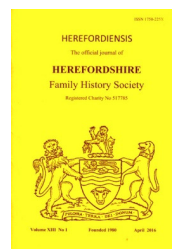


# The Case of Edith's Leg

David J Skyrme



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It is not often that one comes across the burial of just a leg in a cemetery. I was alerted to this by Annie Irving, a Friend of Cathays Cemetery, who in October 2015 emailed me saying she was researching “the rather bizarre situation of having 4 amputated legs buried in the cemetery and researching more about the people to whom the legs once belonged”. The first leg to be buried was that of Miss Skyrme in January 1883.

Now I knew that a Miss Skyrme featured in an article in the *Western Mail* of Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1883 headlined “Terrible Accident in The Gelly Pit” with subtitles “Melancholy Termination of a Pleasure Trip” and “Shocking Injuries to Miss Skyrme and Miss Cassy John”. I had attributed the Miss



Burial plot of Edith's leg 1883.

(Photo: Annie Irving)

Skyrme as Kate Skyrme, daughter of Edward Skyrme, postmaster at Pentre in Glamorgan. However, Annie's research and further newspaper articles giving her age confirmed the leg to be that of her elder sister Edith Fanny Skyrme.

Edith was one of the 11 children of Edward and Frances Skyrme. Edward (1830-1894) was the grandson of Thomas Skyrme from Bromyard, and his parents had farmed in Kivernoll, Much Dewchurch before moving to Monmouthshire. Edward was a grocer and later postmaster in Pentre, Glamorgan, where Edith was born in 1867, and her sister Kate in 1869. You can read more about Edith's family and some of her illustrious siblings at page 20 of [The Skyrmes of Herefordshire](#)<sup>1</sup>

The story behind the incident is that several young girls had “expressed an ardent desire to see the inside of a colliery”. So the colliery manager and some of his staff took them down the pit. The newspaper report continues:

*“They had gone about 300 yards from the bottom of the shaft when they were startled by a tremendous roar in front of them...A tram loaded with coal crashed through the door at lightning speed”*

It was this that injured Edith. After receiving medical help at the surface:

*“It was soon seen that Miss Skyrme had sustained such dreadful injuries to the leg that amputation was necessary. To this Mr Skyrme, her father, who is postmaster at Pentre, objected until Dr Price of Cardiff, the family medical man, had seen her.”*

The end result was that Edith’s leg was indeed amputated. The reason that the physician was from Cardiff was that Edward’s family now lived there at Richmond Terrace, even though he was still postmaster at Pentre.

It is not all that common to bury limbs in cemeteries. One of the most famous examples is the arm of Confederate General “Stonewall” Jackson. He was accidentally shot by his own side, and his arm, rather than going into a scrap pile of body parts was properly buried at Ellwood plantation in Virginia, while the rest of his body lies in a grave at Lexington.<sup>2</sup>

These days most amputated limbs are incinerated as part of hospital waste. Where they are buried, some religious traditions, such as those of the Orthodox Jews, insist that all of the body parts must be buried together. This did not happen with Edith. In 1900 she married Arthur Haddock at Whitchurch, Cardiff and it is at St Mary’s Church graveyard in Whitchurch where she was buried at her death in 1924.

You can read the full story of Edith’s leg and those of the other three on Annie Irvings blog.<sup>3</sup>

**David J Skyrme Membership No 3192 [www.skyrme.info](http://www.skyrme.info)**

### **Footnotes**

1. ‘The Skyrme of Herefordshire’, David J Skyrme (2015).  
[www.skyrme.info/library/hef1.pdf](http://www.skyrme.info/library/hef1.pdf)
2. ‘Visiting Stonewall Jackson’s Left Arm at Chancellorsville’, Eric J Mink (2007).  
[www.historynet.com/visiting-stonewall-jacksons-left-arm-at-chancellorsville.htm](http://www.historynet.com/visiting-stonewall-jacksons-left-arm-at-chancellorsville.htm)
3. ‘Grave matters: limbs lost and found’, Annie Irving (Oct 2015). Two articles at  
[http://sconzani.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/grave-matters-limbs-lost-and-found-part\\_30.html](http://sconzani.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/grave-matters-limbs-lost-and-found-part_30.html)