



George Littlewood: 'The Sheffield Flyer'

By John Clarke

When it comes to naming the most famous runner in Sheffield, most people would mention Sebastian Coe. However, recently, the Friends of Darnall Cemetery have discovered the grave of George Littlewood. His feats of endurance and long-standing world records make him one of Sheffield's forgotten heroes.

George was born in 1859 in Rawmarsh. He specialised in professional six-day races, which were very popular, attracting huge crowds and lots of betting. He still holds the record for six-day walking

achieved in Sheffield between 6 and 11th March 1882, on a 13-lap-to-the-mile track at Norfolk Drill Hall, completed 531 miles.

George won numerous races; in 1883, he competed against a horse called Charlie in a 17-mile race from Doncaster to Sheffield. He lost by three-quarters of a mile. His fame was so great he was invited to race in America and made the trip twice. In 1887, he annihilated the best opposition in the world in 'Championship of the World Sweepstakes'. George stayed on in America and in front of a massive crowd, he broke the 600-mile



barrier at Madison Square Gardens. The record of 623 miles and 1,320 yards lasted for 96 years. The competition was so serious that one of his rivals had tried to sabotage his efforts by setting fire to the tin bath of spirit that George was treating his aching feet in. Undeterred, George battled on to win and break the world record, collecting the prize of 6,000 dollars. After he retired, George took over the Kings Head Tavern in Attercliffe.

George died on 4th December 1912 in Sheffield. His funeral was attended by 3,000 people. Sadly, George's

achievements have been somewhat forgotten outside of the long-distance running fraternity; his grave has been neglected and is in need of restoration. Nick Duggan, a local runner who trains with Sheffield Running Club, never realised that weekly the club ran past George's grave. In collaboration with the Friends of Darnall Cemetery, Nick has set up a crowd funder to restore George's grave to its former glory.

For more information, visit gofund.me/202c9195.