

Three burials, two very sad stories.



Lightcliffe plot H81 is in the middle section of the St. Matthew's churchyard, roughly in the position marked above, under some trees. It is near the wall to the new section and, as you can see, it has no headstone. Its three occupants were unrelated. Two died in very sad circumstances. After the burial of the last occupant, it was declared to be full.

What follows is an attempt to piece together the stories of these three occupants.

The first occupant had an unusual name **Andree de Wandeleer**. Almost nothing has been found about him apart from his name. The parish burial register notes the burial of 34-year-old Andree de Wandeleer on 21st November 1916 after his death on 18th November 1916.

2288	81 H	Nov 18 th	Nov 21 st	Andree De Wandeleer	34 years
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The typed name is easier to read on the *England & Wales Deaths 1837-2007* register.

De Wandeleer, Andree	34	Halifax	9	2	533
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This was during WW1 but that may be irrelevant.

The next occupant was a young woman, 21-year-old **Wilhelmina Whitfield**, originally from Blanchland in Northumberland. She was buried in plot H81 on 23rd November 1921. Her sad story is told in a separate article.

The 1921 Lightcliffe railway mystery



Wilhelmina Whitfield

Fourteen years later on 12th January 1935 56-year-old **Matthew Ernest Ward** who died on 8th January 1935 was buried in the same Lightcliffe plot.

3049H81	Jan 8 th	Jan 12 th	Matthew Ernest Ward	56 years	FULL
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What follows is his story told through parish registers, census data and the West Yorkshire electoral roll before a Halifax newspaper completes this second tragic story.

Matthew Ernest Ward was the son of Thomas Ward, a stoker, and his wife Margaret née Rudkin who had him baptised at All Saints Church in Wakefield on 3rd December 1879.

No. 1312.	1879.	December 3 rd	Matthew Thomas Ernest & Ward	Jacobs Well Road Stoker	W. A. Lewis Curate
No. 1316.	Son of Margaret				

1881 census

Thomas Ward Head 31 Stoker Gas Works
 Margaret Ward Wife 29
 George H. Ward Son 5 Scholar
 Matthew E. Ward Son 2
 Address Moxon Cottage, Stanley cum Wrenthorpe, Wakefield

1901 census

Margaret Ward Head 49 Widow
 George H Ward Son 28 Tailor
 Mathew Ward Son 22 Iron Founders Labourer
 James Ball Boarder 25 Engineer Fitter
 Address 14 Moxon Square, Stanley, Wakefield

1891 census

Thos Ward Head 41 Engine Fireman
 Margaret Ward Wife 39
 George H Ward Son 15 Tailor's Apprentice
 Matt Ernest Ward Son 12 Son
 Address 14 Moxon Square, Stanley cum Wrenthorpe, Wakefield

1911 census

Margaret Ward Head 59 Widow
 Matthew Ernest Ward Son 32 Teamer Iron Foundry
 George Samuel Smart Boarder 24 Grocer's Assistant
 Address 19 Marsland Place, Berners Street, Wakefield

Throughout WW1 Matthew Ernest Ward served with the Royal Army Service Corps.

T1/122	WARD	Driver.
	Matthew Ernest	R.A.S.C. T1/122
		Driver.

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
WARD	ASC (280 HT Coy)	2nd Lt	T1/122
ME.			
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	RASC 101	10	
BRITISH	do	2	
14 STAR	RASC 21	11	
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein 5.10.14			

On the 1921 census he was living with a cousin at 4 Park View, Lightcliffe and working as a general labourer, probably a gardener, for James Bunce & Sons of Sunny Vale Gardens.

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	
1 James Edward Spence	Head	44	11	M	Married	Yorkshire Kirkstall Hill	—	—	Dyers Foreman Atter Rice Dyeing	Bradford Dyers' Association	Valley Dye Works Brighouse
2 Kate Spence	Wife	46	7	F	Married	Northamptonshire Harrington	—	—	—	—	Valley Dye Works Brighouse
3 Matthew Ernest Hand Cousin		43	2	M	Single	Yorkshire Wakefield	—	—	General Labourer	J. Bunce & Sons Sunny Vale Gardens	Sunny Vale Gardens High Porten



Using the *West Yorkshire, Electoral Roll* it is possible to see where Matthew Ernest Ward lived after the 1921 census. He remained in the Hipperholme area, living with Frank and Ada Smith at 14 Glen Terrace, Hipperholme from 1922 to 1925. Then he moved back in with his Spence cousins, who by then were at 14 Brookeville Avenue, Hipperholme. He was with them from 1926 to 1930. In 1931 and 1932 he was with John and Annie Holmes at 5 Wakefield Road, Hipperholme. And finally, he was recorded as living at 8 George Street, Hipperholme with Annie Gertrude Marshall in 1933 and 1934.

The following newspaper report completes Matthew Ernest Ward's story with the sad details of his death before his burial in Lightcliffe plot H81.

From the *Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian* Thursday 10th January 1935

BODY OF MAN ON TOP OF CUPBOARD

Brookfoot Club Tragedy Inquest

WAR MEDALS IN POCKET

The District Coroner, Mr. E. W. Norris, held an inquest at Hipperholme Council offices, this afternoon, on Matthew Ernest Ward (57), of 8 George-street, Hipperholme, a gardener, who was found gassed at Brookfoot Conservative Club on Tuesday.

Annie Gertrude Marshall, 8 George-street, Hipperholme, gave evidence of identity and said that Ward had had good health but appeared a little depressed during the past week. Witness last saw him alive at 9.0 o'clock on Saturday morning as he was leaving the house.

It was stated that Ward was a horse driver in the Royal Army Service Corps during the war and served in Salonica and Palestine.

KITCHEN UNUSED FOR MONTH

Edith Hannah Thorburn, 107, Branston-street, Brighouse, said that on Tuesday afternoon, about 2.0 o'clock she went to Brookfoot Conservative Club with the object of tidying up. On the kitchen door she found a card, and on opening the door she smelt gas. She turned

off the gas at the meter and on stepping inside the room she saw Ward lying on top of a cupboard which runs the length of the kitchen. Witness added that Ward occasionally did odd jobs at the club and had been provided with a key to the premises. The kitchen had not been used for a month.

Constable R.W. Farrar said that when he was called to the club, he found Ward lying on a low cupboard and near the body was a gas ring. In his pocket were three war medals.

The Coroner said that on the card, which was found on the kitchen door, was written a warning to anyone entering the room, telling them to send for the police and not to put any lights on.

CORONER AND RELATIVES

Later, when it was explained that there was no-one present to sign the burial order, the Coroner commented that it seemed a pity that the relatives of this man, who had served his country throughout the war, did not take a little more interest in him than they had done.

The jury returned a verdict "Death from coal-gas poisoning, self-administered, while of unsound mind, caused by being financially embarrassed."

D. M. Barker

March 2025