

Sixty Years a Fireman: Search for Tombstone Record

(By Frank H. Brindley)

We were discussing Sheffield Fire Brigade and their connection with the water department of our city. Length of service in the old days was most remarkable. The photograph shown here is of - so the story goes - Christopher Turton, who served 60 years the Fire Brigade and 60 years in the Sheffield Water Co., and this length of service was recorded on his tombstone in Ecclesall Churchyard.



CHRISTOPHER TURTON

The usual objector to any unconfirmed facts was there, and it was decided that we go to Ecclesall Churchyard and take a photograph to confirm the story.

Arriving there, just after the snowfall, our search for the grave of which no one seemed to know the position, was one of more than usual difficulty, snow now covered the ground where many of the tombstones are horizontal, and it was thought that the stone was one of these and not an upright memorial.

This made the search prolonged into more than one visit, which finally resulted in asking for the assistance of Mr. Walter Corker, who holds the church records of burial there.

Mr. Corker put himself about to assist us and made a most careful search of the lists - made more difficult by our not being able to give the date of Mr. Turton's death.

After reading through many pages, a mystery find came up. In the year 1878, on March 17th, a burial took place somewhere on the south side of the church of a Christopher Turton, age 76, and recorded on the same page was a remark. He was a member for .50 years of the Sheffield Fire Brigade. There was no mention whatever of his being in the Water Department.

I was taken into the churchyard to investigate the mystery. The book giving the exact position of the grave was not in Mr. Corker s possession, having, been one in use before he took the work over, and it is not in the same correct, state as the books now in use.

Along with Mr. Corker we searched, and failed to find the grave, snow covering the ground in every direction, Business calls took Mr. Corker back to his office; and we continued the search on our own.

Just as dusk came on we made a discovery. We found a stone amid the thick branches of some bushes, overlooking the main road, which made the mystery greater. A stone faced us, with the following inscription on it:

John Turton, age 72, who died January 21st, 1889, who was 62 years with the Sheffield Water Co., and 40 years with Sheffield a Fire Brigade

The grave of Christopher Turton, age 76 years who was for 60 years a member of both departments we have failed to discover.