

Settle, a railway town

Of all the Victorian developments railways had the greatest impact on the daily life of the residents of Settle. The Skipton to Lancaster line, known as the 'Little North Western', was completed in 1850 but the building of the Settle to Carlisle line, between 1869 and 1875, was far more intrusive to the market town of Settle.

As with all technological developments through time there are pros and cons, winners and losers. Look at the debates about HS2 now. The Settle railways were no different. Inevitably there were arguments and debates at local and national level. The diaries of a schoolmaster *William Lodge Paley [WLP]* recorded debates about the Little North Western as early as 1844.

Feb. 25.—Saw in paper a list of shareholders in the Swaledale and Wensleydale bank wh. I copied out. Went to a railway meeting at Golden Lion from Skipton to Lancaster. Mr. Clayton in the chair, and Mr. Sharpe described the line and expense. Mr. T. Ingleby put a resolution in favour, seconded by Mr. Littledale. Mr. Farrer, Jr., cautioned the people against it, saying other lines might be set up and the transit not so great. Mr. Alcock, of Skipton, answered him, and J. Thompson made many attempts against it, saying he knew of railways where the law expenses were £30,000 and yet wanted an additional lawyer to be appointed for Settle. Mr. Littledale and Dr. De Vitre, of Lancaster, made good speeches in favour wh. were reported in the newspapers.

Similar arguments were raised about the Settle to Carlisle railway, but Parliamentary approval was given in 1866. [SC].

MIDLAND RAILWAY.—EXTENSION TO CARLISLE.—We understand the local opposition to this branch has been withdrawn. There can not be much doubt that the act will be passed in the next session, altho' strong opposition may be expected from rival companies. Altho' the main object of this line is to give the Midland greater facilities for commanding through traffic, one of its minor advantages will be to open an extensive district which has hitherto been practically unapproachable.

MIDLAND RAILWAY (SETTLE TO CARLISLE) BILL.

Friday, June 22nd.

This project came before the Select Committee of the House of Lords to-day, Lord Amherst presided. Mr. Venables, the principal counsel for the promoters, stated that the object was to construct a line from Settle *via* Hawes and Appleby, to Carlisle, and so give the Midland a through line from London to a junction with the Scottish trains in the Citadel Station at Carlisle, instead of being obliged, as now, to exchange with the London and North-western at Ingleton. It was further urged that the line would be of great service to the Wensleydale district, through which it would pass, and which is at present destitute of railway communication. By the junction at Hawes with an extension of the North Eastern from Leyburn, the Midland would be in communication with the East Coast systems. The London and North Western Company, through Mr Hope Scott, opposed the line on the general ground that this runs parallel with their own line, and that there is not room in the Citadel Station for Midland trains. Lords Wharncliffe, Bolton, and Wensleydale, spoke of the advantages the line would be to their estates at Hawes, and in Wensleydale. Mr. Other, of Elm House, stated that the district had fallen off through want of railway communication to carry their agricultural produce to Leeds, Bradford, and Halifax. He found this in the case of his own flour mill and woollen manufactory at Aysgarth. Several proprietors from the neighbourhood of Appleby and Kirkby Stephen stated that their tenants and all the tenants on their portion of the proposed line were in its favour. Mr Carr, the biscuit maker, of Carlisle, and others spoke of the difficulties of the carriage of their goods to Burton and the Midland counties generally. The managers of the Glasgow and South-Western and North British Railway Bills were also called in support of the case of the promoters, which was not concluded when the committee adjourned.

Tuesday, June 26th.

The preamble of the Midland Railway (Settle and Carlisle) Bill has been proved before the Lords' Committee. Slight modifications have been made of the claims as to the Citadel Station at Carlisle.

Eventually the railways brought benefits to almost everyone. The building and operation of the railways provided thousands of jobs. Farmers could easily transport livestock to and from markets. Tradesmen could get goods more quickly so new businesses sprang up, including Settle's first 'fish and chip saloon' [LSA] and the Langcliffe limeworks with the Hoffmann Kiln. The timely introduction of the Bank Holidays Act in 1872 enabled more leisure excursions by train.

Inevitably, the railways brought a halt to the droving trade and affected business at the coaching inns. But every cloud has a silver lining - the lack of late trains after theatre productions in Leeds prompted the formation of the Settle Amateur Dramatic Society in 1879, still running today.

David Hearsam,
FISH and
CHIP SALOON,
Wholesale Potato Dealer
The Folly, SETTLE.
+*+*+*+
Good Accommodation for Tourists
HOT and GOLD BATHS.

The building of the railway brought hundreds of working class workers to the area from all around the UK. These people had unusual accents, called a spade a blinking shovel and weren't afraid to use 'brute force' to settle an argument, destroying 'the quietude of our peaceful community' [CH,1923]. There was a stigma against navvies, especially those from other parts of the UK. This was probably justified by the numerous reports of court sessions finding navvies guilty of drunken behaviour and assault. Occasionally, offences were far worse [2].

CHARGE OF MURDER AT SETTLE—Ellis Parker *alias* Nelson, who had been, up to the time of his apprehension, employed on the new Settle and Carlisle line of railway, now in course of construction, was again brought up on remand on Wednesday, before Mr. J. Birkbeck, Rev. H. J. Swale, and Mr. H. Christie, charged with having, on the 9th inst., maliciously and wilfully, with malice aforethought, maltreated Christopher Wright, a beerseller, at Langcliffe, near Settle, from the effects of which he died on the 16th inst. A Coroner's inquest was held on the 17th inst., before Mr. T. P. Brown, deputy-coroner, when a verdict of manslaughter was returned. The deceased was 75 years old. The prisoner, who made no statement, was committed for trial.

The making of the Settle and Carlisle Railway was a very important event in the history of Settle. It brought into the town and neighbourhood an alien population, and soon after operations began the voice of the Cockney was heard in the land. Huts were erected to house the workmen and their families, a "Tommy Shop" was established in an old barn at the bottom of Duke Street to supply food, etc., and there were scenes of bustle and excitement in the somnolent little town.

As a rule the newcomers were well behaved, but occasionally quarrels arose which led to fights in the fields outside the town. Such fistic encounters as these took place were practically unknown in Settle, and I can recall several ghastly exhibitions which we youngsters witnessed with horror. The contestants, stripped to the waist, faced each other in a ring formed by partisans and other spectators, and then began a display of brute force, which increased in violence until one, or, in some instances, both were incapacitated and covered with blood. It was not an edifying spectacle, and I merely mention it to show how an alien element were able to destroy the quietude of our peaceful community.

Navvies did hard physical work so needed plenty of food and beer to sustain them with inevitable and sometimes fatal consequences – see Thomas Smith. Up at the Batty Wife settlement, where some 2000 people lived, the Midland Railway paid for church ministers and educators to work to try to calm things down. Of course, some navvies made a valuable contribution to the life of the town – see John Griffith Owen.

Settle town provided a base for operations and housed numerous temporary buildings, stables and (primitive) machinery, probably in the Ashfield area. To build embankments and cuttings for the railway significant earthworks were required, primarily achieved through the hard labour of the navvies. Tons of land below Ingfield (the Falcon Manor) were moved to make the embankment through to Settle Station. Two viaducts and more embankments were built beyond the station requiring a quarter of a million cubic yards of material and so the work continued for years. Can you imagine what the locals must have thought (and moaned about) while the railway was being built?

Attracting navvies to work in Settle

A relatively generous salary attracted working class labourers with transferable skills who were struggling to find work elsewhere because of increasing mechanisation in agriculture and mills or the declining Cornish mines. Workers would have attended a local hiring market held every quarter or found an advert in the local paper, such as this in 1873 [1], which emphasised good wages and lodgings. At that time there were 28 different railway companies requiring workers. It was common for navvies to travel around the country with the railway contractors to work on new jobs.

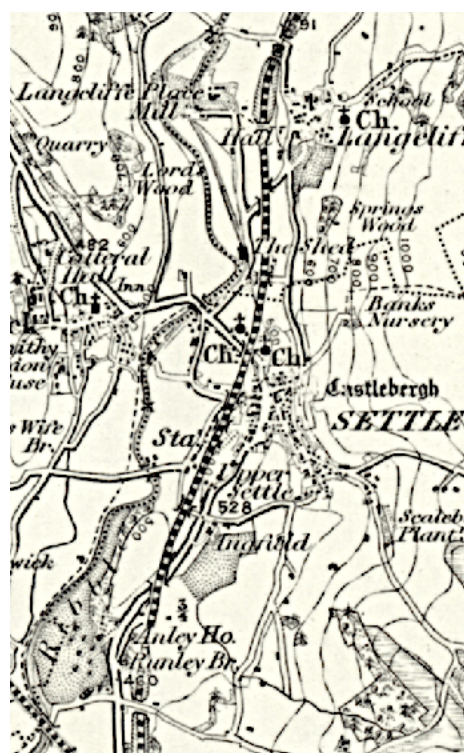
TUNNEL MINERS wanted at Blea Moor Tunnel, Settle and Carlisle Railway, No. 1 Contract. Wages, 6s. per day. Good lodgings immediately adjoining. Station, Ingleton via Leeds. Parties of ten men will be passed down.—Apply Alfred Terry, Midland Railway Office, Settle

Navvies needed to eat well to be strong enough to work and so their pay was relatively high – four shillings a week, including danger money. (Sometimes this was in the form of tokens which could only be spent in the workplace settlement stores, also run by the railway company.) As their work was more dangerous, tunnellers were paid more than regular navvies – six shillings

and six pence. Obviously, there was no sick pay or compensation for injury or death. Despite this salary, navvies and tunnellers generally lived hand to mouth, so are unlikely to have earned enough to pay for a gravestone when they or one of their family died.

Navy huts

Some Settle navvies were able to board with local families, generally in Upper Settle. However the demand for accommodation outstripped supply so settlements of temporary wooden navy huts were built close to the working sites. In Settle there were five settlements alongside the railway. There were 5 huts at Runley Bridge, 17 at Goldielands, 16 at Ashfield, one at Marshfield and the 4 Oxbang huts. The Ashfield huts also contained a 'hospital' of some sort and, nearby, PC Alfred Phillipson lived at the Marshfield hut. He would have been a busy man. A photo, published in WR Mitchell's book 'Settle and the Railway', shows huts by the arches north of the viaduct opposite the church. The newspaper cutting describes a 'Tommy Shop' in a barn at the bottom of Duke Street to provide supplies. Moving up the valley there were 4 navy huts in Langcliffe, 21 in Stainforth and 15 at 'Elworth Bridge' – Helwith Bridge.



A navy village was not the dream location for child rearing but some navvies had hardy wives who gave birth to children and brought them up in the huts, although child mortality was even higher than usual. That's a way to breed rough diamonds! Typically, a navy hut contained such a family who also provided lodgings for a number of other, single navvies. The family would have been at one end of the hut, boarders at the other, with the central area for eating and cooking. This hut recorded in an 1871 census return is typical.



Railway Hut	1	George Gibbs	Head	Mar.	30	Railway Miller	Honourable Gloucester
		Franc. Do	Wife	Mar.	28		Cornwall: Towleclath
		James H. Do	Son		12		Do. Do
		Lavinia Do	Daughter		8		Derbyshire: Vermunell
		George Do	Son		3		Do : Do.
		Mary Do	Daughter		1		Yorkshire: Stannage
		Francis Frattlefarty	Boarder	Widow	24	Railway Labourer	Staffordshire: Lichfield
		James Smith	Do	Widow	25	Do. : Widow	Lancashire: Liverpool
Railway Hut contine		Richard Bentley	Boarder	Widow	27	Railway Labourer	Devonshire: Devonport
Widow		Thomas Watkins	Do	Widow	26	Do. : Do	Staffordshire: Lichfield
		Robert Rouse	Do	Widow	25	Do : Do	Suffolk: Helmingham
		James Thomas	Do	Widow	26	Do : Do	Devonshire: Plymouth

Unsurprisingly most navvies and tunnellers were unmarried men in their twenties and thirties. The birth places of the labourers on this census return show that navvies came from Lancashire, Yorkshire and Derbyshire but also some from further afield. A noticeably high number of navvies gave false names and were untraceable before and afterwards. Some gave incredible names – one man above called himself **Francis Frattlefarty** from Lichfield. One wonders about his

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personal hygiene? Unsurprisingly, he can't be traced any further. Several navvies had an unknown birthplace or name, recorded as 'NK' – not known.

St. Sebastian	1	Joseph Croxman	Head	Age	44	Excavator	Refuge, Settle
		Amelia	Wife	Age	44		
		William	Son	Age	21	Green Grocer	
		Harriet	Daughter	Age	9		
		'NK'	Son	Age	38		
		'NK'	Daughter	Age	28		
		'NK'	Daughter	Age	22		
		'NK'	Daughter	Age	18		
		'NK'	Daughter	Age	14		
		'NK'	Daughter	Age	10		

The navy huts were serviced by a variety of tradesmen and professionals. Greengrocer Robert Ferris, the brother of **Thomas Ferris** served the Batty Wife settlement. In this research, three navvies lived in navy hut communities at the time of the 1871 census – **James Gibbins** lived in the Ashfield Huts (see **John Barrett**), **Joseph Smith** was listed as living in 'Wood Hut' at Elworth Bridge' and **Peter Day**, who registered the death of **William Potterton**, lived in the Runley Mill huts.

The life of the navy was recreated in Channel 4's Time Team in 2008.

Memorials to the Navvies

The Settle church porch houses one of two commemorative plaques dedicated to the memory of to the navvies who died during the building of the railway between Settle and Dent. The money was raised by subscription, with the Midland Railway contributing £25. It a shame the plaque in Settle doesn't give any indication of how many are buried in the churchyard or who they are. It's taken nearly 150 years to find out.

To the memory of those, through accidents lost their lives in constructing the railway works between Settle and Dent Head. This tablet was erected at the joint expense of their fellow workers and the Midland Railway Company 1869 - 1876.



The matching plaque with an identical inscription is in St Leonard's Church, Chapel-le-Dale. As time has gone by, the navvies' contribution and sacrifices are still being appreciated. As part of the millennium celebrations the Chapel-le-Dale community erected a further stone and brass plaque in the graveyard to commemorate the 200+ burials of workers and their families. Over 80 burials were the result of a smallpox epidemic that swept through the community at Betty Green.

In 2016 a modern carved stone memorial was erected at St John's Church in Cowgill near Dent to commemorate the 72 burials of workers and their families in their graveyard.

Ribblehead has also commemorated lives lost with old and new memorials.



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' family tree on ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project

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Settle Graveyard Project

is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@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.

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Yorkshire Post, 2 – Leeds Mercury

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