

## William Bilton, a master saddler at the Town Hall

William Bilton was born in 1780 in Ripon, but had moved to Settle by 1806 when he married Betty Rigg. He worked as a saddler and harness maker in the Town Hall for at least 58 years [SC]. He even employed 'clever and experienced workmen from first class London houses' to paint, varnish and trim carriages. William became a churchwarden in 1840 and spent some time working as treasurer and librarian at the 'Settle Literary Society and News Room' library in the Town Hall, recorded in a very early 1840 edition of the Settle Almanac [ph1]. In these early days books were a luxury which few could afford so a subscription library was a realistic

alternative, although the £3 3s initial fee and £1 annual subscription was still a lot of money. It had been established in 1770 and had 85 members who could access 'a very good collection of books' and, for a separate subscription, four daily papers.

In 1856 William was commissioned and paid £20 to make a harnesses for the horse-drawn hearse for Giggleswick Church. 'They are very neat and substantial and do credit to the town' [SC]. A new house for the hearse was also built, the whole project costing £89 raised by subscription and donations, coordinated by *Stephen Hargraves*. It is still there today, opposite St Alkelda's Church. In 2016 it was put up for sale through Dacre, Son and Hartley and was on the market for £59,950. That's quite a profit!

Betty was aged 71 when she died. William was an incredible 91, still working as a saddler and outliving four of his six children. He is the oldest man commemorated on a memorial stone in the Ancient graveyard. The inscription remembers daughters **Mary Bilton** and **Sarah Bilton** who died in childhood and are buried in Giggleswick graveyard but are commemorated on William's stone.

*In memory of Mary Bilton who died July 11th 1820, aged 7 years, Sarah Bilton who died March 17th 1822 aged 3 years, William Bilton who died January 29 1847 aged 36 years, Betty wife of William Bilton of Settle and mother of the above who died July 24th 1851 aged 71 years. William Bilton husband of the above named Betty Bilton who died March 28th 1871 aged 91 years. Margaret Bilton who died July 12th 1878 aged 70 years, C21*

WILLIAM BILTON,  
SADDLER and HARNESS MAKER,  
MARKET PLACE,  
SETTLE,  
In returning thanks to the inhabitants of Settle and neighbourhood for the very liberal support he has received for the last 58 years, begs leave to inform them, that in addition to the Saddle and Harness business he is combining that of  
CARRIAGE PAINTING,  
VARNISHING & TRIMMING,  
And for that purpose has engaged clever and experienced Workmen from first class London Houses whom he can with confidence recommend.

### SETTLE LITERARY SOCIETY AND NEWS ROOM.

Mr. Bilton, Librarian.

This Society, which is merely a Book Club, established 1770, has a very good collection of Books—it has about 86 Members. Annual subscription £1.—entrance £3. 3s. The News Room adjoining it has four Daily Papers—Subscription £1. 1s. per annum.

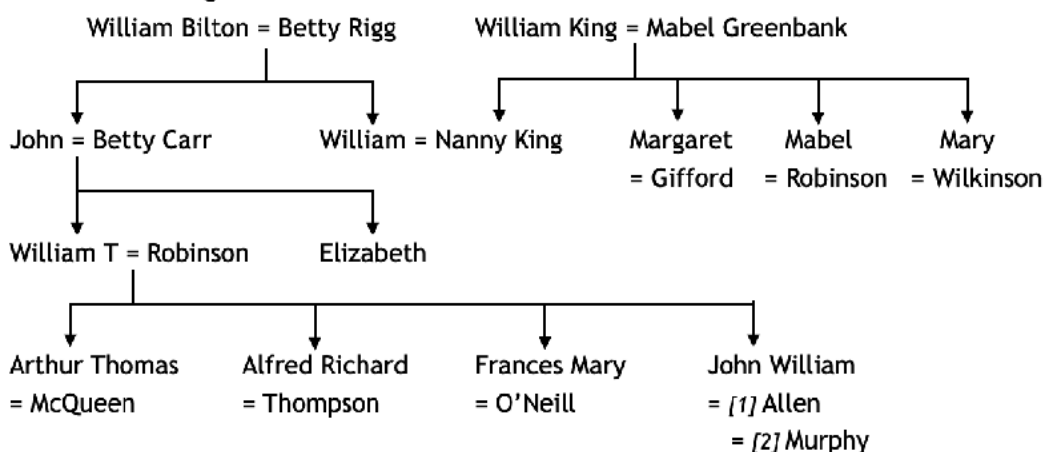
HARNESS FOR THE NEW HEARSE.—We have seen the harness for the new hearse for Giggleswick Church which are in course of construction by Mr. Bilton, Saddler, Settle; they are very neat and substantial, and do credit to the town.



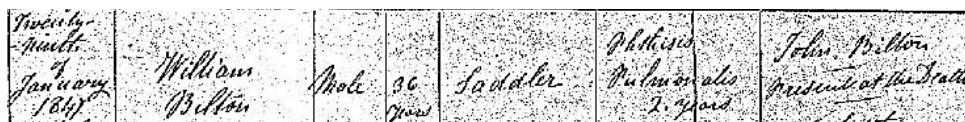
William and Betty's son **William Bilton** is buried with them. He had married **Nanny King** [ph2], of Dent, daughter of **William King** who had moved to Langcliffe in 1815 and had more recently been the innkeeper at the Joiner's Arms in Settle. Nanny was the sixth of 11 children. Her sister **Margaret King** married **John Gifford** and they took over the Joiner's Arms. Sister **Mabel King** married **Thomas Robinson**, son of a surgeon **Thomas Robinson**, and they had five children. Thomas (Jnr) was also a surgeon and they lived in Kettlewell. When Mabel died soon after the birth of their last child, Thomas deserted all the children and lived with his new wife, Alice. The children went into work at an early age or were looked after by relations. Nancy's sister **Mary King** married **James Wilkinson** who worked as a draper and also a solicitor's clerk in Settle. They had nine children. The King brothers worked in farming, many in Mallerstang, south of Kirkby Stephen. Nanny's father, William King, was a forward thinking man. When he died he invested his money to give his daughters an income from the interest. Only when the daughters had their allocated amount did the sons inherit.



### The Bilton family



William Bilton (Jnr) followed his dad to become another saddler, but died of phthisis (tuberculosis), from which he had been suffering for two years, in January 1847, aged just 36. His brother, **John Bilton**, was present at his death. Tuberculosis develops over a long time, so was known as the long death - the family would have known he was dying for those two years. It's also highly infectious and it's a miracle that no other family members caught it from him.



William and Nancy had three children but youngest daughter, **Elizabeth Bilton**, died in infancy and is buried in *Anc EX25*, the infants section of the graveyard. Widow Nanny miraculously had a further daughter Emily four years after William's death, which may have had something to do with her lodger **Thomas Holden**, a railway clerk from Lancaster. By the time of the next census, in 1861, Nancy and the girls had moved, with

son William, to Holbeck, Leeds where William found work as a cashier at a railway goods department. Later, they moved to Bradford.

William (Jnr)'s brother, **John Bilton** is buried nearby with a daughter and two grandchildren:



*In remembrance of Betty Bilton who died 2nd Feb 1840 aged 25 years. Also of John Bilton who died 18th Feb 1869 aged 53 years. Also of Elizabeth Bilton daughter of the above who died 11th August 1877, aged 37 years. Margaret Elizabeth Bilton granddaughter of the above who died 21st Nov 1865 aged 7 months, Joseph Edward Bilton, grandson of the above who died August 24th aged 11 weeks, Anc D8*

John's wife **Betty Carr** died just a few weeks after the birth of their second child Elizabeth, who survived. John brought up his son and daughter in the Town Hall helped by his dad and sister, also working as a saddler. He predeceased his dad William by two years. Their daughter Elizabeth had taken over as the librarian for the Settle Literary Society [LSA], but died aged 37. The library had 8,000 and the annual subscription was now 21 shillings.

**SETTLE LITERARY SOCIETY.**

The Library was established in 1770, and contains about 8000 volumes. The entrance fee is £3 3s., and the annual subscription 21s. The number of subscribers is 75. The Library is open from 10 to 4 from October 1st to April 1st, and from 10 to 5 the remainder of the year. Librarian, Miss Bilton.

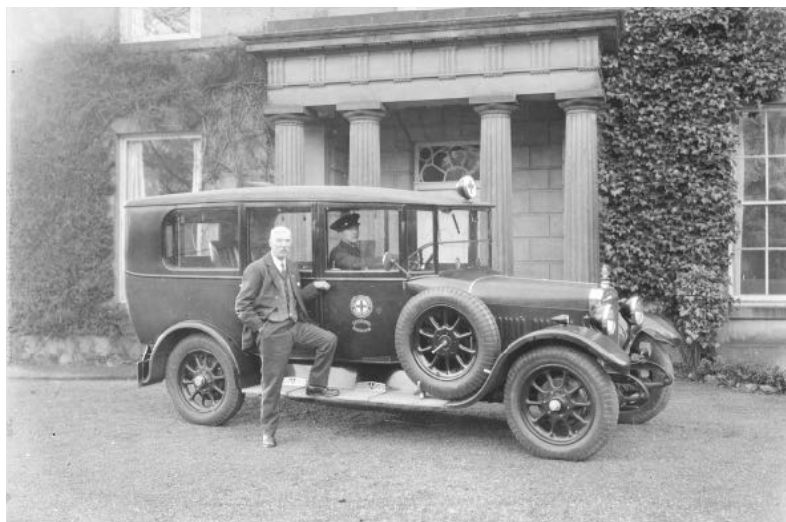
John and Betty's **William Thomas Bilton**

continued the saddlery business in Settle and also worked as the County Court Bailiff. He worked with **William Field Hook** as assistant Registrar of Birth, Marriages and Deaths. William and his wife **Sarah Robinson** had seven children and two of these infants are commemorated on John and Betty's memorial stone.

William Thomas and Sarah's son **Arthur Thomas Bilton** [ph3] was one of the 'drivers' of the early bicycle ambulances [ph5]. From this start he established the District Voluntary Hospitals Committee to raise



funds for and maintain a motor ambulance for Settle. Arthur was the (voluntary) driver of the ambulance had his photo taken in front of the ambulance at Taitlands [ph4]. He was the 'voluntary transport officer' until he died in 1940, aged 69. Arthur's wife, **Nicholas Davidson McQueen**, [ph1] from Dumfries, was also an active and caring member of the local branch of the St John's Ambulance Brigade for many years. 'Nothing was too much for her to do for the comfort of patients, and also the drivers, before starting the



Ambulance 1 of 2, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

*journey to Leeds Infirmary. No matter the time of day or night, she always had warm blankets ready for any emergency, and all this work she, like her husband, did voluntarily.'* She became the oldest member of the Mothers' Union at the church. Arthur, his wife Nicholas and only daughter Janet Frances Bilton are buried together in the New graveyard New17

Ratcliffe, at Stackhouse. Mrs. Bilton, like her late husband, will be remembered for work for the Settle Motor Ambulance, prior to the service being taken over by the State. Nothing was too much for her to do for the comfort of patients, and also the drivers, before starting the journey to Leeds Infirmary. No matter the time of day or night, she had always warm blankets ready for any emergency, and all this work she, like her husband, did voluntarily. Mrs.

*In loving memory of Arthur Thomas Bilton born 6 July 1870 died 28 April 1940, also his wife Nicholas Davidson Bilton born 13 May 1867 died 24 December 1957, also their daughter Janet F Bilton died 27 December 1974 aged 79 years, New 17*



William Thomas and Sarah's son Alfred Richard Bilton ran a grocer's shop in Duke Street, taking over from the Marsden brothers, with his wife, Sarah Thompson and two spinster daughters [LSA]. They are buried with daughter Mary Bilton in the unmarked Old EX10 and daughter Ethel Sarah Bilton was buried in the unmarked New LX32

William Thomas and Sarah's daughter Frances Mary ran a dressmaking business [LSA] before she married the brick maker Cornelius O'Neill, and son John William Bilton, a Settle joiner spent 12 years as bandmaster for Settle Brass Band, being rewarded in 1913 [LSA]. John

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## Settle Graveyard Project

William died in 1926, aged 63 and was buried in an unmarked grave with his parents William Thomas and Sarah in *Old FX21*. His first wife **Susanna Allen** had died in 1901, aged 45, and was buried alone in an unmarked grave *EX19* and his second wife **Margaret Murphy** and their daughter **Kathleen** in the unmarked *New JX40*.

17. Mr. J. W. Bilton was presented with a Purse of Gold and an illuminated Address, subscribed by the patrons and members of the Settle Brass Band, as a small recognition of his services as Bandmaster for the past twelve years.



*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.*

*The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project and can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle graveyard project](http://dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project). The 'Old Settle' family tree on [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on [settleresearch@gmail.com](mailto:settleresearch@gmail.com). Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.*

*Thanks to Jane Milner, a descendant of the family for her help with this account*

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*SC – Settle Chronicle, with kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust*

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