE WHITE
LEY WHICH DEPARTED
THIS LIFE THE 22 DAY
OF JUNE 1700

G ♥ W

After 1704 the parish burial records begin. The first few pages are extremely difficult to read – and they do not get much better until the mid C18th - but the first recorded burials have been transcribed as being a Brook family buried in an unknown plot. The burial of Sarah Mann, the daughter of the above-mentioned William Mann, buried with her brother Thomas in 1707 seems to be the next burial with a Blackburn transcribed memorial inscription. Understandably he slightly paraphrased the inscription which reading from the ledgerstone says:-

Also Hear Lyeth the Body
of SARAH, Dovghter
OF WILLIAM man who
Departed this Life
the 29th day of June in the
5th yeare of HER Age in
THE YEAR OF OVR Lord
17 [heart shape] 07

If you can get to the churchyard these very old memorials are in the southeast corner. Whilst there look out for the old English spellings or misspellings eg YEARE for YEAR, HEAR instead of HERE, BODEY instead of BODY, the already noted DOVGHTER etc. Then there is a back to front D for Dorothy(!) on another ledgerstone after the stone mason got it right at the top of the stone. What looks like a long letter 'f' was used for 's' and there are some double 'ff' as above in John fflather. The place names Lightcliffe and Hipperholme are usually written correctly but there are some Belly Bridges or even Belly Brigs for Bailiffe Bridge.

All very understandable when you consider that these memorials are over three hundred years old.

D.M.Barker

April 2026

More information about some early burials within vaults in the church and memorials in the church can be found in the articles :-

Burials within the old shurch

Burials elsewhere but memorials in the old church