

National Scandal at the Golden Lion Inn

Going back to the reign of Charles II, the Golden Lion has been regarded as Settle's premier hostelry. The existing building has a date stone of 1671 although the Lion probably operated before that. The original Golden Lion was built on Cheapside, on the site now occupied by Lambert's, a prime position on the old main road through Settle from the hills, along High Street, Cheapside and then Kirkgate to Giggleswick. By the 1750s the Golden Lion had purchased a new wing in Duke Street. In 1773 the new Long Preston to Kendal Turnpike Road was built taking the main route through Settle along Duke Street and Church Street and so Duke Street was a better location for the Inn. The completion of the Leeds to Lancaster railway line and Station Road in 1848 probably finalised the full move to the Golden Lion's current position in Duke Street [A, ph2,4].



INN.
Golden Lion (and posting house)
Robert Hartley, Seale

COACHES.

To KENDAL, the *Royal Union* (from Leeds) calls at the Golden Lion, every evening at five.
To LEEDS, the *Royal Union* (from Kendal) calls at the Golden Lion, every day (Sundays excepted) at twelve; goes through Long Preston, Hellfield, Cuni-stone and Gargrave.
To MANCHESTER, the *Independent*, from the Golden Lion, every Monday, Thursday & Saturday at twelve; goes

TAVERNS & PUBLIC HOUSES.
Black Horse, John Waller, Giggleswick
Hart's Head, Rbt. Gorstang, Giggleswick
Joiners' Arms, Thomas Bowskill, Settle
Naked Man, Eli Harger, Settle
New Inn, William Brown, Settle
Royal Oak, Joseph Harger, Settle
Spread Eagle, Robert Atkinson, Settle
Talbot (& excise office) Wm. Dugill, Settle
White Horse, Ellen Bowskill, Settle

The Golden Lion was a popular coaching inn and posting house and a hub of activity for social life, business, meetings, auctions, and bankruptcy hearings. It is recorded in many archives — for example, Lady Anne Clifford of Skipton Castle recorded an overnight visit on 25th October 1662. In the early 19th century trade directory the Golden Lion was referred to as an 'Inn' whereas all the other establishments were called 'Taverns and Public Houses.' The distinctive feature of the Golden Lion was horse-drawn coaches providing the main form of transport to Kendal, Leeds and Manchester, using the yards behind the inn to tend to all those horses. Horses were hired out to travellers at a minimum cost of one shilling per mile to travel to the next coaching house, Kirkby Lonsdale for example, and were returned by travellers coming in the opposite direction. It was only possible to travel 15 miles or so before needing to change horses. This was a critical factor in the Golden Lion's role in one of the 19th century's most scandalous cases.

A 'scandal' is defined as an action or event regarded as morally or legally wrong and causing general public outrage, especially when these have been concealed for some time. We have plenty of recent examples in politics, sport and royalty. 'Scandal' is dependent on public feeling and as moral standards change over time, so do scandals. For example Alan Turing was forced to undergo chemical castration for being gay, which was scandalous and illegal at the time, but Turing is now the first gay man to be represented on a bank note. In Bristol, the statue to commemorate the merchant and benefactor Edward Colston was erected in 1895. The fact that his wealth was reliant on the slave trade is now regarded differently and so the statue was toppled by outraged campaigners, which in itself outraged others. Scandal is a permanent and evolving part of life,

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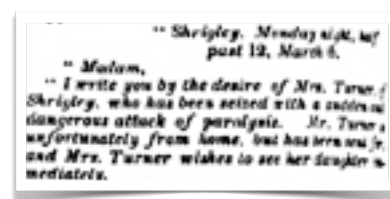
upon which the media of the day thrive. By 1820 the innkeepers at the Golden Lion were **Robert** and **Isabella Hartley** [ph11] and it was Robert who became involved in the scandal. This was during the Regency years after the Napoleonic Wars and just after the death of Jane Austen.



At 1.30am on Wednesday 8th March 1826 a young woman and two brothers stopped off at the Golden Lion to exchange horses. **Edward Gibbon Wakefield** [ph10] wore 'a brown wool frock coat, white shirt, black silk stockings, a slim and elegant figure.' He was a 30 year old widower and an international diplomat with a wealthy background — his grandmother's family were involved in setting up Barclays Bank. Despite his Quaker roots Edward had a troubled youth resulting in an extravagant lifestyle and decided he needed a rich wife to match his political ambition. 15 year old **Ellen Turner** was the only heir of **William Turner**, a clergyman, High Sheriff and prosperous mill owner, who had spent £80,000 purchasing Shrigley Hall, near Macclesfield in Cheshire [ph10]. Ellen, 'a delicate child', [C] attended a ladies' boarding school in Liverpool. She was intelligent and had an excellent disposition — a model child, a model pupil and, hopefully, a model wife. A cunning and audacious plot was hatched by Edward's step-mother, **Frances Wakefield**, to allow Edward to acquire the Turner family wealth. She made some discrete enquiries into Ellen's background and managed some high society introductions to furnish her plan. This was definitely a pre-meditated scheme.



A forged letter was delivered to Ellen at her school on the morning of Tuesday 7th March, allegedly by the Turner family doctor, 'I write to you by the desire of Mrs Turner of Shrigley who has been seized with a sudden and dangerous attack of paralysis. Mr Turner is away from home and Mrs Turner wishes to see her daughter immediately. My carriage will arrive soon to fetch Miss Turner. Miss Turner may be very anxious and Mrs Turner particularly wishes that her daughter may not be informed of the extent of the danger and does not wish anyone to accompany her. Yours John Ainsworth MD.' Ellen's mother was known to be a bit of a hypochondriac so Ellen was not unduly worried.



Ellen had never met Edward before but was persuaded to accompany him and his brother William on a long circuitous trek, exchanging horses at coaching inns, but not stopping overnight anywhere. Edward assured her at each stage they would meet her father at one of the next coaching inns. From Liverpool and Manchester they exchanged horses at the Bell Inn in Delph, Halifax, Huddersfield, Keighley and the Devonshire Arms in Skipton. Staff at the inns said how well they got on, often laughing together. The next leg took them to the Golden Lion in Settle and then to the Royal at Kirkby Lonsdale, Shap, Penrith, Carlisle



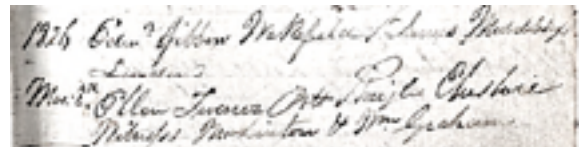
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and then, inevitably, Gretna Green. They had purchased dozens of horses, four at a time which was an expensive business. During this journey Ellen chatted away, as 15 year olds do, telling the charming Edward about family affairs and business details. Having found these things out, Edward called in at the coaching inns to write more (forged) notes to persuade Ellen that her father's bank had failed and the only way to avert financial disaster was to marry him. In a sinister twist, Edward was also able to say that *'they had spent the night together'*, albeit innocently, instantly tarnishing Ellen's reputation if marriage were not to follow. Ellen was *'fatigued, harassed and weakened by the journey'* and probably not thinking very clearly.

The Hardwicke Marriage Act of 1753 only permitted weddings in the established Church of England if both partners were over the age of 21, unless they had permission of parents. In Scotland, this law didn't apply so boys of 14 and girls as young as 12 could marry. Newspapers report Edward and Ellen were married by *'a 74 year old drunken blacksmith'* called **David Lang** [C], but known as Bishop Lang, or the 'Anvil Priest' who would strike the anvil with a hammer when the marriage had taken place. This was a lucrative business with



boys from the Carlisle Inns taking messages up to Gretna Green about the potential wealth of couples travelling north and so Edward was charged £30 and Ellen paid a tip of 20 shillings. Edward immediately put a notice in the papers for Ellen's father to see [6] and dispatched his brother to tell him as well. It would have still been illegal to consummate the marriage in England without parental permission but



March 8, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Esq. to Ellen, only daughter of W. Turner, Esq. of Shrigley Park, in the county of Chester.

Edward was sure this would soon be given for fear of a high society scandal. In the meantime, worried about capture, Edward decided they should flee to Calais [ph13]. Ellen *'travelled 700 miles in the most distressing anxiety, affliction and agitation'*. However, Edward underestimated William Turner who couldn't accept his wealth being squandered to this trickster. William tracked them down to the pier in Calais with a warrant for Edward's arrest and a despatch from the Foreign Office to insist the French authorities did all they could to deport Edward. When she realised what had happened Ellen said, *"This is an abominable trick. Oh, he is a brute, he has deceived me, and I have never called anyone a brute before!"* Ouch! William brought Ellen safely home, but she was still a married woman.

During his year at Lancaster Castle, affording a luxury cell of course, Edward wrote numerous letters to the press and some in the name of others, protesting his innocence and justifying his actions. It transpired that Edward's marriage to his first underage wife, **Eliza Pattle**, the daughter of a rich East India merchant, had also been a runaway marriage in Edinburgh, although she was desperate to marry too. After bribing Eliza's family servants, who damaged the family's second



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coach so they couldn't be followed, Edward and Eliza ran off to Edinburgh. Eliza's father had given retrospective permission for the marriage and Edward was rewarded with a healthy dowry to ease his precarious financial situation.

At the trial the barrister explained that conspiracy and abducting a minor were criminal offences in England and, three years earlier, would have been punishable by *'forfeiting his life by the common executioner upon the walls of this Castle.'* By 1826 it was *'a high offence and punishable by fine and imprisonment'*. This was a sensational case which gave journalists plenty of creative opportunities. *'Persons of all denominations were seen hurrying from all parts . . . all anxious to procure a situation in Court to hear the interesting proceedings. A number of elegantly dressed ladies were admitted by the High Sheriff'* [1]. It was explained the captors *'unlawfully, wickedly and injuriously, for the sake of lucre and gain, conspired with diverse other persons by subtle stratagems, contrivances and false pretences to convey Ellen Turner, an unmarried maid of 15 years of age, against her will'*. Edward was described as *'a person of fashionable appearance and a consummate master of all that kind of dissimulation necessary for such a purpose as this, removing all suspicion.'*



Lancaster, Friday, March 23. **WAKEFIELD'S TRIAL.**

At an early hour this morning this town was all alive, and on no former occasion was the interest so much excited as by the trial of the Wakefields. From five o'clock till nine, persons of all denominations were seen hurrying from all parts adjacent to the town, towards the Castle, all anxious to procure a situation in Court to hear the interesting proceedings. A number of elegantly dressed ladies were admitted by the High Sheriff, Charles

At the trial the innkeepers along the route, including Robert Hartley, gave evidence [1]. **Anne Bradley** at the Devonshire Arms in Skipton [ph14], the mother-in-law of the county Coroner, **Thomas Brown**, explained how she thought Edward and Ellen were involved in a runaway wedding because they were cheerful and laughing while they ate her gingerbread [1]. Robert Hartley at the Lion was less forthcoming:



Anne Bradley—I keep the Devonshire Arms at Skipton. Recollect two gentlemen and a lady coming in a coach and four, about eleven o'clock at night on the 7th of March. Saw them by the light of a lantern. Four horses were ordered for Settle. Ordered the servant to take some gingerbread, which was laid in the lady's lap. They had also two glasses of water. I said I should be glad to see them on their return, for I rather thought it was a runaway wedding. They were very cheerful, and laughing. The young lady was in good spirits. The gingerbread seemed to please the lady, for she took two plates of it.

You are the landlord of the Golden Lion at Settle? - **Yes**

Do you remember a party coming there on the morning of the 8th March? **Yes**

At what time? **About half past one.**

Who were the party? - **Two gentlemen and a lady**

Did they change horses there? - **Yes**

Four horses? - **Yes**

After just an hour of deliberation, the jury decided that



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Edward, his brother and servant were guilty of conspiracy and abduction [1] and imprisoned for three years although Ellen's father chose not to pursue a sentence for a lady, Edward's step-mother. Edward had 'a sordid affection for Mr Turners money with no feelings of affection or love for the girl'. In his defence, Edward explained that he had behaved in a gentlemanly way throughout. Three days after Edward's incarceration, a petition was presented to the House of Lords to annul the marriage by an Act of Parliament. The case had cost William £10,000, equivalent to half a million pounds at today's value. A newspaper report was illustrated by none other than **Dawson Watson** [ph9], the brother-in-law of **Christopher Edmundson**, buried in Settle churchyard.

The Jury, after retiring a short time brought in a verdict of GUILTY.

What happened to Edward and Ellen? Soon after his entry to Newgate prison in London, Edward 'underwent a transformation' and became preoccupied with issues around prison, rehabilitation and punishment and colonial affairs, writing numerous reports. Upon his release he became influential in the decision to end transportation for convicts from the UK and penal reform in Canada, New Zealand and Australia where he is revered for establishing non-convict colonies by insisting on a cross section of society. In 1836 he organised the colonisation of South Australia and in 1840 arranged for a ship, Aurora, to establish the first systematically settled colony on New Zealand, in so doing becoming 'the founder of New Zealand'. He died in New Zealand in 1862, aged 66. His obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* said that 'There is no part of the British Empire which does not feel the effect of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's labours as a practical statesman and constructive reform can scarcely be traced to the single hand of any other man.' The abduction of Ellen was referred to as 'the first of his get-rich-quick schemes' although they probably forgot to consider Edward's his first marriage. Streets, rivers and ports were named after him in Australia and New Zealand and a bronze bust was erected in Wellington. A concrete structure dedicated to his brother, William Wakefield, sits near deep extra cover at the Basin Reserve, where it is best known for providing shady oasis on a hot day at the cricket. In the natural cycle of scandal, by 2020 public feeling turned against them with calls to scrap their monuments:

EDWARD GIBBON WAKEFIELD.
Founder of New Zealand.

Two monuments to 'sexual predators and colonisers' could be scrapped in Wellington



And Ellen? In January 1828, now aged 16, Ellen married **Thomas Legh**, [C] the MP for Lyme who resided at Lyme Park and had supported her father during the trial. Tragically she died at the birth of her third child, a son who also died, in January 1831, aged just 19. Thomas remarried, this time to **Maud Lowther**. Ellen and Thomas' daughter **Ellen Jane** spent her life at Shrigley Hall, the ancestral home, with her husband, the **Reverend Brahazon Lowther** and family. Brahazon was the brother of Maud Lowther, Ellen's step-mother's brother.



The case was the talk of the nation for months and will have brought Robert Hartley plenty of extra trade at the Golden Lion. Shrigley Hall is now used for leisure breaks and wedding fairs. The case was recently told in the book, *The Shrigley Abduction, a tale of anguish, deceit and violation of the domestic hearth*, by Abby Ashby and Audrey Jones and it's a great read.



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We'll find out more about Robert and Isabella Hartley, innkeepers of the Golden Lion Inn in Part 2.



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 includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

Illustrations kindly provided by Teresa Gordon

A – An appreciation of Settle, Settle and District Civil Society, 1973

B – Thomas Brayshaw - Local fragments

C – The Shrigley Abduction, Abby Ashby and Audrey Jones

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SC – Settle Chronicle, LSA - Lambert's Settle Almanac, WLP – the diaries of William Lodge Paley both with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust

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