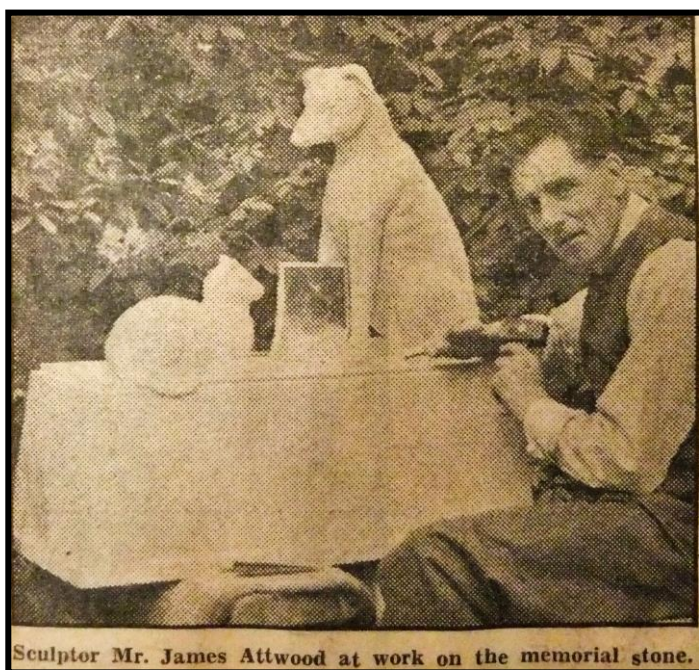


JAMES ATTWOOD

Shortly after the church's centenary (1946), damage caused by the furniture beetle was discovered in the three main roofs at the east end of the church. A further examination revealed that the damage was much more extensive than first realised. This event led to wholesale restoration work being carried out throughout the church. From 1951 to approximately 1957, much work was done, from replacing the entire roof to the complete refurbishment of the Earl's memorial tomb and some external stonework, and the removal and cleaning of the stained glass. An appeal was launched to raise £10,000 needed to complete the work - and after 3 months, the vicar (Colin Lamont) announced that the sum had been raised!

In overall charge of the whole process was James Attwood. He had been a master carver and stonemason at Blackburn Cathedral. He was born in 1906 in Worcester, a city where he was buried in 1982. A highly skilled and dedicated tradesman, perhaps his finest single-handed work was the complete renovation of the Ellesmere tomb, which had suffered the ravages of the industrial revolution. He recorded details of all the work on 53 typed pages - but, sadly, only 25 have survived. He had been a senior adviser on the reconstruction of the Free Trade Hall, following its partial destruction in the Manchester Blitz of December 1940.



Sculptor Mr. James Attwood at work on the memorial stone.

The only known photograph of him is from *The Evening Chronicle*, showing him carving a memorial stone for Susan Cunliffe, of Mowbray, Leigh Road, who died aged 8 and was buried in the churchyard on 28 August 1954.

The newspaper reported: *Eight-year-old Susan Cunliffe loved her pets, Smokey, the kitten and Tim the dog.*

Then, two tears ago, Susan died - and her family agreed; "Let us remember her by the pets that gave her so much happiness."

And it was decided that the memorial stone to Susan in Worsley Church should portray Tim and Smokey.

It is now being made by sculptor Mr. James Attwood and shows the pets, worked in Carrara marble, sitting together.

Mrs. R. Cunliffe, of Leigh Road, Worsley, told The Evening Chronicle: "Susan was always with her pets - she was devoted to them."

The marble was specially brought from Italy.

HIS WILL gave the following details: James Attwood, of 46 Artillery Mansions, 75 Victoria Street, London SW1 died 13 August 1982. Probate 10 January 1983. Aged 76.

Buried at Astwood Cemetery, Worcester. (Born 29th May 1906)

The Times announced: ATTWOOD James - Architectural sculptor on August 13th Westminster Hospital, London. Funeral St. Barnabas Church, Worcester, 1.30pm. Wednesday 25th August. Committal Astwood Cemetery, Worcester.



There are two details in his account of the restoration which reveal his generous nature, his skills and add a human touch to the story of the church.

It became evident at any early stage in the restoration process that some of the fleur-de-lys at the ends of the choir stalls repeatedly became dislodged, due to the antics of the boy choristers who used to swing around them. On the final page of his report, he wrote:



'The last new wood carving I did in the church was to carve new fleur-de-lys at the heads and entrances of the choir stalls (four in number). Three of these had been broken off again and I flatly refused to repair them. The choir boys had to know, once and for all, Mr. Attwood would not always be on hand to repair broken carvings. I never charged for any of these repairs. The church was charged £25 for four new ones. I altered the design to the old medieval design of sharp point which could be cutting to boys' hands who swing round out of the stalls clutching the fleur-de-lys.'



One of the most visually striking images of our church is the Memorial Tomb to the patron of the church, the First Earl of Ellesmere. Today, we see a beautifully designed and carved piece of workmanship. The tomb was originally designed by George Gilbert Scott, and executed in Caen stone by J. B. Philip. The effigy of the Earl (wearing his robes as a Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter) was the work of Matthew Noble. However, it was not always like it is today. In his account, Attwood wrote:



'Canon Lamont asked me if it was possible to do something about the Earl's tomb. It looked all so grey and grimed with dirt. I told him I would restore it and that would be my contribution. I was thinking about a couple of weeks work to thoroughly clean it whilst waiting for the windows and ended up taking over a month. But I did put a lot of colour into the job, I brought the recumbent figure back to its original gleaming whiteness and was astonished to find the top of the base and its plinth were in coloured marble. The abrasions and knocks in the foliage features were recut. When the lights were turned on, the

Chancel had an air of brightness and warmth. After morning service on Sunday after completion and the dust sheets removed, Mr. and Mrs. Willink came especially to thank me. Most of the congregation came this day to look after the service. It was a happy day for everyone, and I was happy because the efforts of my labours were seen in the people's smiling faces. Jesse York in his verger's robe, squeezed my arm and said "There you are. Tha sees what tha can do." Dear kind, lovable old Jesse. My heart warmed to him as he lapsed into dialect.

This then concluded my work at Worsley Parish Church.'

Susan Cunliffe:

Baptised 21 September 1946. Daughter of Richard Cunliffe and Muriel Dilys Hughes. They were married at St. Mark's on 12 October 1939. Richard, 28, was a textile engraver and Muriel was 21, spinster. Richard lived at Mowbray, Leigh Road, Worsley, and Muriel was of Hazelwood, Ellesmere Park, Eccles. Richard's father (Herbert Harris Cunliffe) was deceased and Muriel's father was James Hughes, a merchant.

In the 1939 Register for Salford, Herbert's birth was given as 19 August 1906 and Dallas (sic) was recorded as 21 May 1909. Herbert was an Engraver to Calico Printers (Manager). Both were by now married. Their first child was also named Herbert Harris. Herbert Harris had been born on 8 September 1868 and baptised on 20 December 1868 at St. James, Didsbury - the son of Richard (an engraver) and Elizabeth of Arthur Street, Pendleton. Upon his death on 14 February 1939, he left his estate to Westminster Bank and his two sons, Herbert Harris and Richard, both engravers.

Buried 28 August 1954, aged 8, of Mowbray, Leigh Road.

In 1948 the New Hall Estate was sold to Richard and Herbert Cunliffe, who operated the Worsley Hall Nurseries and Garden Centre (**Site 18**) from the New Hall's former Kitchen Gardens (**Sites 2 to 10**). (Univ. of Salford, Department of Applied Archaeology).

By the beginning of the 21st century the Cunliffe family had relinquished their interest in the New Hall Estate and the study area was purchased by Peel Investments (North) Ltd as a redevelopment opportunity.

In 1949 it appears that the Garden Cottage was sold to Richard and Herbert Cunliffe who used it as an office and dwelling. In 1987 the Cottage was awarded a Grade II listing by English Heritage and in 2008 it was purchased by Peel Investment (North) Ltd. The property still survives on site today and is currently uninhabited.

