

The Prestons, representing the quiet underbelly of Settle life

Settle's history tends to be recalled through the accounts of middle class and wealthy residents but 80% of our population were working class. The Preston's tough working class lives give us a different perspective.

John Preston was an agricultural labourer in Hellifield who had seven children with his wife Dorothy Tomlinson. When John died in 1849, aged 58, Dorothy moved to Upper Settle with two teenaged sons and daughter Elizabeth. In the 1851 census return Dorothy described herself as a pauper and daughter Elizabeth as 'an idiot' – poor Elizabeth died in 1856, aged 30 and is buried in the Ancient graveyard where Dorothy would later join her.

This family were really very poor. Son Rodger, born in 1834, took work where he could get it on farms or in the lime works. In 1867, for some reason Rodger was found guilty and fined £5 or two months imprisonment for poisoning 106 fish by putting lime in a stream [1]. A £5 fine was a huge amount for someone in Rodger's situation. What a strange thing to do. Were there some mental health issues or did he have a point to prove?

After Dorothy died aged 73, in 1871, Rodger lived in the common lodging houses on Albert Hill. These provided the cheapest possible accommodation to avoid the workhouse but were cramped and unpleasant. They had a deserved reputation as a hotbed of crime, disease and prostitution. In 1882 Rodger couldn't afford to pay for that night's accommodation so slept in an outhouse of the Commercial Inn [1]. He was imprisoned for 14 days and may have been glad to have a roof over his head.

Lodging houses and vagrancy linked activities such as 'vagrant suspicious characters' were the most commonly reported 'crime' of 19th century Settle as illustrated in this police report of

POISONING FISH.

Roger Preston, Settle, was charged with having, on Sunday the 16th inst. poisoned a number of fish, by putting chloride of lime in a stream, called the Ings Beck, being a tributary of the river Ribbles. The charge was proved by Richard Whipp, gamekeeper, who was corroborated in some measure by James Hardacre. It appeared that one hundred and six fish weighing about 13lbs, had been destroyed. Mr. Johnson, of Lancaster, appeared for the defendant, and cross-examined the witnesses for the complainant, but did not succeed in shaking their testimony. The Bench inflicted the full penalty of £5 and costs, or in default 2 months imprisonment and expressed their determination to put an end to such wholesale destruction of fish.

POLICE COURT.—At this court on Monday last before the Rev. H. J. Swale, Roger Preston, of Settle, labourer, was sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment for being found wandering abroad and sleeping in an outhouse at the Commercial Inn the previous evening.

The following is a summary of the offences with which the prisoners were charged :—

Breaking into dwelling-houses.....	2
Burglary	2
Simple Larceny.....	17
Obtaining money or goods by false pretences	2
Assault common.....	10
Vagrant suspicious characters	6
Vagrants begging	21
Vagrant paupers.....	8
Vagrant neglect of family.....	6
Vagrant bastardy	2
Misdemeanour by threatening the life.....	2
Misdemeanour with intent to steal	1
Offence against the railway act.....	2
Drunk and creating a breach of the peace	5
Receiving stolen property.....	1
Deserters from the army.....	2
Rape	1
Forgery	1
Misdemeanour common.....	7
Total.....	98

following years were 8, 21, and 28. Of these 85 were males, and 13 females; 20 could neither read nor write, 75 could read imperfectly, and three had received a good education; 73 were English, 21 Irish, 3 Scotch, and 1 a native of Wales; 15 were committed to the assizes or sessions for trial, 61 were summarily dealt with, and 19 were discharged. The following is a summary of the

The Superintending Constable feels sorry he is not able to speak in such satisfactory terms with respect to the conducting of the common lodging-houses as in his former report, several of the keepers having been summoned and convicted in various penalties, for different offences, committed against the regulations of the common lodging house Act 1851, although the number of tramps who frequent the houses is considerably on the decrease. In the conduct of the public-houses and beer-houses the Superintendent is sorry to report, that the complaints brought before the Justices during the years 1855-6, are 3 in excess of the two former years; the numbers 1855-6, having been 14, whilst in 1853-4, there were only 11.

W. H. COCKSHOTT, Supt. Constable,

1856 by *PC Cockshott [1]*. The majority of ‘criminals’ were men who were not able to read well, which suggests desperate poor working class men – no surprises there then.

In January 1893, Rodger became victim to smallpox whilst living in the common lodging house [2]. The cramped conditions were ideal for the spread of infection. Fortunately Rodger recovered. Not everyone was as lucky – the vicar’s wife *Charlotte Garnett* (buried in *Old graveyard*) also became victim to smallpox and was placed in the isolation hospital in the same year, but died on 6 April. The Giggleswick Workhouse had a ‘fever hospital’ within it, although being in the main workhouse was not sufficiently isolated. In 1903 a dedicated isolation hospital for the area was built at Harden Bridge, west of Austwick.

SMALLPOX AT SETTLE. — An aged labourer named Rodger Preston has been attacked with smallpox whilst living in a common lodging-house at Settle. It is expected that the sufferer will be removed to the fever hospital at Giggleswick Workhouse, where the two patients from Bentham are at present being nursed. — . . .

Almost inevitably, Rodger’s last years and death in 1911, aged 77, were in the workhouse which provided the only care available for aged poor people. He was buried in the unmarked grave *Old DX5* with there other elderly men who died in the workhouse in a ‘Union grave’.

Rodger’s eldest sister *Charlotte* married *Stephen Preston* from Long Preston who could have been a relation. Stephen and Charlotte lived in Kirkgate where Stephen worked as an ostler, looking after the horses at one of Settle’s inns. Stephen’s brother *Thomas Preston* was the father of *Rose Martha* and *Ellen Preston* who became the first and second wives of the preacher *John Lord*.

Rodger’s elder brother *Ambrose Tomlinson Preston*, born in 1831, married *Elizabeth Young* and they had six children. Daughters *Mary* and *Charlotte* died in childhood and were buried at Giggleswick.

To make ends meet Ambrose was not unusual in trying to harvest nature’s gifts but was often caught, fined and imprisoned for poaching conies (rabbits), this one in 1854 [1].

SETTLE.
COMMITTAL.—On Tuesday last, George Towler and Ambrose Preston, both of Settle, were committed to Wakefield House of Correction for a month’s hard labour, having made default in payment of the fines and costs inflicted upon them on the 5th instant, for trespassing in search of conies, as reported in our last.

The railways provided an employment opportunity for Ambrose. This paid a relatively good salary, but at a price - it was dangerous work, with, on average, a navvy being killed for each mile of railway built. By the sounds of it, in 1867 Ambrose had a very lucky escape suffering a compound fracture of the skull [3]. Amazingly he lived for almost 20 more years.

SERIOUS ACCIDENT TO A PLATELAYER.—While a middle-aged man, in the employment of the Midland Railway Company as a platelayer, named Ambrose Preston, was at work in a sewer near the company’s line at Leeds on Thursday afternoon, a stone, weighing about 10 lb., fell from a height of about 12 feet upon his head, and caused a severe compound fracture of the skull. The unfortunate man, of whose recovery but faint hopes are entertained, belongs to Settle, but at the time of the accident resided at 15, Water-hall, Water-lans, Leeds.

After Ambrose’s accident the family settled in Settle, living in the railway cottages on Cammock Lane and he continued to work on the railways as a platelayer. Ambrose died in 1886, aged 55 and is buried in Giggleswick churchyard with Elizabeth who died in 1904 in Darwen but was brought back for burial.

Shortly after Ambrose died, in 1886, eldest daughter *Elizabeth Ann* gave birth to a son *Ambrose Thomas Preston*. This may have influenced mum Elizabeth’s decision to move to Darwen with the youngest children, although Elizabeth Ann had another child, *Charlotte Rosalie Preston*, a year later. In 1893 Elizabeth Ann married *James Gosling*, a miner and took daughter *Charlotte* with her. For some reason she left young Ambrose with grandmother Elizabeth.

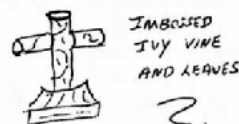
Settle Graveyard Project

After Elizabeth died in 1904 it seems that 17 year old Ambrose took off for Silverstream, New Zealand with his uncle **William Tomlinson Preston** and family, to find employment in a brickworks. New Zealand burial records tell us that two years later Ambrose had a tragic death, 'accidentally shot'. On a half day off work Ambrose had been out to shoot stray pigs with a friend. When their dogs smelled a lair Ambrose and his friend both fired but Ambrose was hit by his friend's bullet, which 'lodged in his head'. That really was unlucky. It took seven hours to extract his body from the dense bush. His workmates erected a red terracotta drainpipe memorial gravestone to him, embossed with ivy and leaves. Even worse, FindMyGrave website reports that vandals destroyed the memorial cross over 100 years later.

ROW No. 4:

247. In memory of Ambrose Thomas PRESTON, accidentally shot 28 July 1906, aged 19 years. Erected by Silverstream Liberal Club.

(Note: This is an unusual shaped cross shaped in terracotta red drainpipe style. The present Vicar stated that his mates worked at the Silverstream Brickworks, and they still don't know how the accident occurred - Ed.)



Aged 21

Accidentally Shot by companion at Haywards.

Memorial Cross erected by Silverstream Liberal Club was made from terracotta drainpipes styled by his workmates at the Brickworks. It stood for about 100 years until vandals destroyed it.



Back in Settle, Ambrose and Elizabeth's eldest son, **Thomas**, [ph2] married Cornish wife **Lucy Doney** [ph1]. He worked on the railways and they had a large family. Thomas and Lucy are buried in the unmarked grave *Old HX19* next to the grave of their son **William** [ph1] and his two wives, **Rose Mary Pratt** and **Gladys Hilda Tuke**.



In Loving Memory of Rose Mary Beloved wife of William Preston who died December 2nd 1918 Aged 30 years. Also of Gladys Hilda beloved wife of William Preston who died January 21st 1971 Aged 75 years and William Preston who died February 28th 1972 Aged 80 years, Old H20



Thomas and Lucy's son **Charles George Gordon Preston** is buried with his wife and mother in law in *New F2* and some of their family are buried in *New J49*



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, 'settle graveyard project'. The 'Old

Settle Graveyard Project

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'

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Northern Daily Telegraph, 3 – Leeds Mercury

ph1,2 – credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username ETH and MAF, Jo Summers

The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project