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Remembering Edwin Glover Bingham

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Date

Saturday 25 November 2017



Photograph: Edwin Glover Bingham with the choir at St Augustine's Wrangthorn

A guest blog from Maureen Kershaw

Born in 1948 I don't have memories of family passing away until those from the 1960s onwards. However this gentleman, my great uncle, is someone I think of with affection and I would have loved to have known him in my lifetime.

Edwin was born on 7 September 1985, the son of a Woodhouse cloth dresser and musician. His birth certificate gives his birthplace as Hyde Park Corner although the correct address was 216 Woodhouse Street, the *exact* site where my house was to be built in 2004! Edwin inherited his love of music from his father who sang in the choir of St Augustine's Wrangthorn, and soon followed his father as a member of the choir, later to become the Church organist and choirmaster.

In April 1900 my great-grandmother and Edwin's mother Ellen died at the age of 43, followed by his father's also untimely death just one month later, aged 46. Edwin's father John William Bingham sang at local musical evenings and was, according to the *Leeds Mercury*, 'well known in Leeds bohemian circles'!

Following the death of his parents, Edwin along with his four younger siblings moved next door to their uncle Fredrick Holt, who was a soloist at Leeds Parish Church and worked as an organ builder.

Edwin later took up the position of organist and choirmaster at Roundhay Congregational Church, lodging with the deputy organist and his wife in Harehills.

During his short time there Edwin became gravely ill after swallowing a tooth and undergoing a routine operation to remove it. Complications tragically set in, resulting in gangrene of the lung.

Such was the kindness of his many friends at the Church that they wished to pay for Edwin to stay at the Hazelwood Hydro, Grange over Sands, to assist his recovery. But he was too unwell to travel to Cumbria. *The Yorkshire Post* reported that the Leeds Society of Professional Musicians held a benefit concert for him at the Theatre Royal in Leeds, but again Edwin was too ill to attend.

He passed away of 12 May 1908 and was buried at Woodhouse Cemetery. He was just 31. Burial records for the cemetery held by the University of Leeds state the plot number of Edwin's grave, but sadly in the development of the university and the opening of St George's Field many graves were lost. Walks around the field on footpaths which apparently had the names of all those buried there have unfortunately not proved successful. Whilst some names can be read on the footpaths, many have worn away over the years as the city's students, workers and visitors have crossed the field.

When I started work on my family tree I was told many stories by my mum who, being born in 1916, never had the pleasure of knowing Edwin either, but my grandmother told her lots of stories. He adored his sister, who was stone deaf but felt the rhythm of the music and was a proficient ballroom dancer and Veleta champion! He bought her a velvet and fur cape to wear when she attended his many classical concerts around Leeds.

Before mum died in 2009 I visited the Leeds Central Library newspaper room and searched through the huge, heavy, leather bound volumes from the early 1900s. From these I was able to find articles on Edwin Glover Bingham and I could hardly contain my excitement! There were photographs too - something my mother was delighted at as she never recalled having seen a photograph of him.

An accomplished musician, accompanist and composer. I feel I did know my great-uncle and I mourn his loss at such a young age. In remembrance of him I will continue to search archived records in the hope of learning more about his life.

Maureen's story of remembrance will be included in our exhibition at Abbey House Museum from March 2018.

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