

## George Ambler, industrial entrepreneur

George was born in 1816 in Oldham, the son of James Ambler and his wife Ann Robertshaw. At that time his father was working in the woollen industry, although the family originated from Halifax, and that is where his siblings lived their lives.

In 1837 George married 16 year old Jane Bradley, a tailor's daughter, in Bradford. She would give him 8 children, and from the birth records of the youngest five, we know they came to Settle in 1844 with George working as a blacksmith.

George's career is wonderful story of industrial entrepreneurship. He began working as a blacksmith (forging iron) and when they moved to Holme Head (Langcliffe Locks) he was working as a whitesmith (forging tin or pewter, or doing finishing work on iron, such as filing or lathing). By 1855 the family had moved to Scalebar in Upper Settle before moving down to Duke Street 'opposite the Craven Bank' during the 1860s. [SC]

Jane died aged just 42 in 1863 and is buried in the Ancient graveyard. It's surprising that George didn't pay for a gravestone, although it was not unusual to wait until the man of the family had passed before organising a gravestone. Aged 48, in 1864, George married widow Susannah Forrester. She was born Susannah Robinson, the daughter of a Settle tailor. Tragically her first husband, Robert Forrester, had run off to America leaving her with three children who were looked after by their grandparents but all died in childhood. Susannah gave George a further son, Richard Robertshaw Ambler.

George's career appeared to flourish. He was variously described as a farming implement maker, an ironmonger and a machinist. His farming implements were regularly commented on at the agricultural shows, together with those of Thomas Anderson Harvey, John Johnson Hartley and Richard Greenwood [1]. In 1881 George had sufficient funds to pay for a dinner for the Wesleyan choir.

George moved to Silsden for his last few years before he died aged 76 in 1891, after a long illness. He left a staggering £5500, worth over £1million today's value. His obituary outlines his evolving career, describing his work as an engineer, millwright, agricultural implement maker and then finding a new business in shoe heel and toe tips.[3]

Susannah died a year later, having

**GEORGE AMBLER,**  
Duke Street, (opposite the Craven Bank) Settle,  
**AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT MAKER,**  
AND  
**IRONMONGER,**  
Takes this opportunity of thanking his friends and the public for the kind patronage so liberally bestowed upon him during the 11 years he has been in business, and respectfully solicits a continuance of the same.  
G. A. requests the public notice to his new and cheap stock of Ironmongery, Paraffin Lamps and Paraffin Oil all of the finest quality in the market, also Washing, Wringing, and Mangling Machines, Chaff Cutters, Corn Bruisers, Oil-cake Breakers, Liquid Manure Pumps, Tinkler's Patent Barrel Churns, &c. &c.

... Messrs. **George Ambler**, of **Settle**, **J. J. Hartley**, **Settle**, **Harvey and Greenwood**, **Settle**, and **Geo. Lowcock**, of **Close House**, also exhibited a variety of agricultural implements, which were commended.

... animal and would have been difficult to match:—Mr. **George Ambler**, of **Settle**, had a number of useful agricultural implements on the ground, including a reaper. Amongst the more distinguished visitors on

**SETTLE.**  
**WESLEYAN CHAPEL.**—Mr. **THOMAS COOK**, Wesleyan evangelist for the Bradford district, has been holding a series of special mission services in the Wesleyan chapel, **Settle**, this week, and we understand much good has resulted.—On New Year's Day Mr. **George Ambler** provided a substantial dinner for the chapel choir and the local preachers, after which a meeting for conversation was held.

**Mr. George Ambler**, of **Silsden**, died at **Ilkley** on **Monday**. He formerly lived at **Settle**, where he commenced business on a comparatively small scale as engineer, millwright, and agricultural implement maker. Finding inquiries for shoe heel and toe tips, he allowed his original business to drop into almost secondary importance, and turned his undivided attention to producing these articles, and on his own premises provided labour-saving machinery. Eventually the machines reached a high standard of excellence. Mr. **Ambler** at one time sat on the **Silsden Local Board**, and was also connected with the **Silsden Mechanics' Institution** and other public bodies. Aged 76.

Settle Graveyard Project

been provided with £100 per year as part of George's will. Susannah and George are buried together at St James Church in Silsden with a fine gravestone.



George's children didn't quite inherit his business acumen. Most had careers or married men with careers in farming or working class jobs in the Shipley/Keighley area. Only son George stayed in Settle working as a blacksmith. His first wife, Ann Smith died aged just 30 after giving birth to three children, all of whom died in childhood. They are all buried in unmarked graves in the Ancient Graveyard at Holy Ascension - maybe they were buried with Jane. George moved to Silsden and married his second wife, Annie Edmondson, helping to bring up his stepson Thomas.

When George (Senior) died a couple of articles explained that in 1889, George had bought a paper mill business from James Ambler, who could be a distant relation [3]. The Ingrow Paper Mill business had been in the family for at least 50 years. James applied for a patent for machinery in partnership with the famous entrepreneur Samuel Cunliffe Lister. [3].

Insolvent. In January, 1889, the debtor's father purchased from Mr James Ambler the Ingrow Paper Mills for the sum of £4,000. Mr Ambler had previously carried on there the business of a paper manufacturer.

A couple of years before, George's son Richard Robertshaw Ambler had married James' daughter Amy. He left the business to his son Richard Robertshaw Ambler who did not have the business brain of his dad.

Samuel C. Lister, and James Ambler, of Bradford, Yorkshire, manufacturers, for improvements in machinery for applying fringes to shawls and other articles.

Very quickly, by 1893, the firm was £20,000 in debt. Richard tried to sell it, [2] and went into new business partnerships but these just made the situation worse. Part of the business was tied up in a mortgage with the Craven Bank.[3] Richard was declared bankrupt.

**GEORGE AMBLER (LIMITED).**  
 This company has been formed with a capital of £15,000. It will take over the business of the late George Ambler, shoe heel and toe-tip manufacturer and mechanical engineer, at Canal Works, Silsden. The business has been established for forty years. The books show an average net profit for the past seven years of £1,129 per annum. The increased profit expected is estimated at £1,000. Mr. R. R. Ambler, who has managed the business for the last eight years, has consented to remain in the same capacity for other five years. The prospectus appears in another column.

**THE HEAVY FAILURE AT SILSDEN.**  
**DEFICIENCY £20,000**  
 This forenoon a meeting of the creditors of Richard Robertshaw Ambler, of Riversleigh, Silsden, in the parish of Kildwick, carrying on business as a heel and toe-plate manufacturer, under the name of Geo. Ambler, at Canal Works, Silsden, and under the style of Ambler and Co. at Ingrow Paper Mills, Keighley, as a paper maker, was held in the office of the Official Receiver at Bradford. There was a large attendance of creditors. A

The final nail in the coffin was in 1903 with Richard's incarceration for obtaining cotton twist under false pretences. He was convicted in Liverpool Court served 12 months with hard labour [3]. Without too many options, Richard followed many another convicts and bankrupts to the far side of the Atlantic.

At Liverpool Assizes, yesterday, Richard Robertshaw Ambler, 38, merchant, pleaded not guilty to having obtained by false pretences quantities of cotton twist from spinning companies in Lancashire. He was found guilty and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, with hard labour.

Guilty	...	...	...	...	12 Calendar Months hard labour
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Unlawfully obtained goods by false pretences, and unlawfully in incurring a debt obtained credit by fraud other than false pretences from the Thornton Spinning Co., the Beech Spinning Co., the Lion Spinning Co., the Mutual Spinning Co., the New Ladyhouse Spinning Co., and James Lambert, February—September, 1903

## Settle Graveyard Project

Richard and Ada and their 7 children spent the rest of their lives in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Richard died when he was 57, Ada lived until she was 91!

The photo was taken just before they left England in 1904 - they don't look too happy. [ph1]



*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. Life stories can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk](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'.*

*Newspaper cuttings by kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Yorkshire Evening Post, 3 – Bradford Daily Telegraph*

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

*ph1 – credited to the descendants of the family*