



Graham Swain at work cleaning the headstone



L-R: Andy Tyne, Graham Swain, Chris Lawson and Tim Hardy



How the Lumb grave, left, used to look. Photo: Sue Sleep



The restored grave, showing the family inscription



Mark Nicholson visits the grave to see the results of the team's work

GRAVE TRIBUTE TO TRAGIC YOUNG LUMB BROTHERS

EMMA CLAYTON finds out how a team of volunteers have laid a tragic family to rest

ANYONE passing the Lumb family grave, covered in weeds in a corner of Undercliffe Cemetery, probably wouldn't have stopped to look at the inscription. The headstone had been there for over 150 years, and the family names were fading.

But behind this old grave lies a tragic tale of three young Bradford brothers who died together in a terrible accident. Now their grave has been restored - thanks to a poignant film which unearthed the brothers' story.

To set the scene, we return to a T&A feature from earlier this year, about the Lumb brothers who died on Saturday, February 4, 1871. Their story came to light in a moving film called Three Brothers made by local historians Riaz Ahmed and Mark Nicholson for the Bradford Through the Lens YouTube channel.

The family - Jabez Lumb, his wife Martha and their six children - lived in Little Horton. Jabez's job, looking after All Saints Church and the adjoining school, included keeping the buildings warm in winter. On that cold, foggy February afternoon, Jabez was ill with bronchitis so sent eldest son, 15-year-old James, to light the church furnace. James did so, then visited a friend. By 7pm he hadn't returned home so Martha sent his brother Charles to check on the furnace. He took younger siblings, John and Fred along with him. When the boys didn't return home, their worried mother alerted James and they went to look for them.

Entering the vault, James made the horrifying discovery of his brothers' bodies. One of the furnaces, which were in the vault beneath the vestry, had gone out, producing sulphurous fumes, which overcame the poor boys. An inquest returned a verdict of accidental suffocation.

The inscription on the Lumb family grave says: "The above brothers lost their lives by suffocation in the heating vaults of All Saints Church, February 4 1871". It bears the names of Charles Edward Lumb, 13, John William, nine, and Fred, six, and their father, Jabez, who died 10 days after his young sons. Also named on the grave is Martha, who died aged 57 in 1893.

Now Bradford Through the Lens has made another film, about the restoration of the family grave. Riaz says the first video drew a lot of attention - and a descendent of the Lumb family from the other side of the world has been in touch to thank the team.

A letter from Peter Lumb to Bradford Through the Lens says: "Thank you to all concerned for reporting and filming



The grave restoring team trying to lift the Lumb family headstone at Undercliffe Cemetery

our family's story so sensitively. We have lived in New Zealand for over 50 years. I was born in Shipley and my wife in Low Moor. My sister visited the UK years ago and noticed the grave then. It was badly overgrown but with the help of my cousin she cleared the site.

"Jabez's father, John Lumb, my four times great grandfather, was the verger of All Saints Church.

"Another incident in Martha's life occurred when she was robbed of her purse, containing 8s6d whilst trying to help a lady. This was reported in the Leeds Times on November 14, 1868."

The new film, called Restoring A Forgotten Grave: Tragedy to Tribute, follows the efforts of grave restorer Graham Swain and his team - Andy Tyne, Chris Lawson, Tim Hardy and Chris Magson - to clean the Lumb family headstone and clear the grave site and area around it.

A digger is filmed trying to lift the headstone, but the team discovers that it's too heavy. Plan B involves setting up an A-frame to lift it. The team's efforts with the A-frame are successful, and the headstone is pulled out, along with stone slabs lining the grave. The team is working from a photograph of how the grave originally looked, which was sent to Riaz by Sue Sleep, of Nottingham, who watched the first Lumb brothers video and recognised their grave as the one next to her relatives' grave.

Looking at the photo, Graham decides the Lumb headstone should be raised further, to show Martha's name, which had previously been hidden.

The restoration is a painstaking process, but eventually the team gets the grave back in place and sets about cleaning the stonework and inscriptions.

At the end of the film Mark Nicholson visits the restored grave and is visibly moved. "It was January 2023 when we made the first video, snow was starting to fall. Now it's summer 2024 and what a transformation," says Mark. "The whole area has been cleaned up. I said it would be lovely to see this grave restored. Graham and his team have come up trumps. "Anyone visiting it can now read the headstone without having to climb virtually into the grave, which is what I had to do initially."

Bradford Through the Lens, a YouTube channel exploring stories of the district's social history, was set up by Riaz, a historian and photographer. "The channel isn't just talking about history - we're now trying to restore some local history too, with the help of Graham and his team," says Riaz. "All the work is done on a voluntary basis and is run on our passion for the Bradford district. What a journey we've had, with the Lumb family story."

* To watch Restoring A Forgotten Grave: Tragedy to Tribute go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta8c-Sr3yRA



How the grave looked before it was restored