

# LAYERTHORPE GROVE-31 HAWTHORN GROVE, YORK ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Dr Charlotte Hursey, October 2024



## Introduction

The following is an initial research summary for the property now known as 31 Hawthorn Grove, but formerly recorded as Layerthorpe Grove until at least 1920, and more recently as Millington House. Part of the eastern end of the original building seems to have disappeared but the main part of the building survives, as shown above. The original garden and surrounds have also been built on but are shown on nineteenth century maps.

It is currently on the City of York Council's Historic Environment Record but is not on the statutory listing for conservation purposes. An application for listing was made in 1994 but was unsuccessful (See Appendix). It is hoped that a new listing can be submitted in 2024, and that a decision will be more favourable in the light of new evidence of its architectural and historic associations and interest.

The notes arise from research on Elizabeth Millington, who lived in the property from c1853 until her death in 1918<sup>1</sup>. This revealed the fact that it was formerly occupied by her uncle, Francis Plummer, but that it had been designed by Richard Hey Sharp, architect, and built as his personal residence.

## Elizabeth Millington – The Showman’s Friend

Elizabeth Millington is a subject of interest as the leading instigator and Honorary Secretary of the Travellers’ National Total Abstainers Union, which arose from the Temperance movement in the mid nineteenth century. The Union was founded in the early 1870s following a meeting in York and quickly spread nationwide, with Elizabeth travelling across the country in her own caravan for several decades. Though its day-to-day work was offering support and information to visiting travellers, such as at York’s Martinmas Fair, Miss Millington had a vital role in bringing travellers together, campaigning for better education and welfare, and helping to promote their cause in the face of opposition and potential legislation such as the Movable Dwellings Bills.

Although her work arose from a moral and philanthropic perspective, it was an important contribution to the formation of the national Van Dwellers Protection Association, which later became the Showmen’s Guild. Elizabeth carried on her work until at least the outbreak of WW1, including as Editor of ‘The Caravan’. She is buried in Plot 16861 in Section L/01/87 at York Cemetery, with other members of her family. The inscription of ‘The Showman’s Friend’ on the gravestone (below) acknowledges her role, as well as confirming the link to Layerthorpe Grove.



## The Plummer Family

The property was occupied from at least June 1855 by Francis Plummer, Elizabeth’s uncle, her mother Joanna’s brother<sup>2</sup>. Francis was a currier with a business at 3 Colliergate, York, where the family lived before moving to Heworth Moor. Francis belonged to the Plummer family, based in the Easingwold-Husthwaite-Oulston area of North Yorkshire, which was well-connected to the merchant trade and the church. Francis and Joanna had several brothers including John, farmer and breeder of horses, and famous for the renowned racehorse, Alice Hawthorn. Joanna and family lived with her brother following the sudden death in Ireland of her husband, Thomas Millington, in 1848.

## Mapping the Property

The property is visible on the 1852 Map of York by Captain Tucker <sup>3</sup>, but not named. However, Layerthorpe Grove with its name clearly noted is on the detailed map of York (Yorkshire CLXXIV.7.11. Surveyed: 1889, Published: 1891) and the outline corresponds with the earlier map.

The 1861 census record for Francis Plummer provided the following entry 93 between Eastern Par(ade)[sic] and Blue Coat School: Layerthorpe Grove: Francis Plummer/ Head/ Unmarried/ 48/ Currier (employing 4 men and 2 boys/ [born] Yorkshire, Easingwold) with sister Joanna, nieces Elizabeth and Joanna, and one servant. (RG9/3551/p14 - St Saviour, York, Monk Ward)

Looking for a corresponding reference in the 1851 census provided number 45, as the only one between the Blue Coat School and East Parade: Heworth Moor/Richard Hey Sharp/Head/Unmarried/ 37/Architect/[born]Yorkshire, Batley. (HO107/2355 p15 - St Saviour, York)

The 1841 Census for St Saviours and this part of York presented difficulties for the enumerators due to the confusion of parish boundaries: there are many entries crossed out with notes as to being in a different parish. There is a reference to Richard Hey Sharp in the introduction to the return for the parish of St Cuthberts as not being of that parish. This implies he was a resident in a nearby area, but no conclusive record has yet been identified.

## Richard Hey Sharp, Architect (1793-1853)<sup>4</sup>

Sharp came from an old Yorkshire family with illustrious connections to the church, medicine and scientific research, including archaeology and geology<sup>5</sup>. Sharp and various relatives were involved with the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, gave talks and contributed to the emergence of the York Museum. Sharp himself was for a time architect to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society.

He was apprenticed to Peter Atkinson (Junior), architect and became his partner in Atkinson and Sharp of York in 1819, after travelling in Greece and Italy<sup>6</sup>. Later he formed a partnership with his brother, Samuel, also an architect. He worked on numerous commissions in the City, and elsewhere in Yorkshire, including the first design for York Museum, the new residence for Canons Residentiary of York Minster (later Purey Cust), the Concert Room for the Yorkshire Musical Festivals, and the restoration of St Saviour. Other important commissions included the Rotunda and the Valley at Scarborough.

The reference to Richard Hey Sharp provided a lead to other newspaper items of interest, especially the advertisement for the auction of his house and property following his death in early 1853 (Farmers Friend and Freemans Journal - Saturday 30 April 1853, p2). An extract summarises the most relevant information:

“All that commodious Freehold Dwelling House, with the convenient buildings, and an excellent Garden attached, situate on the Road from York to Heworth, and late in the occupation of Mr R.H. Sharp, Architect, deceased, by whom the same was most substantially built, and fitted up with every convenience for his own private Residence; and as a Suburban Villa it is well worth the notice of any Person wishing for such a Residence”.

The key item which shows a connection between the Plummer property and that of Richard Hey Sharp is an advertisement from 1858 (Yorkshire Gazette - Saturday 03 April 1858, p7). It is not clear as yet whether Francis Plummer owned the property, but it appears that the property was not sold but in fact became Francis and his sister's family home. The description corresponds to the earlier advertisement:

"To Be Sold by Private Contract, all that excellent message or dwelling house, with garden and pleasure grounds, containing 4000 square yards of Freehold Land, situate on Heworth Green, in the Suburbs of the City of York.  
The House is substantially built, having been erected by the late owner, R. H. Sharp, Esq., Architect, for his own Private Residence.  
If required, two thirds of the Purchase Money may remain on security, at moderate Rate of Interest.  
For further Particulars apply to Mr Plummer, Colliergate, or to Mr J. Hornsey, Architect, Low Ousegate, York."

British History Online includes some relevant information<sup>7</sup>, though the author is not able to verify whether the internal details are still extant:

"Heworth is an area to the N.E. of the City, part of which has always been in the City and part of which was included by extensions of the City boundary in 1884 and later. The plan of a small mediaeval village street with long tofts is traceable on the OS map of 1852 in the road now called Heworth, but most of the area was moor or common until the rapid expansion of the City in this direction after c. 1825. At this date plans were drawn up by Peter Atkinson II and R. H. Sharp for the development of Heworth Grange Crown Estate on the N.W. side of Heworth Green (PRO, MPE 1006). These houses were never built but they are typical of the good quality houses which were erected in Heworth Green from this period onwards."

"Hawthorn Grove  
(155) House, No. 31, is a detached villa of three storeys with semi-basement and attic, gabled to the N.E. and S.W., which was built c. 1830.  
There is a two-storey porch to the S.E. and a large semicircular bay, possibly added, with modillioned and dentilled cornice at the S.W. end. The ground level varies between the front and back of the house and the entrance hall is therefore divided between two floors. The main part of the hall has a plaster panel above each of the three doorways leading off it, that over the door to the middle room with griffins and a central urn very similar to that in No. 61 Bootham (48). The middle room itself has a frieze with Classical figures on both of the long walls. The staircase rises in the hall between the two front rooms; it has very slender turned balusters, two to a tread, and a mahogany handrail, and is lit by a tall window with marginal panes of ruby and white glass, stretching up over two landings."

## Conclusion

The available information strongly supports the proposal that 31 Hawthorn Grove was designed and built by Richard Hey Sharp. In Sharp's will<sup>8</sup>, held in the Borthwick archives, a clear reference is made to 'the dwellinghouse cottage office and appurtenances thereunto belonging situate on Heworth Moor in or near the said city of York'. The date of signing confirms that the residence was built before 1839. Online sources provide a short biography of Richard and key works, though without reference to his own house<sup>9</sup>, or several other buildings with which he was involved.

The property should merit recognition as the work of a known York, and Yorkshire, architect. It is proposed that a formal listing, and conservation protection, be afforded by York City Council and Historic England on the grounds of both architectural and historic interest. There may also be a good case to consider the building for a historic building plaque, recognising both Richard Hey Sharp and Elizabeth Millington.

## APPENDIX

### DESCRIPTION IN LISTING APPLICATION 1994 Information Courtesy of Historic England

#### 31 Hawthorn Grove - Information Supplied October 2024

31 Hawthorn Grove was considered for listing in 1994 and at that time it was considered not listable. There is no full report as to why it was not listable, but the case description is as follows.

#### EXTERIOR

House. c1840 with later C19 and early C20 alterations. Buff-orange brick in English garden-wall bond, rendered and lined-out at front and sides: shallow pitched slate roof with overhanging bracketed eaves and brick stacks.

2 storeys, semi-basement and attic; 3 bays, centre bays at front and rear breaking forward slightly, front bay extending further forward as 1-storey flat roofed porch: to left is wing of 2 storeys and basement. Porch opening closed by iron gates has radial glazing bars in cambered head: steps up lead to panelled door. Windows on each side are cantilevered square bays with casements and transom lights. Over door is staircase window with margin glazing: on each side, 1-pane sash windows. Gable end attic windows are 3-light casements. Raised attic band. Convex ended wing retains original 2-light 4-pane casement windows recessed in moulded surrounds and has dentilled eaves cornice on shaped brackets.

#### INTERIOR

Basement kitchen retains fireplace with late C19 cooking range. Open string staircase with slender turned balusters rises from ground floor to attics. Three sets of panelled double doors on ground floor have plaster moulded overdoor panels. Centre room has plaster frieze of classical figures. Margin panes in staircase window are of ruby and white etched glass. Attic bedrooms have small cast-iron fireplaces in eared surrounds.

Assessment: Not of listable quality.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Further information on Elizabeth Millington is available from the author, if required. See also: Hursey, Charlotte (2023) *'The Showman's Friend'* in *The Fairground Mercury*, Vol 45, No 4 pp 22-24.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Plummer was recorded as living at Layerthorpe Grove as early as 1855, when some chickens were stolen (*Yorkshire Gazette* - Saturday 02 June 1855, p5).

<sup>3</sup> <https://yorkmaps.net/1852/#17/53.9622/-1.0821>

<sup>4</sup> Further biographical information on Richard Hey Sharp is also available from the author, if required. This includes details of his architectural and professional career. They are not included here for brevity.

<sup>5</sup> For genealogical information on the Sharp family see especially: Cudworth, William (1888) *Rambles round Horton: historical, topographical, and descriptive*. Accessed June 2022: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t09w0g27m&view=1up&seq=9&skin=2021>

<sup>6</sup> References to some of Sharp's work jointly with Atkinson can be found in the Atkinson- Brierley archive held in the Borthwick Archives, York.

<sup>7</sup> *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in City of York, Volume 4, Outside the City Walls East of the Ouse*. Originally published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1975. Accessed June 2022:

<sup>8</sup> Will of Richard Hey Sharp of the City of York, Architect signed 5 January 1839 and passed 27 September 1853.

<sup>9</sup> Colvin, Howard (1978) *A biographical dictionary of British architects, 1600-1840*. Accessed June 2022: <https://archive.org>

## CONTACT

The author has submitted this research via the City of York website, Historic Environment Record link.

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