

HOUGHTON HILLSIDE CEMETERY

Detached Burial Ground of St Michael & All Angels Church
Sunderland Street, Houghton-le-Spring
Consecrated in 1854

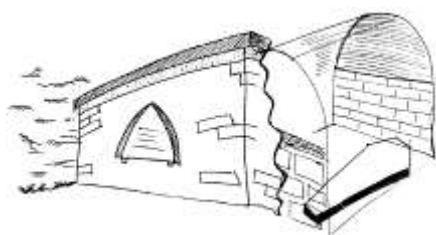
THE VAULT OF WILLIAM STANDISH STANDISH



William, his wife Susan, and daughter Susan, in the grounds of Cocken Hall.



The vault in 2003.



A diagram of the vault interior.

William Standish Standish, originally known as William Standish Carr, took up the Standish surname as a condition of inheriting estates owned by the late Frank Hall Standish.

It is widely believed that William died as a result of a tragic accident after he plummeted over the cliffs of the Hillside Cemetery whilst riding his horse, and was later interned on the spot where he met his end.

It is more likely that William died at his County Durham home, Cocken Hall, from an illness, as suggested by newspaper reports and more importantly, as stated on the inscription upon his vault.

William's ancestors were all nobility – and royalty – with William 18th in a direct descent from King Edward III. His great-great-great grandparents, **Ralph Carr** and **Anne Fairfax**, are buried in St Michael & All Angels Church. William's modern day descendants are **The 18th Marquess of Winchester** and **The Earl of Wiltshire**.

The vault of William Standish Standish has regularly been a target for vandalism over the years, and a metal sheet was secured to the vault in April 2003 as a means of preventing the acts. The inscription on the badly damaged memorial stone reads as follows:

Within this tomb lies the remains of the deservedly lamented WILLIAM STANDISH STANDISH ESQR of Duxbury Park County of Lancashire and Cocken Hall County of Durham who died at Cocken Hall July 10th 1856 aged 48 years. Blessed is the poor in spirit for such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

| NAME | ABODE | AGE | DATE OF BIRTH | DATE OF DEATH | DATE OF FUNERAL | CEREMONY PERFORMED BY |
|---------------------------|------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| William Standish Standish | Cocken Hall, Co Durham | 48 years | December 7th 1807 | July 10th 1856 | July 17th 1856 | Edmund Wood, Curate |

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THE VAULT OF SIR GEORGE ELLIOT – BART.



George Elliot was born in Gateshead in 1815, the son of a miner. He started work at the age of 10 as a trapper boy at Whitfield Pit, Penshaw, and eventually owned this colliery later in his life. In 1849 he became a wire rope manufacturer and his company laid one of the first Atlantic cables.

George became an MP on November 26 1868 and he was created a Baronet on May 15 1874. In his capacity as an MP he made arrangements for the new tongue of Big Ben, in Westminster, London, to be forged at Hopper's Iron Foundry in Houghton. Sir George advised the then Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, to buy shares in the Suez Canal, resulting in England having control over the sea route to India.

His local residence was Houghton Hall, and he resided at London in the last years of his life. The vault, which dates from 1862, was vandalised and resealed in 1957 and is described as having an inner door which leads into a large, shelved cavity.

THE LATE SIR GEORGE ELLIOT - FUNERAL TODAY

The late Sir George Elliot, Bart., who died in London last Saturday after a brief illness, was interred at Houghton-le-Spring today. The chief members of the family arrived at Houghton last night and the body was brought this morning from King's Cross, arriving at Fence Houses railway station soon after midday.

Although the weather was very unpropitious, rain falling heavily the whole of the time, there was a very large gathering of mourners and friends of the family. Numerous wreaths were sent by Lord Londonderry, Sir John Pender, Miss Pender, the officials of North Biddick Colliery, and of the Alexandra Dock, Newport (Mon.). Among those present at the funeral, in addition to the immediate relatives, were Lord Durham, Colonel Erainson, Mr Matthew Fowler, MP, Mr Thomas Milvain, QC, Dr Murphy (Sunderland), Mr F Gordon and Mr H H Wake (Sunderland), and Mr Appleby, Secretary to Lord Londonderry.

The cortege proceeded from Fence Houses Station to Houghton-le-Spring, and a funeral service was held in the parish church, Canon Grey officiating. From the church the coffin was conveyed to the cemetery, a number of workmen from Shiney Row acting as underbearers. The body was laid to rest in the family vault in Sunderland Street. The cemetery was filled by a large number of people.

Sunderland Daily Echo – Thursday December 28th 1893

| NAME | ABODE | AGE | DATE OF BIRTH | DATE OF DEATH | DATE OF FUNERAL | CEREMONY PERFORMED BY |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Sir George Elliot - Bart. | 19 Portland Place, London | 78 years | March 18th 1815 | December 23rd 1893 (3:10pm) | December 28th 1893 | CGO Griffith |

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THE VAULT OF THE BECKWITHS



Beckwith memorial

Today, a neglected path leads from the ruined lych-gate on Houghton Cut. Through muddy ways a broad expanse of grass opens up with a few toppled headstones - witness to the vandalism prevalent nowadays. But the Beckwith memorial has escaped for high on the rock out of reach is a marble tablet and one of three panels still faintly shows the raised hinds head and chevrons of the Beckwith arms.

Priscilla Maria Beckwith was the daughter of Thomas Hopper of Silksworth House (now renamed Doxford Park). In 1831 Priscilla Maria entered into a marriage contract with William Beckwith, then a Major in the 14th Regiment of Dragoons.



Beckwith family crest

General Beckwith died in February 1871; his cortege followed by fourteen carriages, and pulled by six black-plumed horses made its way to St Michael's Church. Following the service he was laid to rest in a specially constructed vault cut out of the limestone in the Hillside Cemetery.

The General's brother, Captain John Beckwith, a bachelor, retired from the army after spending most of his life in Calcutta. He resided with Mrs Beckwith and six housemaids comfortably cared for the two.



General Beckwith.

In 1874 Mrs Beckwith suffered from an illness which left her with heart trouble. By 1877 she suffered so severely that she was sent to Bournemouth for several months in hope of improvement but died on June 3rd 1877. It was surely indicative of the esteem in which she was held that the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle himself arrived to conduct the funeral Mass that Saturday morning, then, accompanied by Fr. Sharples and Dr. Welford, travelled in a chaise at the head of the cortege.

Twelve carriages followed the hearse with tenants and villagers on foot across the roads leading to Houghton Cut. There she was laid to rest in a vault adjoining that of the General.

By Douglas Smith, Sunderland Antiquarian Society

| NAME | ABODE | AGE | DATE OF DEATH | DATE OF FUNERAL | CEREMONY PERFORMED BY |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| General Beckwith | Silksworth | 75 yrs | February 23rd 1871 | March 2nd 1871 | Curate |
| Priscilla Maria Beckwith | Houghton-le-Spring | 70 yrs | June 3rd 1877 | June 9th 1877 | A Krauss |
| John Beckwith | Silksworth | 87 yrs | April 23rd 1891 | April 27th 1891 | JK Brown, Vicar of Silksworth |

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FLORA & FAUNA

The Hillside Cemetery burial grounds are an important location for wildlife. They are populated by many different species of flora and fauna, and have three main habitats: grassland, woodland, and rock exposure. The site is home to rabbits, moles, mice, shrews and voles; a disused badger set has also been found. Numerous birds can be seen on the site, including: dove, song thrush, mistle thrush, great/blue/coal/long tailed tits, green/chaf/bull/gold finches, pheasant, wood pigeon, magpie, jackdaw (possibly nesting in cliff face), feeding birds, swift, swallow, house martins, kestrels, and a sparrow hawk.



A discarded rock dove egg.



A juicy, fat slug.



Deadly nightshade grows in several locations around the site.



Bluebells grow in abundance in Spring.



Mole hills can regularly be seen on the landing front of the lych gate.



A grave on the plateau, covered in elderberry fruit.



Wild mushrooms and fungus can be found on pieces of rotting wood and grassy areas.



This hardy and self-seeding vegetation is found in abundance on the plateau area.



This small amphibian was found underneath a pile of leaves near the lych gate.

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LYCH GATE & LODGE

The original entrance to the Hillside Cemetery was through the neighbouring Glebe Farm. The lych gate and lodge were erected in around 1873 and became a familiar site on Sunderland Street until ivy and neglect hid them from view.

The 1881 census records **William Reid** (60 years old), the Parish Sexton, his wife **Mary** (59) and daughter **Mary Jane** (24, schoolteacher), as living in the Cemetery Lodge. The sixty-year-old Sexton and his wife originated in Ireland. A trade directory from 1895 records **George Brown**, Sexton, as living at the Church Cemetery, Sunderland Street. The burial registers suggest that George had a 5-year-old son, **William**, who died in August 1894 and was buried in the Cemetery.

In the 1930s/1940s Mr Scott, a gravedigger, and his wife, occupied the Lodge.



A then and now view of the Hillside Cemetery entrance on Sunderland Street.

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THE GRAVE OF GEORGE WHEATLEY

George Wheatley was a Crimean War veteran having fought at the battle of the Alma at the siege of Sevastopol for which he had received two medals with clasps. It was here that his right leg was blown off by a cannon ball – he was only nineteen years old. Sevastopol was a port and naval base in the S. Ukraine, in the Crimea, on the Black Sea. It was captured and destroyed by British, French and Turkish forces during the Crimean War. George was discharged from the Navy and went on to found the well-known Wheatley's confectionery business in Houghton. At the age of 35 years, and as widower of Jane Finlay, he married Josephine Lowson aged 17 years, on April 26th 1869 at their home in Scotland. He was survived by six sons and seven daughters.



| NAME | ABODE | AGE | DATE OF BIRTH | DATE OF DEATH | DATE OF FUNERAL | GRAVE LOCATION | NOTES |
|---------------------------|--|----------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| George Wheatley | Houghton-le-Spring | 70 years | Circa 09/08/1833 | 11/12/1906 | 15/12/1906 | G0122 | - |
| Josephine Lowson Wheatley | 35 Ironside Street, Houghton-le-Spring | 65 years | Circa 1845 - 1852, Scotland | 15/12/1915 | 19/12/1915 | G0122 | AMOUNT OF FEES: 12s 6d |
| Elizabeth Finlay | Houghton-le-Spring | 88 years | Circa 1817 - 1823, Dundee, Scotland | 17/05/1909 | 19/05/1909 | G0122 | Year of birth varies according to census or headstone |

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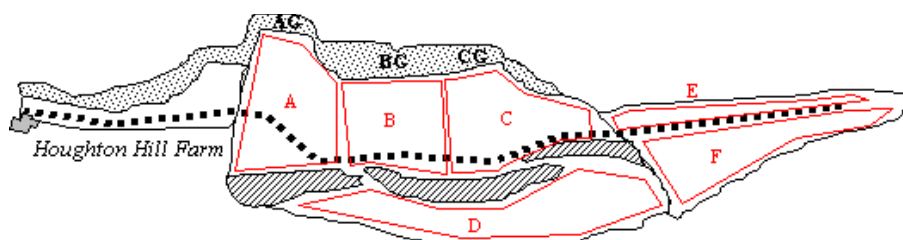
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THE BURIAL GROUND

The Hillside Cemetery is divided into four main sections: the upper plateau level, the lower level, the upper extension level and lower extension level. The extension, to the east of the site, was added in 1894 due to the refusal of the Local Board of Health to have a portion of the new Durham Road Cemetery, which opened in 1892, consecrated.

A total of ten vaults or mounted stones can be found on the rock face, however most have become hidden by thick ivy growth. The gravestone of *Thomas William Usherwood Robinson*, a former Churchwarden and objector to the Cemetery proposals, can be found adjacent to the rock face on the plateau level.



A rugged view of the plateau around 1900 and a similar view in 2004.




Views of the plateau showing erect headstones (circa 1960s) and flattened headstones (in 2004).

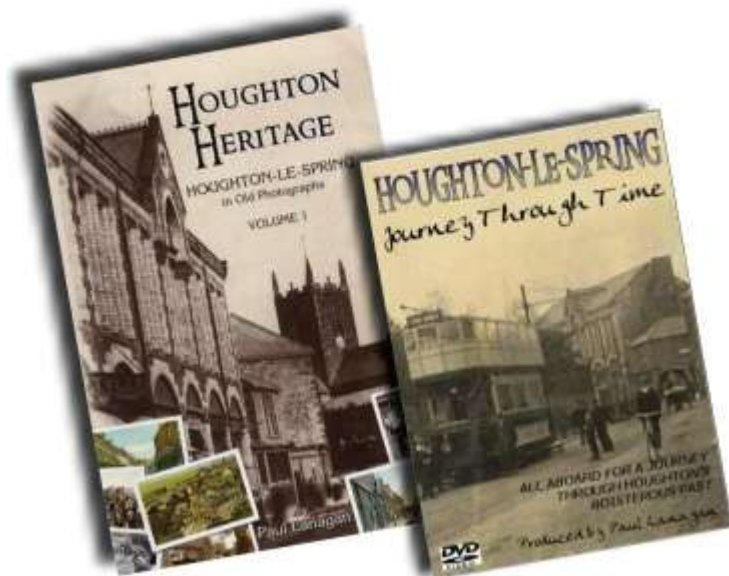
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