

Charles Benson, bank manager

Charles Benson, born in 1820 in York, began life as a banker's clerk in Driffield and then in Leeds. In 1849 he married Leeds girl **Eliza Birch** who was the daughter of a corn miller. She would give Charles five children.

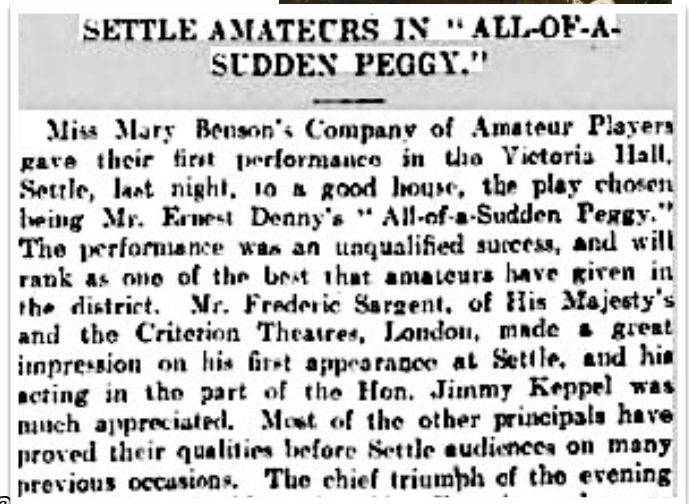
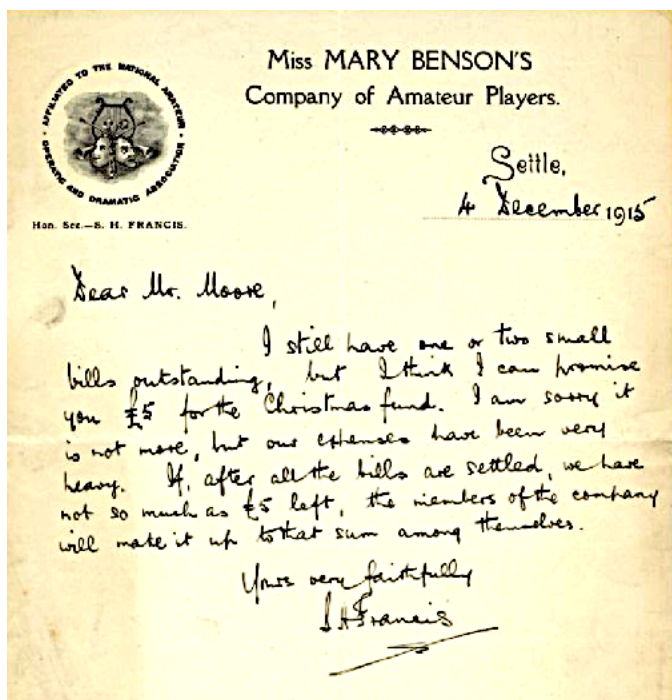
By 1858 and the birth of their fourth child, **Charles Frank**, Charles had become the bank manager of what was then the Yorkshire Bank [LSA] in the Market Place, next to the old Saving's Bank behind the Town Hall. Little Charles Frank died in infancy and is buried in the ancient graveyard. In June 1883 Charles narrowly escaped injury when an engine whistle startled his horse, throwing the driver off and causing the carriage to turn over [1]. The paper reports severe shock and some slight bruises were the consequence. This may have contributed to Charles' decision to retire and move to London to live with their son. The family had been in Settle for about 30 years.



A DANGEROUS PRACTICE.—Last week Mr. Benson, manager of the Settle branch of the Yorkshire Banking Company, narrowly escaped serious injury whilst being driven in a close carriage past the Settle Junction. It seems that the vehicle was proceeding quietly on its way, but when opposite the junction the sudden whistle of an engine, accompanied by an emission of steam, caused the animal to start violently forward, throwing the driver off the box, and upsetting the conveyance. Fortunately, no further consequences resulted than a severe shock to the nerves and some slight bruises.

None of their children married. Son **Alfred** was a medical practitioner and found work in Paddington, London. Daughter **Rosa** worked as a governess. **Gertrude** was the family housekeeper, and continued housekeeping for Alfred after their parents died in the 1890s.

The youngest daughter was actually christened **Mary Frances Clark Benson** in 1860 and stayed in Settle until 1929. She lived at 17 Craven Terrace working as a music teacher. Her widowed aunt **Mary Clark Bell** lived with her for a while — she had been the second wife of artist **John Christopher Bell** in Scarborough. He specialised in oil paintings of animals and exhibited several works for the Society of British Artists in the 1850s. His paintings generally sell for over £1500 even today [ph2]. This was an artistic family.



Settle Graveyard Project

Mary [ph1] was better known as 'Miss Benson' a stalwart of the Amateur Operatic Society and lead performer and director for many years. In 1915 Miss Mary Benson's Company of Amateur Players contributed £5 to the scheme to send parcels to the sons of Settle fighting on the front [ph3].

There are numerous articles celebrating Mary's talent [2, CH].

Whilst writing of this "Ancient Mystery Play," my mind reverts to the dramatic performances given from time to time by amateurs in Settle, the most popular being the Gilbert-Sullivan Operas, such as "Pinafore" and "The Pirates of Penzance." Who that saw the admirable production of "Pinafore" will forget the singing and acting of Miss Annie Lister as "Josephine," and Miss Polly Benson as "Little Buttercup," or the masterly "Sir

In 1929 Mary moved down to Paddington to be with her sister Gertrude and died just a year later, aged 69. Her sister Gertrude died when she was 87.



This account has been compiled by Sarah Lister as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. It has been written in good faith with no offence intended. If I have inadvertently included errors or breached any copyright I apologise and would welcome corrections.

Life stories can be found on dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project. The 'Old Settle' family tree on ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settlerearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

Newspaper cuttings by kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Yorkshire Post,

CH - with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer

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