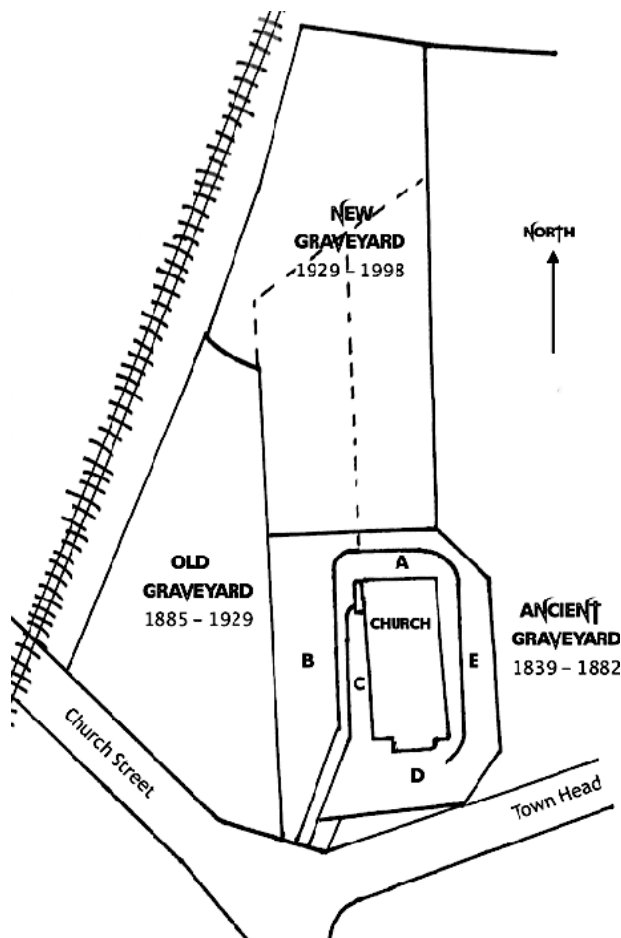


## THE ANCIENT GRAVEYARD



The land next to the church was the original graveyard, now known as the 'Ancient' graveyard, and this is where our stories begin in 1838. It has five areas A - E, with numbered plots, for example *D12*. Unmarked graves are shown with X, for example *AX4*. The graveyard plan is inside the back cover of this book. In the Ancient graveyard there are around one thousand burials. The first burial was in January 1839, and the last was in March 1949. The graveyard contains Catholics, Wesleyan Methodists and Primitive Methodists (The Quakers and the Zion Chapel had their own graveyards). The churchyard contained burials from Langcliffe until 1851 when St John's Church was built.

The church sexton had a responsibility of keeping the burial plan up to date, to show where bodies were buried. William Perkin was the sexton from 1843 until the 1880s, but he didn't keep the burial plan up to date, despite being reminded. This was even recorded formally in Vestry records. As a result there are over 400 people in unmarked graves, and we will never know

where they are buried. How frustrating! Of course, William was buried in prime plot *DX22* by the church gate with two wives and two of his children.

103 gravestones name 324 people but two stones are too worn to read. Approximately 10% of the people named on gravestones were not actually buried in the grave, but had died elsewhere. *Gravestone D12* names two people, neither of whom are in the grave.

Don't make assumptions from gravestone inscriptions! Many were not inscribed until the man of the house died, or when the last of the family died. By then, memories of dates and ages could be slightly confused. Illiteracy was common, and this included the stonemasons. Take the case of **John Bullock** in *grave E3*, himself a stonemason. He married **Elizabeth Sledding** and they had seven children, three of whom died in childhood. When John died, Elizabeth married **Thomas Bordley**.

*In affectionate remembrance of John Bullock of Settle, died March 27th 1854 aged 40 years - John was only 38, and was not buried in E3 but in plot AX7 with a niece and two nephews*  
*Elizabeth, widow of the above, died April 10th 1877, aged 60 years*  
*— correct!*



*Ellen their daughter, died Jan 13th 1841, aged 5 years. Robert their son, died Jan 12th 1846 aged 5 years. Ellen and Robert both died just before their 4th birthdays and are buried at St Alkelda's, Giggleswick*

*Elizabeth their daughter, died July 29th 1852 aged 5 years. Elizabeth was nearly 4 and her body is in AX17*

*Also of Thomas Bordley, second husband of the above who died Jan 17th 1875 aged 64 years – correct!*

The only people actually buried in this grave seem to be John's widow Elizabeth with her second husband, Thomas Bordley. Elizabeth's children are likely to have paid for the gravestone and inscription after she died and forgotten some of the details.

*NB Transcriptions given in these accounts are exact copies of inscriptions, even if they included mistakes. Brackets include missing details, if known.*



## DID YOU KNOW . . .

The average age of death for those burials *with* gravestones in the Ancient graveyard was 44 years. Of those *without* gravestones between 1839 and 1855 the average age was just 21, despite William Beecroft, a labourer who had come to Settle from Ferrybridge. He died in 1852 when he was 98. He is buried in *grave AX1* with his daughter Nancy, aged 75.

Between 1839 and 1855, nearly a third of burials had a gravestone, which is a higher proportion than at most other graveyards. Generally, it was only the wealthy who could afford a gravestone and Settle had plenty of those, although there are a few working class exceptions.

The wealthy folk, including the first two vicars, were buried in areas D and E at the corner of the churchyard behind the altar, or in area C close to the church door so that everyone would have to walk past their gravestone on their way into church. There are two huge family vaults – the Robinsons in *grave C11*, and the Birkbecks in *grave D6*. The wealthy could afford elaborate artwork and inscriptions on their stones.

	Gravestones	Unmarked
<b>Wealthy</b>	11	1
<b>Farmers</b>	13	2
<b>Professional</b>	20	10
<b>Tradesmen</b>	34	34
<b>Innkeepers</b>	9	1
<b>Working class</b>	15	66

Graves were dug across all five areas from the start – families bought a plot to their liking in any part of the Ancient graveyard, with paupers randomly buried where there was a space. Area E contains the 16 infant graves, with three of the infants being illegitimate.

There were numerous people who arrived in Settle to try to find work. Some stayed, but others moved on. Nearly everyone who moved away from Settle went west, often to the Lancashire industrial towns.

There are around 30 gravestones in each of areas B - E, but just two in area A, which was later hard-surfaced. Sometimes churches kept the north side for people who were not christened, which may or may not be the case here. This area contains a large number of burials of people whose families moved away from Settle.



## DANGEROUSLY FULL . . .

In January 1882 the Ancient Graveyard was closed by the Home Secretary as it had become 'dangerously full' – across the country graveyards were the source infectious diseases. No further burials could take place unless there were 'special specified' circumstances to add someone to an existing grave, which may have involved money. All new burials had to be in Giggleswick. It was not until November 1885 that the land between the church and the (new) railway was bought for the "Old" graveyard [Yorkshire Post and Intelligencer].

**ENLARGEMENT OF THE SETTLE CHURCHYARD.—** The original burial ground attached to the Church of the Holy Ascension, Settle, having some time ago become exhausted, the then Home Secretary (Sir William V. Harcourt) directed that no further interments should take place within it. Thereupon the Rural Sanitary Authority of the Settle Union raised the question of the provision of a joint cemetery for the parishes of Settle and Giggleswick, but the parishioners at a public meeting, presided over by the vicar (the Rev. Jackson Mason, M.A.), decided by an almost unanimous vote in favour of the enlargement of the Settle Churchyard in preference to a cemetery. New ground was accordingly purchased, and the addition recently made to the old ground virtually settles the cemetery question for all time so far as Settle is concerned. The entire cost of the extension proved to be £1144 1s. 10d. For a parish containing less than four thousand inhabitants this may appear to be a considerable sum to expend on the project, and yet the entire outlay has been provided for solely by voluntary subscriptions and one offertory at the church. It is only fair to add that members of every religious denomination represented in the district have given generously to the fund.

Families were split across graveyards, although the rules were relaxed later as the

Old graveyard also filled. Thomas Ayrton was a labourer whose wife Jane Jenkinson had 12 children. Thomas died in 1881 and is buried in *grave B17*, and his headstone also commemorates Jane. However, Jane died in 1886 and is buried in the *Old graveyard* in the kerbstone grave directly behind Thomas' in *Old A25*. Elizabeth Chapman died in 1881 and is buried in *grave D22*. Elizabeth's son Robert died in 1884, before the Old graveyard had opened, so he is buried in St Alkelda's, Giggleswick.

Initially, Holy Ascension Church could conduct baptisms and burials, but weddings weren't permitted until 1849. The first wedding was that of Susannah Hardacre, a farmer's daughter from Long Preston to Joseph Hartley, a manufacturer of cotton from Lancashire. Joseph was the son of the innkeeper of the Golden Lion in Settle. The independent Parish of Settle was established in 1892 and the 'New' graveyard was added in 1928/9.



...JR...

## TO A BETTER PLACE . . .

We have discovered six known cases of suicide who are buried in the Ancient churchyard, plus a couple of rather strange accidents which could also have been suicide. Without healthcare and a welfare state, some people became so desperate that they took their own lives, often recorded as a moment of '*temporary insanity*'. Surprisingly, all of these unfortunate people were from professional, religious or trading backgrounds, and all were men.

Until 1961 suicide was a criminal offence. The Church of England had strict rules about these burials, and subject to the vicar's discretion, prevented funeral services inside the church and burials in consecrated ground or during daylight hours. The General Synod eventually decreed that these burials could have full services inside the church in 2015. All of the burials of suicidal victims in Holy Ascension Graveyard appear to be in consecrated ground.



### *Settle Graveyard Project*

For some reason in 1897 the Craven district suffered 'Suicidal Mania' with six cases in the district within 12 months. Two of these were in Settle, with another in Langcliffe.

Our cases of 'Temporary Insanity' linked to the Ancient graveyard are:

**Henry Bowles**, April 1864, a military man who shot himself in the outbuildings of the Royal Oak after being disciplined

**Henry Cowburn**, 27 February 1889, the son of a solicitor who shot himself after failing to pass a military exam

**James Tomlinson Handby**, 19 March 1897, a tailor and Wesleyan minister who shot himself in a moment of temporary insanity

**Henry Hayton**, 27 May 1897, a tailor who hanged himself in the outbuildings of the Royal Oak in a moment of temporary insanity

**Charles Alured Swale**, 26 November 1913, son of the first vicar of the church who shot himself whilst in a state of depression

**John Himsworth**, 27 April 1860, a solicitor's clerk who drowned himself in a moment of temporary insanity

In the Old graveyard, the men who died of 'temporary insanity' include a member of the clergy, the son of a Wesleyan minister and the son of a French Polisher.

The descendants of all those buried here, with or without gravestones, should be proud of their contribution to making Settle the town it is today. May they Rest in Peace.



*This account has been compiled as part of the 'Settle Graveyard Project'. The project has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. The 'Old Settle' family tree on [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) includes all the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing, and always welcomes queries, information and family knowledge on [setterresearch@gmail.com](mailto:setterresearch@gmail.com). Latest news and events are on the Facebook page Settle Graveyard Project.*