

3. The Churchyard

It is likely that the northern part of the present churchyard near to the Saxon Cross base was originally occupied by the first St Matthew's Chapel and the Chapel Garth (an enclosed quadrangle or yard) - see sections 2.1 and 2.2 above. This garth was not consecrated ground and was not used for burials.

In 1798 the churchyard was established on land sold by Thomas Thornhill of Fixby to (Sir) George Armytage, the Vicar of Halifax and others (see section 2.3 above)

".....the burial ground were consecrated on the 15th April, 1798." - 'Old Brighouse' by Derek Rastrick 1986:

One of the oldest graves is that of John Morton, who died in March 1799, see Section 2.3 above. John Morton's gravestone now forms part of the paths between the west doorsteps and the entrance to the carpark. Some twenty-two (or thereabouts) gravestones were re-located probably during the late 20th century from their original positions. They are not recorded in their current locations on the Barron sketch plan of 1973 below. (See below.)

The churchyard was later extended in two phases:

*'Before 1798 the children were baptised at Rastrick, but the entries were sent down and duly entered in the Elland registers. There were, however, no marriages solemnised, neither was there any burial ground. When, however, the church was rebuilt, and removed to its present position, a piece of ground was given (sic) by the Thornhill family, so that burials then took place. The land proving insufficient, an additional plot was given by the same family, in 1823, which sufficed till 1862, when the present new ground was bought and paid for by subscriptions, which amounted to £328 6s 0d.'*¹

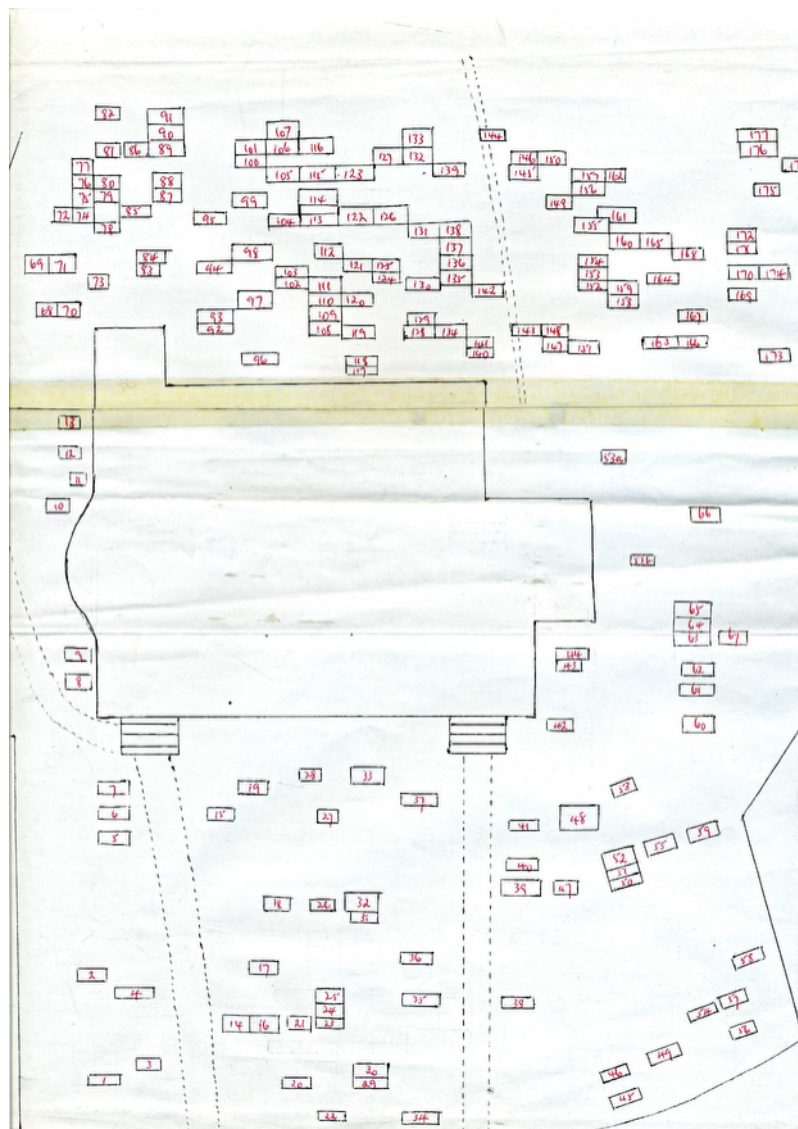
William Morton Shaw was Verger at St Matthew's from 1890 to 1936. A photograph of him at work in the churchyard is included in Appendix B

A Register of Burials, currently stored in the church safe, gives details of burials in the churchyard from June 1880 to May 1998, a total of 2398 entries. Another Burial Book, also kept in the church safe, gives details (duplicating in part the above) from 1890 to January 1970, a total of approximately 1360 entries. The books are available for inspection by arrangement with the churchwardens.

Records of Burials between 1813 and 1880 (4 volumes - parcels 19 to 22) are archived at the Diocese of Wakefield Record Office in Wakefield. Earlier records of burials between 1798 and 1812 are also kept in the Wakefield archives (Parcel 2 Baptisms and Burials with yearly totals 1798-1812).

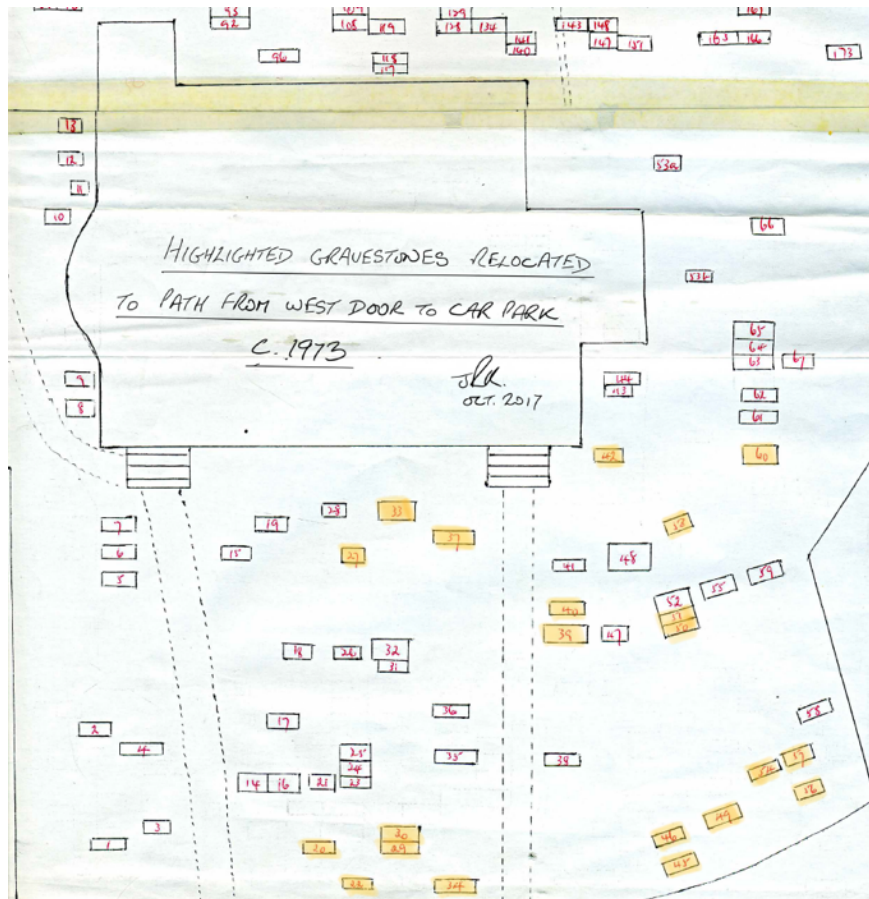
The inscriptions on gravestones to the north, east and west of the church and some of those to the south were transcribed between 28 April and 5 May 1973 by David H. Barron for Revd. Ian Knox. Some 12 rows of headstones to the south of the church were included in the list in order to try to record all burial dates pre 1837 in the list. The earliest burial to be found was dated 1798 and the latest 1943. A plan was produced of the graves numbering some 178 in total, with the graves given numbers 1 to 178. The plan and transcriptions are available for inspection by arrangement with the churchwardens.

¹ History of Brighouse and It's Co-operative Society



Original St Matthew's Graveyard
Sketch Plan by David H. Barron 1973

Gravestones marking 21 graves on the above plan were re-located in 1973 (see below) to form the path from the west door to the car park. See Appendix T for details.





Graves in the 1823 extension to the graveyard are set out on a grid, details of which are held in the church records and are available for inspection. See also below for details of the Transcriptions made by the writer in October 2017.

The grid is referenced 'on the ground' by a series of markers on the south wall of the church, on the south boundary wall of the 1823 churchyard and on the west boundary wall of the churchyard.



Row 'a' marker at east end of the south wall of Church

In 2012 Ralph Shepherd produced a plan of the 1823 burial ground on the south side of the chapel, up to the current boundary wall with houses on Crowtrees Crescent. Markers have been carved on the church walls and on the copings of the boundary walls :



Detail of Row 'a' Mark



Row 'R' mark at west end of south wall of Church



Detail of Row Q on the South Boundary Wall



Detail of Row P 53 Marker on South Boundary Wall



Detail of Row Marker L 49 on the South Boundary Wall



Detail of Row Marker I 46 on the South Boundary Wall

Note that at the east end of this wall there is good correlation between the marker combinations e.g. 'P 53' and Ralph Shepherd's 2012 Plan. However, halfway along the wall at 'I 46' the correlation is not as good - the Plan would suggest that the combination should be "I 44". Towards the west end of the wall, there is evidence of rebuilding and possible re-positioning of the copings in combinations 'F 43' and 'C 40'.



Details of Row Marker F 43 and C 40 on the South Boundary Wall



The copings on the West boundary wall also have been engraved with markers :

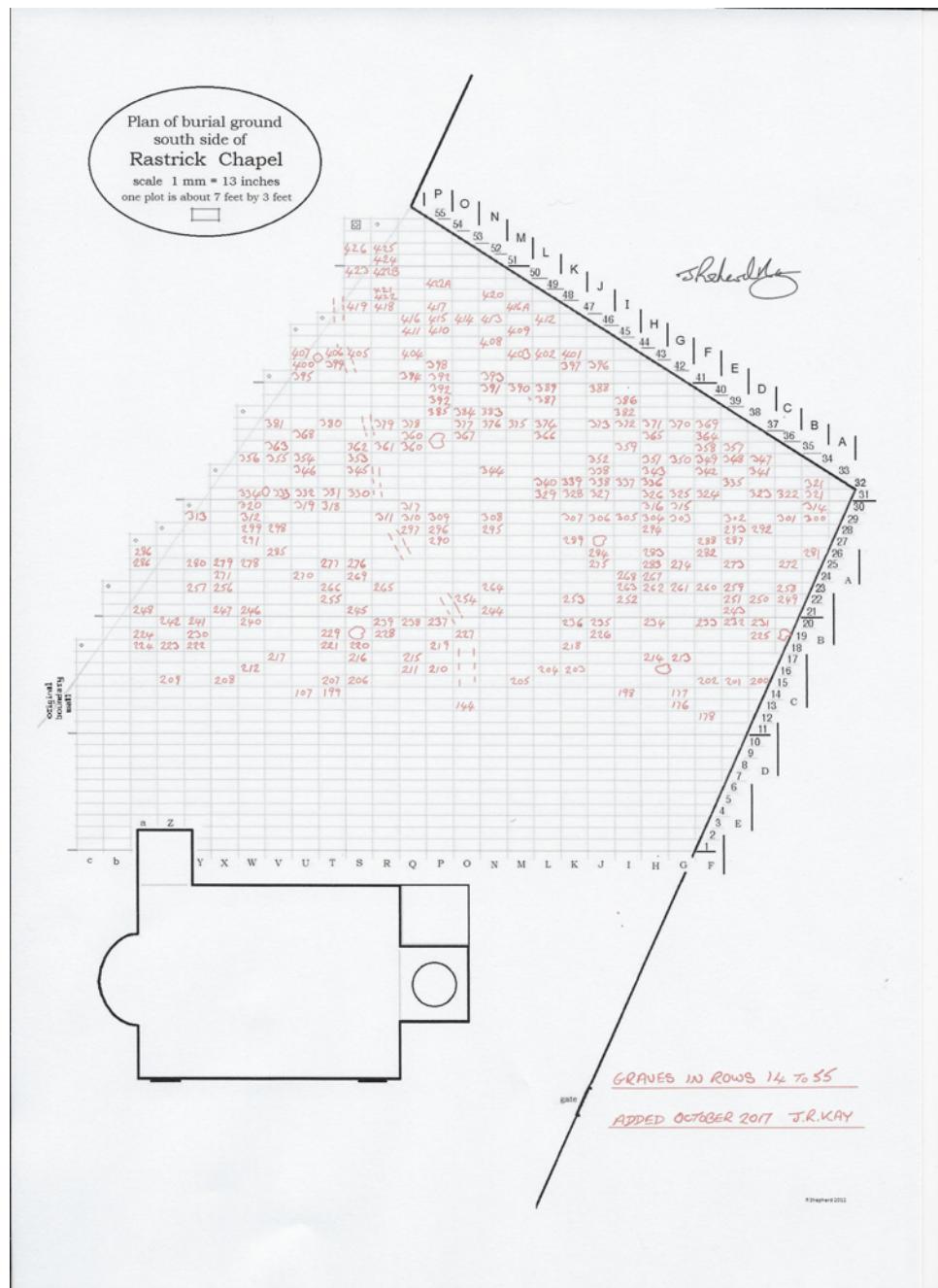
Marker for Row 30 in the south-west corner



Marker for Rows D 15

There is evidence of recent re-pointing and possible re-location of copings.

In October 2017, taking advantage of ground clearance work done by the community Payback Team, the writer used the Sketch Plan by Ralph Shepherd of the 1823 extension to the churchyard to plot the positions of the graves in that part of the churchyard that had been used post 1823 and had not been included in David Barron's work of 1973. The writer also transcribed the inscriptions on the gravestones. The graves were numbered from 198 to 426 and are shown on the plan below. The transcriptions, with an index, and the plan are available for inspection in the church records by arrangement with the Churchwardens. Note that the Grid rows in the plan below are out of step by one row when compared with the Burial records held in the Wakefield archives: e.g. Grave number 325 in the plan is shown at G31 but is recorded in the burial records as G32.



Ralph Shepherd's 2012 Plan of the 1823 Churchyard extension
with Graves 198 to 426 added

In 1871 the Revd. Thomas Hayne was laid to rest in the 1823 churchyard at the age of 68 years. He had been the incumbent in the Rastrick Parish from 1837 for a period of 33 years. His son the Revd. Alfred Thomas Hayne B.A. died at the age of 27 and was buried in the family grave in 1857.

In 1862 the churchyard was again extended to the south-east by the addition of the rectangular plot described below.
1860 saw a further extension to the churchyard to the south-east of the church building. The Wakefield Diocesan archives contain a document titled 'Sentence of Consecration, additional burial ground 3 September 1860.'

Shortly after opening on the 16th April 1864, two children were laid to rest in the same coffin in the newly extended churchyard in Line 30 Plot 4. They had been murdered by their mother Mary Ann Dyson née Thompson of Stackgarth of Ogden Lane. The names of the children were Archibald (four months old) and Mary. (two years old). The burials were conducted by the Revd Thomas Hayne, mentioned above. The circumstances of the children's deaths were so unusual that even the Burial register was endorsed with the comment '*these two children were murdered by their mother & buried in the same coffin.*' The story of their murders, which made national headlines at the time, is to be found on Andy Eccles' 'My Rastrick' website at <https://myrastrick.com/double-child-murder/>

The 1860 extension contains two Graves from World War I which are maintained by the War Graves Commission. The graves, sited in the west side of the 1860 extension, contain the remains of 4380 Pte. **Kaye** Farrar and 201159 Pte. Edward Knapton both of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. Pte. Farrar died on the 16th July 1916 aged 33, and Pte. Knapton on 10th October 1918 aged 36.

Wreaths were laid on the graves the 11th November 2014 by parishioners during a service of remembrance during the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1st World War.



Gravestone of Pte K. Farrar



Gravestone of Pte E. Knapton

See above (Sect 2.3 Church) for details of another Rastrick soldier, 2nd Lt. Oswald Sutcliffe, who gave his life for King and Country during the 1st World War.



War Memorial from the Great War 1914 - 1918

The **War Memorial** is situated in the old churchyard between St. Matthew's church and Church Street.

The memorial cross was designed and executed by Frank Crowther, monumental sculptor, 53 Gooder Lane Rastrick. It stands 9ft high, is of Hopton Wood stone, and stands on a landing given by Messrs. Bentley and Smith. At the base are the words 'Rest in Peace'. Inside the cross is a laurel wreath.

The Hopton Wood stone which has been used comes from Derbyshire, and so nearly approaches marble in its nature that it will take a polish, and is both durable and pleasing to the eye. The cenotaph, which reflects great credit on Mr. Crowther bears the names of 31 men who had been connected with St Matthew's, the letters being cut and filled in black with red capitals.²

Inscriptions on the weathered memorial are difficult to read. But with the help of the press cutting of 30 June 1922 (Appendix Q)

On the north face :

*"To the Glory of God and in sacred remembrance of
those whose names are here recorded who fell in the Great War 1914 -1918.
Jesus said : I am the resurrection and the life. St. John XI 25 "*

² Press cutting dated June 30, 1922 from Ralph Shepherd

The remains of the black filling of the letters with red capitals can be made out on line 5 'Great War 1914 - 1918' in the photo below. The memorial must have been a striking sight when newly unveiled!



St Matthew's WWI Memorial North Face (November 2020)

St Matthew's WWI Memorial East Face

On the east face the names of the following can be made out, correlating with the memorial outside Rastrick Library:

Pte. John Aspinall, Dixon Berry, Tom Booth, Norman Booth, Frank Bottomley, Cecil Brewer, Allen Briggs, Capt. Lionel P. Clay, Pte Ernest Clay, James Clay, Walter H. Churchman, Cpl. Arthur Garlick, Frederick Haley, Charles Hinchliffe, John Gordon Hollingsworth

The Press cutting of 30 June 1922 also includes the name of Pte John R. Booth, but it is difficult to see where his name is inscribed. It seems that a mistake is unlikely since the report also states that among the wreaths placed around the memorial on the occasion of its unveiling, on Wednesday 28th June 1922, was one ‘ “In loving memory of Pte J.R. Booth, Scottish Rifles” from the family.’

Note that Walter H. Churchman is not in the correct alphabetical order on the memorial.

On the west face there are also names - extremely difficult, if not impossible, to read.

After comparing various sources (see Appendix P “The War Memorial and the ‘Sutcliffe’ problem”), I firmly believe that the list for the West Face of the memorial reads :

Leonard Kershaw	George Margerison	Leonard Marshall
Herbert Pamment	John E. Rider	John W. Skitmore
William H. Smith	Herbert Southern	Ernest Stirzaker
William Stannard	Oswald Sutcliffe	William Sutcliffe
Arthur Thornton	Sam Thornton	James Walker

On the south face the following names appear to have been added to the memorial after the initial carving was carried out :

Pte H. Ambler, Pte H. Smith and Pte. Charles Smith.

Harry Ambler died on the 25th March 1916, Harry Smith died on the 29th September 1918 and Charles Smith died on the 4th November 1918³.

All three are recorded on the Rastrick Library War memorial as belonging to the Duke of Wellington’s West Riding Regiment.

Out of the 34 gallant soldiers who are commemorated on the St Matthew’s Memorial, 14 have been shown to have had links with St Matthew’s Church (Alan Flux - ‘The Lost Sons of Rastrick’). This could be a reason why these men in particular had their names recorded on this memorial. The press cutting of June 30, 1922 describes them as ‘who had been connected with St Matthew’s’. See Appendix J for further details.

However, out of the 131 ‘Lost Sons of Rastrick’ named by Alan Flux in his book of the same name, at least an additional 13 and possibly 18 are identified as having had links with St Matthew’s, either through baptism, marriage or burial, and are not included on the St Matthew’s memorial. Further research with Alan, might uncover more named soldiers with similar connections.

It remains a mystery as to how the selection of fallen soldiers was made. No church records have been located to date. Back copies of ‘The Echo’ might prove to be a useful source.

Further information about the Rastrick soldiers named above can be found in Appendix J, and in the document ‘Calderdale War Dead’, which is available on line at ‘From Weaver to Web’ under ‘World War 1 Newspapers’ using the link <http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/wtw/sources/themes/world-war-one.html>

³ Alan Flux ‘The Lost Sons of Rastrick’ and also from Brighouse Echo

Search the listings under 'Lower Calderdale'.

Appendix S 'The 1919 Jubilee Celebrations booklet of the United Methodist Church Crowtrees Lane' contains information of Church Members and Scholars who served during the Great War at pages 68 -71.

The 1862 Extension to the Churchyard

In 2012, Ralph Shepherd also produced a plan of the southern extension to the graveyard showing where the markings on the east boundary wall should be at 4ft intervals from 1 to 135. The actual number sequence on the wall runs from 1 to 119 with several missing sections, with some copings having been re-laid in the wrong position.

The marks on the east boundary wall of the churchyard are confusing, since at least two sections of the wall have been rebuilt, probably during the 20th century, and no attempt has been made to reinstate the coping stones, which contain the reference marks, in the correct locations. An example of an undisturbed section is shown below adjacent to No 2 Vicarage Gardens. The sequence of numbering running from south to north is typically 7+1, +, 7+3. only the odd-numbered rows are inscribed, these being equivalent in the foregoing example to Rows 71, (72) and 73

A detailed survey is required before the copings can be returned to their correct positions.

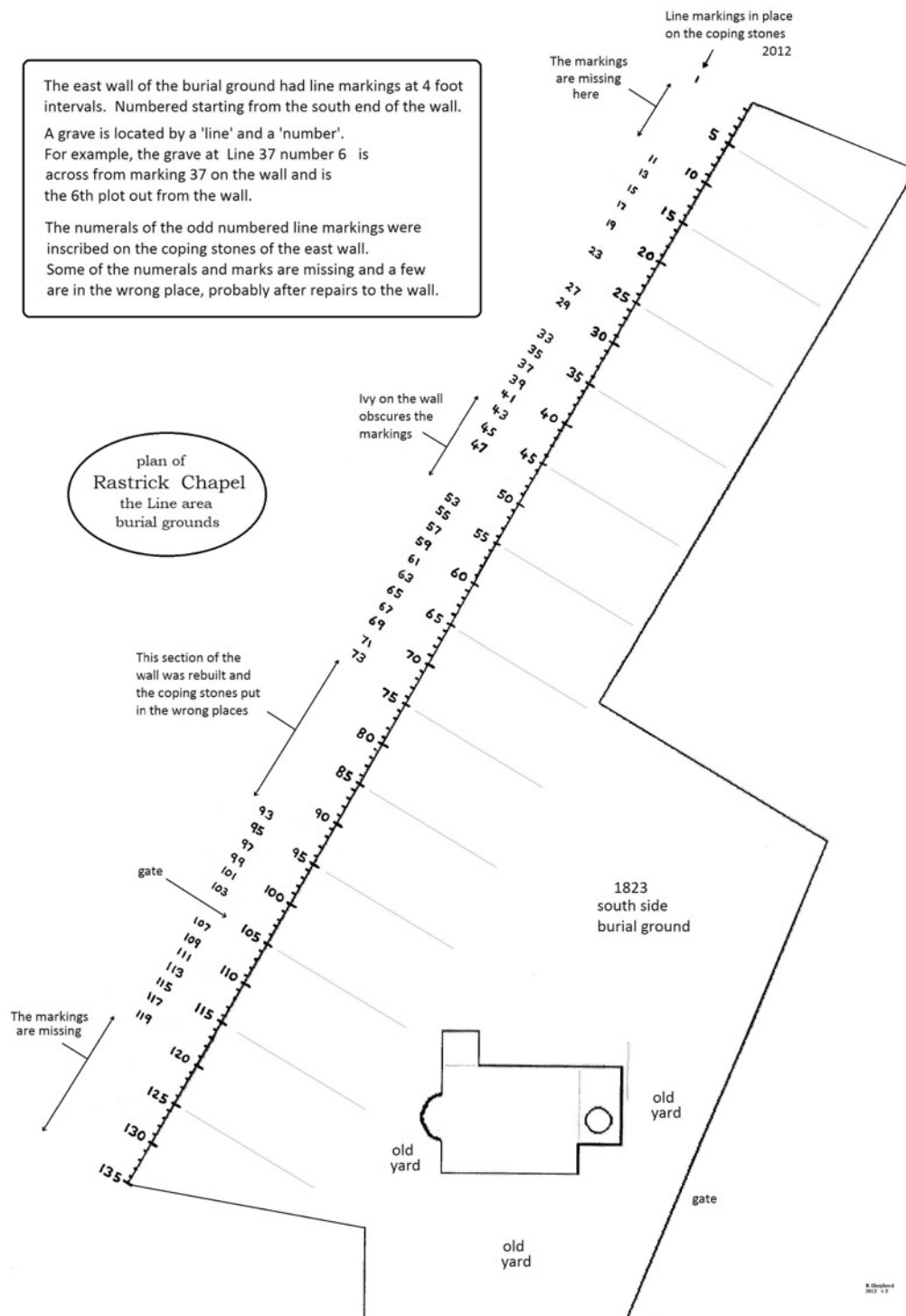


Churchyard East Boundary Wall adjacent 2 Vicarage Gardens

A further document in the Wakefield archives dated 9 April 1949 is titled 'Copy Statutory Record of Consecration, addition to Churchyard'. The location of this addition to the churchyard is yet to be identified by the author.

In 2019, Andy Eccles of Rastrick, in his website '[My Rastrick](http://myrastrick.com/st-matthews-church-2/)'⁴ set down details of burials in the original 1798 yard, the 1823 extension and the 1862 extension taken from the burial records. The information includes on-line searches by name and photographs of headstones.

⁴ <http://myrastrick.com/st-matthews-church-2/>



1862 Extension to St Matthew's Churchyard - Sketch Plan by Ralph Shepherd 2012

Late 20th Century / 21st Century Changes

Following an agreement made between the Vicar of St Matthew's, Revd Ian Knox, the churchwardens Ralph Wade and George Bradley and the Corporation of Brighouse dated the 1st June 1963 a gateway was constructed through the churchyard wall. St Matthew's agreed to pay an annual sum of 5 shillings for a right of access across the adjacent car park into the churchyard.

In early 1973 flat gravestones were removed and relaid as a path from the public car park to the main door of the church (see Plan above and Appendix T). The gravestones relate to parishioners who died in the period 1799 to 1831 or thereabouts. At the same time, the gateway was opened in the churchyard wall to replace the existing gate.⁵

In July 1979 a Faculty was granted for the creation of a place for cremated remains in the churchyard, between the west wall of the tower and the boundary wall to the car park.

The **churchyard** was formally closed on the 15th October 1996 and is no longer available for burials, whilst still being available for the interment of cremated remains.

In May 1996 the top of the sundial, which stood alongside the main path to the west door from Church Street, was stolen and not recovered. The sun-dial pedestal and base were stored inside the church for safety.

The churchyard is now (2008) maintained by Calderdale M.B.C., although St. Matthew's Ecumenical Church Council was up to 2015 responsible for the management of trees in the churchyard. As part of this responsibility, in 2010 the Council felled several trees, which presented a high risk to the public, and replaced them in 2011 with native species: whitebeam, field maple, rowan, copper beech and goat willow. Unfortunately, some of the newly-planted trees did not survive the following hot and dry summer.

During 2013 Calderdale MBC, under the directions of Dave Clay AICCM, Calderdale Bereavement Services Manager, replaced several linear metres of stolen paving slabs on the path through the 1823 extension churchyard. As a means of combatting recurrent thefts of the York stone flags, many of them were marked with a cross and the letter 'M'.

Since the churchyard was closed for burials, Calderdale M.B.C. has carried out routine cutting of the grass throughout the growing season, responding well to requests for a cut before special events. However, the maintenance of the undergrowth which exists within the south half of the 1823 extension and most of the 1862 extension proved too much for hard-pressed local authority budgets. However, the Community Payback Team consisting of ex-offenders under the leadership of Eddie Sladdin have on more than one occasion cut down the brambles and long grass, much to the delight of local people who wish to visit relatives' graves. The only cost the church has been 5 litres of petrol on each visit.

In 2015, a faculty was granted for substantial maintenance work to the trees in the churchyard, in accordance with the recommendations of Godwin's Arboricultural Consultants of Salford in their quinquennial report. The work included the felling of some trees and the removal of the lower branches of several, where they were interfering with

⁵ Faculty Records held in Diocesan Archive Bundle 113

pathways or neighbouring properties. One result has been that the church is now more



visible from the car park

Lower branches removed from Churchyard Trees

Early in 2025 it was discovered that two sections of the churchyard boundary wall in the 1862 extension adjacent to houses in Vicarage Gardens had fallen down. Calderdale M.B.C. stepped in, as the local authority is responsible for the maintenance of the closed churchyard, and rebuilt the two sections. Churchwarden, Margaret Brown, instilled on the workmen the importance of keeping the copings in their original positions in order to maintain the grave row markers. Permission to carry out the work was granted by Archdeacon Bill Braviner under a List B Application dated 27 February 2025. Rebuilt churchyard Boundary Wall adjacent to :



1 Vicarage Gardens (The Vicarage) and 4. Vicarage Gardens

St Matthew's Church pays an annual fee of £40 to Calderdale M.B.C. for the right of access through the **car park** adjacent to the churchyard. The car park lies on the site of the former George Inn public house:



The start of Crowtrees Lane Rastrick, showing the George Inn, licence held by Jos. Morton in 1906.

The George Inn, Crowtrees Lane, Rastrick c. 1906

The George Inn advertised in the Official Handbook to the 1895 Grand Bazaar as follows:

“George Inn, Rastrick (Near the Church)

Wines and Spirits of the Best Quality

Sparkling Ales.

Cigars of the Finest Brands, Good Stabling &c.

Sam Collins, Proprietor”

There were two George Inns close to St Matthew’s Church - the one on Crowtrees Lane was known as the ‘Upper George’ whereas the one on the road known as Jumble Dyke (which links Church Street with Field Lane) was known as the ‘Lower George’.⁶

⁶ Charles Squire conversation 18 September 2013

