

Bollands and Perfects, perfectly aristocratic

The wealthy gentlemen, businessmen and clergy of Victorian Settle made a good living from their inheritance, investments, foreign trade and property. Before the advent of local authorities, they were also responsible for the collection of taxes to spend on drainage, lighting, education, a justice system, of sorts, and any provision for the poor. They employed workers and were also their landlords. The wealthy were also generous benefactors to the town. To keep the money *'in the family'* there were numerous marriages between these families, including the **Dawsons**, **Bollands** and **Robinsons**.

Upper class women filled their time with leisure and a variety of philanthropic societies, often linked to the church, fulfilling their self-appointed duty to teach the less fortunate about Christian morality. Whilst it is easy to criticise their actions with today's values, these women had a real impact supporting the poor and reducing cruelty to women, children and animals.

Many of the wealthy were Settle born and bred, owning hundreds of acres of land in and around Settle and often with several additional residences around the country. Several found their final resting place in tombs under St Alkelda's Church in Giggleswick – the phrase *'the stinking rich'* originated from the smell of decay under the church floor! The wealthy preferred to be buried there because, up until the early 19th century, the bones of decayed bodies in long established graveyards such as that of St Alkelda were periodically dug up and stored in a 'bone house' to create new space for fresh burials. The rich, underneath the floor of the church, would have been unaffected and undisturbed of course. We know that, in 1837, as thinking changed, **Billy Guyer**, the sexton at St Alkelda's was asked to demolish their bone house and re-inter the bones elsewhere in the graveyard, for which he was paid £1 5sh. Once Settle Church had opened in 1838, some of the wealthy were buried in the original 'Ancient' graveyard, at the south-east corner of the church behind the altar, believed to be the best place for a good resurrection. Settle Church was regarded as *'the place to be'* as it had appointed top class vicars and organists to promote a high quality of music and worship.

The Bollands and Perfects were two of these wealthy families.



The Bollands were originally from Kettlewell, but, by 1763, had bought the old Townhead farmhouse in Settle, along with other property and substantial acres of land in the area. They had made their money from the profits of the wool trade which was unusual for the gentry of those days – most families had inherited wealth and wouldn't possibly be seen working for a living! Townhead was a fantastic residence [ph1], now the site of Townhead housing estate above the medical centre. **Anthony**



Bolland married **Elizabeth Dawson** in 1771 but died in 1777, aged just 35. Elizabeth organised some improvements to Townhead, which didn't go too well, according to diarist William Lodge Paley [WLP]. *'They are making sad work at Mrs Bolland's house, building two sets of rooms before old front, breaking a front door east end, and cutting up the parlour for lobby and breaking windows out'*. He also reported that Mrs Bolland was instrumental in the financing and negotiations around the new National School on Kirkgate. When widow Elizabeth died in 1826, aged 77, **William Lodge Paley**[WLP] described the funeral at St Alkelda's in Giggleswick. *'There were seven or more large candles burning'* – these would have been an expensive luxury in those days. *'Bearers were male*

days. They are making sad work at Mrs. Bolland's house, building two sets of rooms before old front, breaking a front door east end, cutting up the parlour for lobby and breaking windows out. Mr. Wm. Carr will subscribe one guinea

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servants in their families. Most ladies had silk handkerchiefs and scarfs and think all had gloves. . . . Our dear friends remains were deposited in a very deep grave near the little door of the church where her husband was laid 52 years before.' After Elizabeth's death, more structural changes took place, with more in the 1870s.

the black cloth covered coffin, age 77. Seven or more large candles burning. They took up before 4 o'clock. Bearers were male servants in their families. Most ladies had silk handkerchiefs and scarfs and think all had gloves. Few children in the church and all quiet. Mr. Ingram read genl. confession before funeral service and our dear friend's remains were deposited in a very deep grave near little door of church where her husband was laid 52 years before. Mrs. and Miss

Anthony's son, **William Bolland**, was only five when his father died but the substantial inheritance easily provided for his education at Hipperholme School, east of Halifax and preparing him for his life as an adult moving in aristocratic circles. William had five daughters with his wife **Margaret Kempster: Margaret, Elizabeth, Mary**, (who died, unmarried, aged 27) **Jane** and **Susannah**. Throughout their lifetimes they are regularly reported as generous benefactors to a number of causes, usually linked to the church.

There was a considerable amount of land surrounding Townhead. In 1835 William purchased land below the house from **John Bowskill** which was very soon to become the preferred site of the new Settle Parish Church. In 1835 *'The secretaries are authorised to pay £250 (deposit) to Mr Bolland on account of the land intended to be taken for the site. A letter to be written by this day's post to Mr Webster the architect requesting him to come hither the first vacant day (except Monday next) in order to view the proposed site, and that the committee may consult him on the subject.'* [C]

Wife Margaret died in 1837, followed by William in 1839.

Margaret Bolland

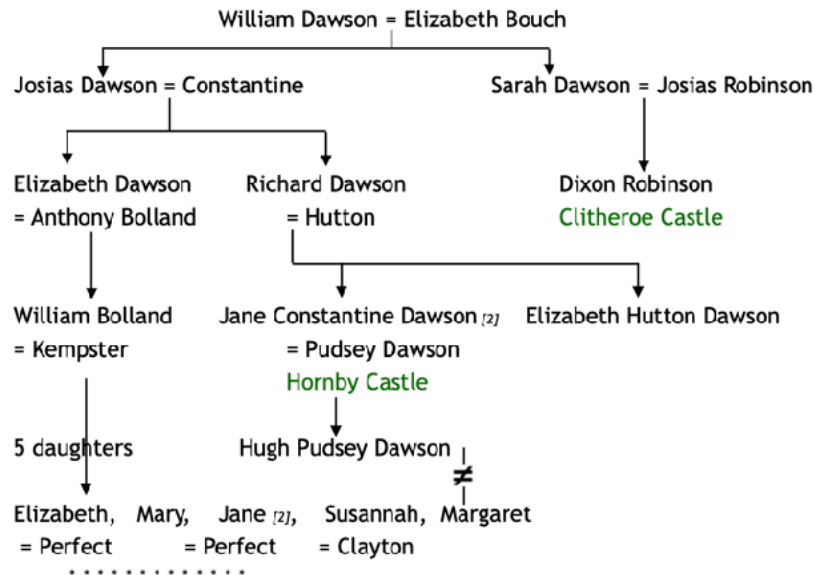
With no sons as heirs, when William died in 1839, Townhead was inherited by eldest daughter, **Margaret Bolland**. Typical for a girl of her class, Margaret had enjoyed a leisurely upbringing, entertaining herself with reading, poetry, painting, nature and keeping an eye on the latest fashions. She visited friends and relations locally and in the York residence. As a teenager she was sent to Miss Simpson's seminary for Young Ladies [ph2] where she received *'a studiously arranged and liberal system of Female Education, which comprises the inculcation of every religious and moral principle, promoted by a conscientious attention to the doctrines of christianity, its services and duties. The accommodation afforded includes public and private study rooms, many single bedrooms, with every desirable domestic comfort which can contribute to the health and happiness of the pupil, on economic terms. The most approved Masters in the county are engaged to assist in teaching English, French, Italian, Music, Drawing, Dancing, Writing, History, Geography and Astronomy. Miss Simpson admits young ladies who are desirous of qualifying themselves for the education of youth'*[1]. Very nice!



ADWICK HALL, near DONCASTER.
THE flattering patronage and approbation which MISS SIMPSON'S Seminary for Young Ladies has hitherto received from her numerous friends, claims her warmest gratitude. In the much-admired situation of **Adwick Hall**, Miss **Simpson** offers to the public, after many years' experience, a studiously arranged and liberal system of Female Education, which comprises the inculcation of every religious and moral principle, promoted by a conscientious attention to the doctrines of christianity, its services and duties.

During the 1820s Margaret met **Hugh Pudsey Dawson** of Langcliffe Hall, who was a sort of cousin. William Bolland's cousin, **Jane Constantine Dawson**, became the second wife of **Pudsey Dawson** of Hornby Castle and Hugh was Pudsey's son by his first wife. Margaret and Hugh became engaged and will have attended all the local balls together – very Jane Austen! Hugh had graduated at Brazenose College, Oxford. Unfortunately he died in 1831 in Madeira, aged just 22, at the home of Dr Renton where he had gone for the benefit of his health. Margaret remained a spinster, living at Townhead with her servants.

Dawsons, Bollands and Robinsons



There are numerous articles describing Margaret's generosity. She contributed to events for the workhouse and to raise money for smallpox vaccinations. She provided the grounds of Townhead for the annual celebrations of the Band of Hope (Junior Temperance Society)[2] and 'it would be a difficult task to say who enjoyed themselves most but both young and old ran and played with unflagging energy until dusk. . .On leaving, the members stopped in front of Miss Bolland's house and sang a melody. They also gave three cheers for the use of her capital field, so generously placed at their disposal, year after year.' In 1867, through the 'well-timed liberality of Miss Bolland' the inmates of Giggleswick workhouse sat down to a New Year dinner of roast beef and plum pudding [3].

As if she wasn't wealthy enough, in 1866 Margaret became the main beneficiary of her cousin **Elizabeth Hutton Dawson's** will. Elizabeth had died, aged 86, the longest lived of her siblings and her estate was worth many millions in today's value. She was so interesting she has a separate account. Elizabeth lived at Marshfield on Kirkgate, Settle but also owned Langcliffe Hall, Neal's Ing estate, hundreds of acres of farmland and had a nice, summer residence in Sidmouth, Devon. As well as Margaret, Elizabeth provided generously for a number of other spinster/widowed family and friends, including Margaret's sister, **Jane (Bolland) Perfect**.

Margaret was perhaps a little eccentric, once described as 'a wealthy old woman who lived in a nice house on Constitution Hill, who collected peacock feathers diligently. She stitched them in rows on a long cloak she wore down to her heels and as she trotted around in the summer sunshine she was quite a gorgeous spectacle' [D].

Unsurprisingly, Margaret died a very wealthy woman in 1878, aged 73 leaving her estate in the capable hands of her relations **George Robinson** and **William George Perfect**. Margaret employed a lifetime gardener at Townhead, **Henry Todd**, of whom she was thought to be very fond, and he is buried nearby with a memorial stone probably financed by the Bolland family.

favour of the principles of their society. After tea, an adjournment was made to Miss Bolland's field, behind Castlebergh, which was also thrown open to the public. Games of various descriptions were carried on and it would be a difficult task to say who enjoyed themselves most, as both old and young ran and played with unflagging energy until dusk. Coloured fires were burnt before the members left the field, but it was not sufficiently dark to show them off to the best advantage. On leaving, the members stopped in front of Miss Bolland's house and sang a melody. They also gave three cheers for the use of her capital field, so generously placed at their disposal year after year. Thus closed another demonstration that will be long remembered with the most pleasing recollections. We

SETTLE.

FESTIVITIES AT THE WORKHOUSE.—The inmates of this establishment were treated, by the Guardians, to their usual feast of roast beef and plum pudding on Christmas Day. Presents of workboxes, and other suitable articles, were made to each of the children by Mr. and Mrs. Charlesworth on Christmas Eve, and we need not say the recipients were highly delighted with the gifts of their liberal donors. Through the kindness and well-timed liberality of Miss Bolland, the whole of the inmates sat down, on New Year's Day, to a dinner of roast beef and plum pudding, presided over by the Rev. T. Mc. Intire, and on the same day, coffee and buns were generously supplied to the inmates by Mr. Perfect. There was also an abundant supply of spic-nuts, &c., distributed amongst the children, while the old people were treated with tobacco, sugar, tea, &c., the gift of Mr. George Hartley. In the evening the whole of the inmates were congregated in the large dining-room, which had been very tastefully decorated with evergreens, and suitable devices, mottoes, &c., where, in the presence of Wm. Robinson, Esq., Miss Bolland, Mrs. Perfect and party, readings, recitations, glees, and instrumental music were gratuitously rendered by the Rev. A. S. Porter and a few other kind friends, to the evident delight and amusement of all present. At the conclusion a vote of thanks to the

Margaret was often reported as a prizewinner in agricultural shows but this was most likely Henry's work rather than Margaret's! One of Margaret's other servants was **Nancy Cornthwaite** who became the second (out of three) wife of **William Perkin**, the church sexton/gravedigger.

Margaret is buried with her sister Elizabeth (Bolland) Perfect and niece.

Meet the Perfect brothers

Brothers **John Crowder Perfect** and **William Mosley Perfect** were sons of **John Perfect**, the principal of the '*Perfect John and William Banking Co*' in Pontefract. Their mother, **Elizabeth Crowder** descended from a Mayor of Pontefract. Very eligible! They made a fortune from banking and land investments and took quite a fancy to the Bolland girls. In 1834 John Crowder Perfect married **Maria Bolland** from Leeds, a third cousin to Margaret Bolland, but Maria died in 1836. John sold up, even selling paintings and his '*fifty dozen of choice old port*' collection[4], and then married Margaret's sister, **Elizabeth Bolland** in 1838. They had two sons, **John William Perfect** and **William Bolland Perfect**, both of whom died in infancy, and a daughter, **Elizabeth Margaret Perfect**, who died aged 17. There are things that money just can't buy. John died when he was just 34 and is buried in Giggleswick churchyard, close to the church door, together with their second son and Elizabeth's father. Their first son was buried with Elizabeth's mother in another Bolland family grave at Giggleswick. Elizabeth spent the rest of her life living with sister Margaret at Townhead. Margaret, Elizabeth and daughter Elizabeth, aged just 17, are buried together.

Elizabeth Margaret Perfect, daughter of John Crowder Perfect Born 10 November 1840, died 17 August 1858. Elizabeth Perfect, widow of John Crowder Perfect, born 10 July 1807, died 12 January 1878. Margaret Bolland of Townhead, Settle born 28 August 1805, died 29 September 1878, Anc E16



In 1845 John's brother **William Mosley Perfect**, a solicitor, received an irresistible offer from the Bollands' cousin, **Dixon Robinson**, of Clitheroe Castle to move to Blackburn. He worked '*obtaining the acts of Parliament for the construction of the railways from Blackburn to Bolton and Clitheroe*'[5], and was a partner of Dixon Robinson in the firm of Robinson, Perfect and Robinson Solicitors. '*He was one of the first chosen Aldermen of Blackburn*'.

of 1845, since which time he has resided here, and assisted in carrying into effect many measures important to the town, particularly in obtaining the acts of parliament for the construction of the railways from Blackburn to Bolton and Clitheroe respectively. He was one of the first chosen aldermen of Blackburn, and retired about two years since from the corporation.—

William Perfect's first wife, **Catherine Maria Young**, died after the birth of a son, **William George Perfect**, and then he married **Jane Bolland**, Margaret Bolland's sister. The vicar presiding over the wedding was **Rev'd William Clayton** who was the husband of youngest sister **Susannah Bolland**. Rev Clayton who was the son of **William Clayton** and his forefathers who had run the Langcliffe Mills for many years before they had to close in the 1840s. Settle and Langcliffe mills had not been mechanised so couldn't compete with the Lancashire mills and the Claytons took their skills to Lancashire too. Their story is included in the accounts of the **Edgar** and **Tottie** families.

Meanwhile, William Mosley Perfect and Jane had a further four daughters and a son. Their daughter, **Mary Perfect**, married **George Robinson**, the son of the persuasive Dixon Robinson and

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so family links remained strong. Unfortunately, in 1865 William suddenly dropped down dead, aged just 42. *'With all the appearances of a man who was destined to attain a ripe old age, . . . he dropped down a corpse'*[6]. There was definitely a weakness in the Perfect gene!

Jane spent the rest of her life living either in Langcliffe Hall or Devon, but still owned Townhead with her sister Susannah (Bolland) Clayton. In 1882, Settle Church's original 'Ancient' graveyard had filled quickly, so much so that it was formerly closed by the Home Secretary on the basis of being 'dangerously full'. Rev Jackson Mason and church Trustees had the unenviable task of finding extra burial space and it seemed logical to acquire more land from the Townhead estate adjacent and up the hill from the existing ground. In 1885 Rev Mason wrote to the church's solicitor, Mr William Hartley, saying, *'If we can induce Mrs Perfect to sell her land it will meet all needs better and (in the long run) more economically than any other plan. Of course the entire scheme would involve the diversion of the footpath, or rather cart road.'*[C] Negotiations began. The solicitor consulted an inheritance consultant, *'Mrs Jane Perfect and Mrs Clayton propose to sell and convey a small portion of land as an addition to the graveyard of the Church of Holy Ascension at Settle but the question arises whether they can do so without forfeiting their life Interests in their respective fourth shares under their fathers Wills not only in the small portion conveyed but in the remainder of the property. It is hoped they can* Counsel is requested to advise on this point *If Mrs Perfect & Mrs Clayton grant under the provisions of the 30th & 31st c 183 any portion of the one fourth taken by them respectively under their fathers wills, I am of opinion that they will forfeit their interest in the entirety of each such fourth,*

BLACKBURN.
DEATH OF WILLIAM MOSLEY PERFECT, ESQ.—In our obituary of this day will be found recorded the death of William Mosley Perfect, Esq., of this town. The circumstances attending his decease offer to us another most startling instance of the uncertainty of life. Painfully and awfully sudden, indeed, was his end. We saw him pass in the morning of Saturday, in the prime of life, apparently in good health, in excellent spirits, and with all the appearances of a man who was destined to attain a ripe old age; and in the afternoon, about four o'clock, within a few fields of the Ribchester station, on the Blackburn and Clitheroe Railway, at a distance of about three miles from his own house in Blackburn, he dropped down a corpse. Accompanied by his eldest son, Henry Hoyle, Esq.,

of the Church of the Holy Ascension at Settle but the question arises whether they can do so without forfeiting their life Interests in their respective fourth shares under their fathers Wills not only in the small portion conveyed but in the remainder of the property. It is hoped they can

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In response to this, Jane wrote a strongly worded letter to Mr Hartley on followed *'of course the opinion you have taken settles the matter as to our parting with the Townhead land for the addition to the churchyard. Mrs Clayton and I have no wish to take any further steps into the matter. Will you kindly let Mr Mason know the result of your investigation. Believe Me, yours sincerely, Jane Perfect, Langcliffe Hall'*. Oh dear. The church didn't give up and tried to negotiate with the sisters further and, just two months later, a conveyance was drawn up. A few days later the sisters' solicitor replied *'I hope to return the draft in the course of this week. Please furnish me with a more detailed plan and what is the amount of the purchase money? and returned*

*of your investigation
 Area for the addition to the churchyard
 Mrs Clayton
 cannot I have no wish to take any further steps in the matter
 Will you kindly let Mr. Mason see the result
 Yours sincerely
 Jane Perfect
 Langcliffe Hall
 August 19th 1885*

*With your Dearness
 near Rotherham.
 7th Oct 1885
 Dear Sir
 I enclose to Mrs Clayton & Mrs Perfect
 We return Draft
 Conveyance approved - If*

assenting. Mr Win. Hartley had consented to name a price for a piece of land called "Shortcake," which adjoins the churchyard, and until the eleventh hour it was understood by the church officials that Mrs Perfect and Mrs Clayton, of Townhead, were willing to dispose of a portion of Townhead Meadow, which it was obvious to all should be added to the rest to make the scheme complete. Those ladies had, however, now, declined to part with the land, and those who were acting in the matter were reduced to the more limited scheme.

the approved Draft Conveyance. However, the sisters backed out at the last minute despite it being 'obvious to all' that their land should be added to the rest to make the scheme complete [9]. Funnily enough, days later the church paid Mr Hartley (yes, the same Mr William Hartley, the church's solicitor) the sum of £414 for 2730 square yards, known as Shortcake Field, adjacent to the railway, now the 'Old' graveyard, regarded as a 'more limited scheme'.

William and Jane's daughters **Margaret Jane Perfect** and **Katherine Elizabeth Perfect** are buried in the same grave as their parents. Daughter **Susanna Frances Perfect** was just 19 when she died on Christmas Day at Langcliffe Hall, and has her own memorial stone. These was a weak gene in the otherwise Perfect family.

E17 William Mosley Perfect died 26 January 1856, aged 42 years. Jane his wife died 13 November 1885 aged 74 years. Margaret Jane Dawson of Langcliffe Hall died 5 January 1917 and Katherine Elizabeth Perfect of Langcliffe Hall died 2 May 1934.



E21 Susanna Frances Perfect died Christmas Day 1870 aged 19 years.

On the gravestone, Margaret Jane's name has become 'Dawson' instead of 'Perfect', even though she was unmarried. Why is this? In 1879 Queen Victoria decreed that the Perfect name could change to Dawson to uphold the ancestry of Langcliffe Hall, [8]. Perfect! The Dawsons had been at Langcliffe Hall almost continuously since 1645 and Elizabeth Dawson had married Anthony Bolland in 1771. William and Jane Perfect's son, **William Mosley Perfect (Jnr)** mentioned in this article tragically died at sea in 1900 and left his estate to his half brother, William George Perfect.

CHANGE OF NAME.—The Queen has granted to Mr William Mosley Perfect, of Langcliffe Hall, Giggleswick, in the West Riding, her royal license that he and his issue may use the name of Dawson in lieu of that of Perfect, and bear the arms of Dawson only.

William and Jane's grandson **Geoffrey Robinson** (now Dawson of course) also lived at Langcliffe Hall — this article [7] explains that he provided a new flagpole for Castleberg Rock in 1930. Geoffrey was the editor of The Times from 1910 to 1942, and was a West Riding Magistrate. His story is provided with the account of Dixon Robinson and family.

Castleberg, the rock which overlooks Settle, lost its flagpole in a storm four years ago. A new pole has now been provided by Mr. Geoffrey Dawson, of Langcliffe Hall, the owner of the rock, and it was brought into use on Saturday, when the Union Jack was hoisted in commemoration of Empire Day.

Widowed sister Susanna (Bolland) Clayton lived at Townhead after Margaret Bolland died, followed by Susanna's widowed daughter **Susanna Isabella Edgar** who is buried in *Old grave E54*. After the death of the last of this line in 1947, Townhead was taken over by Tot Lord, the famous local collector who installed his 'Pig Yard Club Museum there.

Several of the Bolland family are buried in Giggleswick graveyard with huge flat memorial stones which can be seen on the path just outside the church door.

Here lie the remains of William Bolland of Settle who died on the 26th of December 1774 aged 27 years, and of Agnes Bolland of Giggleswick his widow (eldest daughter of Thomas Clapham Esq of Stackhouse) who died on the 5th of November 1826 aged 77 years William Bolland the only child died at Waterford in Ireland on the 8th of July 1798 aged 27 years and was interred at that place.

Here also lie the remains of Margaret Bolland the wife of William Bolland Esq of Townhead, Settle, who died 28 Feb'y 1837 aged 57 years, And of Mary Bolland their third daughter who died 22 Jan'y 1837 aged 27 years.

Also of John William Perfect son of John Crowder Perfect Esq and Elizabeth his wife, second daughter of the said William and Margaret Bolland, who died 16th August 1839 aged 30 days.



Here lie the remains of William Bolland Esq of Townhead, Settle,
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who died 17th Feb'y 1839 in the 67th year of his age. Also of William Bolland Perfect second son of John Crowder Perfect and Elizabeth his wife who died at Blackpool 6th Oct'r 1844 aged 18 months. Also of the above mentioned John Crowder Perfect who died at Townhead the 18th of April 1845 in the 35th year of his age.



This account has been compiled 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](http://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'. The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.

Thanks to the North Craven Building Preservation Trust for their article 'The Bollands of Settle' which was used in compiling this article.

Newspaper cuttings by kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Stamford Mercury, 2,3,6,7,9– Lancaster Gazette, 4 – Leeds Intelligencer, 5 – Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 8 – Edinburgh Evening News,

C – with thanks to Settle Parish Church archives, D – Mabel Horner, Dalesman 1951

ph1 – photo kind permission of Tom Lord, ph2 – credited to Adwick-Woodlands-Highfields Facebook page, submitted by Terry Bloor

Giggleswick memorial stone inscriptions credited to Nigel Mussett's 'An Illustrated Directory of Memorials and Inscriptions'.