

[Skip to main content](#)[University links](#)

## University links

### For staff

- [For Staff](#)
- [Services A-Z](#)
- [Student Education Service](#)

### For students

- [Minerva](#)
- [Mobile app](#)
- [For Students](#)

### Faculties

- [Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures](#)
- [Faculty of Biological Sciences](#)
- [Faculty of Business](#)
- [Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences](#)
- [Faculty of Environment](#)
- [Faculty of Medicine and Health](#)
- [Faculty of Social Sciences](#)
- [Lifelong Learning Centre](#)
- [Language Centre](#)

### Other

- [Staff A-Z](#)
- [Campus map](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Alumni](#)
- [Contacts](#)
- [Library](#)
- [IT](#)
- [VideoLeeds](#)
- [Leeds University Union](#)

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- [Facebook](#)
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- [Medium](#)
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- [The Conversation](#)
- [RSS news feed](#)

[Close quicklinks](#)



Search  Destination 

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Search

Search

[Living With Dying](#)

Menu

Close

- [Home](#)
  - [Home](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Family Historians](#)
  - [Family Historians](#)
  - [Workshop: Family history and academic history](#)
- [Leeds General Cemetery](#)
- ['Remembrance' Exhibition](#)
  - ['Remembrance' Exhibition](#)
  - [Events Programme](#)
- [The Grief Series](#)

1. [Home](#)
2. [Blog](#)
3. A Wompra Family History

# A Wompra Family History

Category [Leeds General Cemetery](#)  
[Research](#)

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*By Imogen Gerard and Kelsie Root*

[The Leeds General Cemetery](#) is a former cemetery on the University of Leeds campus now known as St George's Field. Our research has been centred around this site. Who is buried in the Leeds General Cemetery? Why were they laid to rest here, rather than the many other cemeteries or churchyards in and around Leeds?

We've been investigating these questions by researching the genealogy of some of the families buried in the Leeds General Cemetery. Our research has been aided by the detailed burial records of the people interred at this site, which can be searched online [here](#).

We began by sorting the burial registers by surname, and then selecting recurring surnames that struck us as unusual. Selecting unusual names helped us to trace families quickly by ensuring we didn't have to sift through the many Smiths, Browns or Joneses (who unfortunately have a much harder job when it comes to family history!). This blog post will highlight one of the families we've been tracing: the Wompra family.

There are twelve people bearing the surname **Wompra** in the Leeds General Cemetery. They provide an excellent example of how families used the cemetery, sharing the same plot with multiple relatives.

In plot **2347**, there are nine members of the Wompra family. The first to be buried in this plot was **William Wompra** born in c. 1827. He had been a farmer of over one hundred acres of land in Whitby. Tax records show that William was at least the third generation in the Wompra family to farm this land.

In the 1841 census, William was living at the family farm in the parish of Fylingdales, along with his father Philip, his mother Hannah and his four younger siblings: Robinson, Hannah, Mary and Thomas. Also listed on this census are two servants, employed as a carter and a plough boy. They were aged seventeen and



eleven. Another Wompra, Susana, was also present when the census was taken. She was listed as a visitor, so was not part of the regular main household, but it is likely she was related to William.

At some point after 1861, the **Wompras** left this farm. It is unknown why this happened: perhaps the farm had become less profitable over the years, or the industrial revolution meant that working in the city seemed increasingly appealing. Whatever the reason for leaving the farm, **William** became a railway officiate and married a woman named **Anne**. He eventually died of dropsy (an archaic term for oedema, a swelling of the affected tissues sometimes caused by blood clots, organ failure or lung disease) and was buried on 23 January 1874. William and **Anne** had two children, **Arthur and Howard Wompra**.

**Arthur** became a driver after leaving the farm, and married **Louisa Sandle** (also spelled **Sandal**). Their daughter **Ellen Wompra** was buried in the LGC on 9 November 1888. Her mother **Louisa** followed, and was interred in the same plot ([2347](#)) on 10 November 1899. **Arthur** was laid to rest with them on 24 December 1900, having died of heart disease aged forty-three.

Arthur's brother **Howard** was also buried at the LGC, in plot number [10803](#). This appears to be a common grave, or at least a grave containing a large number of people who were unrelated to each other. **Howard** was buried there on 15 April 1913, having died of asthma, which may have been related to his lifelong employment as a joiner and cabinet maker.

**Howard** was the husband of **Kezia Wompra (nee Major)**. Howard and Kezia both lived in Yorkshire all their lives. They were married on 25 May 1885 at the Church of Holy Trinity, Wakefield. They went on to have seven children: **John William, Violet, Annie, Mabel, Lily, Ethel and Laura**.

Five of these children were buried in the Leeds General Cemetery. Four of these burials took place whilst the parents were living. **Mabel** born in c. 1891 was the first, buried in the LGC on 9 December 1893, aged just two years old having died of bronchitis. **Ethel** was born in 1895 and died in 1897 of bronchitis, aged two, just as her sister Mabel had four years earlier. She was buried on 11 November 1897. **Violet**, born 1888, was buried in the LGC on 13 January 1898, aged ten. Her cause of death was cited as 'affection of the brain'.

Finally, **Annie**, born in c. 1890, was buried on 19 November 1903 having died of consumption. She was fourteen years old.

All these children were buried in plot number [2347](#), with their grandfather (William), uncle (Arthur), aunt (Louisa) and cousin (Ellen). Also interred in this plot are **Ann** (recorded as **Annie**) **Wompra**, who was William's wife, Arthur and Howard's mother and Mabel, Violet, Ethel and Annie's grandmother. She died aged sixty-six and was buried on 18 March 1901.

**Kezia Wompra** lived to the age of seventy-two. She died at 1 Minnie Street in Burley, where the family had lived since at least 1911. She was buried in plot number 4737B on the 20 May 1937 along with her son, **John William**, who was buried on 11 October 1944, having died of unknown causes aged fifty-eight.

This family provides one small example of how the Leeds General Cemetery came to be used by multiple generations of the same family. Once William was buried in the LGC, all of his relatives who died in Leeds were also buried there, many of them sharing family plots. This is true of other families in the cemetery, such as the [Franklands](#).

If you are tracing a particular family in the Leeds General Cemetery burial register [index](#), it is worth tracing those who share the plot: often, these people will be relatives either by blood or by marriage. This can also be



a simple way to find out about children in the family who died at a young age. Many researchers use census records to trace the children of a family, but as the census is only taken once a decade, it can be easy to miss children who are born shortly after one census and die before the next. In the Leeds General Cemetery, children who do not appear on the census can be found by checking the plot number. See more guidance on using the index for your research [here](#).

Have you traced any family members using the Leeds General Cemetery burial registers? Let us know in the comments!

## Footer navigation

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