

Accidental deaths, 1873 - 4, in chronological order

John Griffith Owen, labourer, died February 1873

It would be hard to find a more common Welsh name than John Owen, especially on the island of Anglesey and it's impossible to trace this man's roots. However, this John Owen is the best known of Settle's navy fatalities.



Sacred to the memory of John G Owen of Holyhead who died at Settle Feby 18th 1873 aged 19 years. Ai mewn bedd man loan back -O l'e. loan sy'n llwch bellach. Ond daw'n ol etto'n iach At ail vesi'n hi tlydach, B4.

(Young John is now in his grave, John that is all ashes now, But he'll come back a second time, A thousand times better)

John G Owen's gravestone tells us that was born in 1854 and was from Holyhead on Anglesey. There is no birth registered around that time for John Griffith Owen in Anglesey, nor for a John Owen with a mother's maiden name Griffith. There are nine John Owens registered on Anglesey around 1854. Four have mother's maiden name of Jones, two of Owen and also a Roberts, Evans and Williams. It really was a common name.

At the time of the 1871 census a John Owen from Holyhead, born in 1854, was lodging with his father John and brother Henry in 'number 9 railway hut' at Crosby Garrett near Kirkby Stephen. The three of them were working as 'quarryman and miner'. However, as we know, the name is so common we have no idea if this was the same John.

John had had settled into Settle life by November 1872, performing for the Temperance Lifeboat Crew Society [1]. Incredibly, Settle folk raised enough money to build and launch six lifeboats between 1868 and 1912, saving 148 lives in all. Three boats were stationed in Anglesey so John's contribution was most apt.

John was killed a few months later on 18 February 1873, aged 19, 'accidentally killed by a crane falling and striking him',

SETTLE.
TEMPERANCE LIFE BOAT CREW—The members and friends of the above society gave the first of their entertainments this season on Saturday evening last, Captain Phillipson in the chair. The Hall was well filled with a very enthusiastic audience. The programme, which comprised songs, readings, recitations, and dialogues, was gone through in a very creditable manner. The reading in the Lancashire dialect by Master R Lambert, entitled "Owd Shunt" kept the audience convulsed with laughter, and was deservedly applauded. The dialogues with the assistance of a few friends were very creditably rendered. Mr. John Owen very efficiently sung a Welsh song.

When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
Crooklands February 1873 Langcliffe	John Owen	Male	19 Years	Labourer	Accidentally killed by a crane falling and striking him	Information received from Mr. Parkinson Broom, Deputy Comptroller Yorkshire Inquest held 18 Feb 1873	Crooklands February 1873	John Parkinson Registrar

The report of the inquest describes that he was working underneath a crane in number 3 cutting near Langcliffe when one of the crane supports fell on him, killing him instantly [2]. In this case the

settlers

SETTLE—FATAL ACCIDENT.—John Owen, aged nineteen years, whilst working underneath a crane in No. 3 cutting, near Langcliffe, on the new Settle and Carlisle Railway, was killed on Tuesday last by one of the legs or supports of the crane falling upon him, causing his instant death. An inquest was held the same evening, when a verdict of "Accidentally killed" was returned by the jury, who recommended that for the future all the cranes used on the line should undergo an inspection daily by some competent person in the employ of the Midland Railway Company.

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jury acknowledged the need for better Health and Safety procedures, *'that for the future all the cranes used on the line should undergo an inspection daily by some competent person in the employ of the Midland Railway Company.'* Now that's a good idea, to start with.

John is buried in Settle graveyard and has a fine stone, thought to be arranged by his colleagues. John was working and died at Langcliffe, but his body will have been brought to Settle for the coroner's inquest. This may explain why he was buried at Settle rather than Langcliffe.

Tom Twisleton, the local poet, was captivated by John's tragic story and wrote a poem of some 15 verses. This was Tom's only 'non dialect' poem. It's clear that John was a well respected and popular young man. Typical of the Victorian era, the second half of the poem presents ways to view his death as a matter of fact and inevitability. Of course, his passing should be rejoiced.



*No farewells spoken
As he went forth at dawning of day
For little they thought, ere the morning had fled,
That the summons would call him away.*

*His face was bright as morning spring
His heart free from sorrow and shame
And blythe as a lark, he would carol and sing
Hymns, in praise of his maker's name.*

*As oft 'twas his custom, whilst plying his toil
To enliven his task with a song
Or, with friends interchanging the joke or the smile,
To make labour pass lightly along.*

*He hath greeted his mates at the cutting of rock
And to work they have gone with a will.
Whilst he, humming a tune, kept time to the stroke
Of the rattling hammer and drill*

*The crane groaned and creaked and loud roared the shot
And the whistling engine went by them
These were every day things and they heeded them not
Nor dreamed they that danger was nigh them*

*But hark! a strange sound for a moment is heard
The crane that overhangs them is broken
And the heavy jib falls ere a hand call be stirred
Or a sentence of warning be spoken*

*In a breath, in an instant, it falls down the rock
And the workmen are scattered below
But all, except one, have escaped from the shock*

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He, alone, have received the fell blow.

*They raise him up gently and utter his name
Tis in vain - he hath breathed his last breath
The spirit hath fled unto Him, whence it came
And the body is silent in death.*

*Ah! now heavy sobs convulse the strong breast
And tears trickle down the hard face
As they take the remains of the fairest and best
And bear them away from the place*

*Oh man in thy power! Oh youth in thy pride!
trust not in thy strength or thy skill.
When the messenger calls thee to lay them aside
Be prepared to submit to his will.*

*But how often it happens, that we of short sight,
Are apt to lament or complain
When death takes the hopeful, the young and the bright
While the wretch lingers on in his pain.*

*But thou, whose we are and whose the world is,
Thou, who wash'd out our sins with Thy blood
In thy goodness and wisdom dost nothing amiss
But arranges all things for our good.*

*Look thou down, in thy mercy and pitying power
on the parents who mourn for their son
Give them strength to look up in affliction's dark hour
And say, 'Let the Lord's will be done'.*

*Thou his sun has gone down, ere it reach'd the noonday
Though sudden and fearful the blow
Yet pause and reflect — he hath but gone the way
We all, sooner or later, must go.*

*Then dry up the tear, and let sorrowing cease
When the body is laid neath the sod;
For, rejoicing above at its early release
The spirit is present with God.*



Thomas Smith, (alias Bill Farrer), miner, died May 1873

Thomas had a different background to most of the other navvies. He was born in 1831 in Wakefield, one of five children of a tailor, **William Smith**, and his wife **Elizabeth Brook**.

Tailoring was a skilled occupation and would have been regarded more favourably than labouring. Perhaps this enabled Thomas to 'marry well'. He married **Eliza Seal**, the daughter of

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Samuel Seal who ran a quarry near Wakefield. Eliza's brothers Stephen, James and Walter continued their father's business and were major employers of men, women and children in the area as Stephen's obituary explains [3]. They specialised in making scythe stones – scythestone cutters.

Initially Thomas worked as a plasterer in South Yorkshire while Eliza brought up two sons and a daughter. Another daughter died in infancy. By 1874 Thomas and the family were in Stainforth where Thomas had found work on the railway as a miner (tunneller).

and bereavement. The late Mr. Seal, who was in his 69th year, was a son of the late Mr. Samuel Seal, of Heath Quarries, near Wakefield, a gentleman long well known and highly esteemed in that district. Deceased came to Darfield many years ago, on becoming the lessee of Earl Fitzwilliam's quarries in that township. These quarries he has carried on with great success, having given employment to a large number of workmen. He also worked, first in connection with his father, and latterly on his own account, extensive quarries at Morley Moor, Derbyshire.

No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
55	Found dead Fifteenth March 1874 Settle	Thomas Smith alias Bill Farrer	Male	43 years	Miner	Found dead in the River Ribble with no marks of violence upon his person	Information received from Thos. P. Brown Deputy Coroner for Yorkshire. Settle 15th March 1874	Seventeenth March 1874	Wm. Cowburn Registrar

On 15th March 1874 Thomas was 'found dead' in the River Ribble. There is no indication how long he had been there, nor when he actually died. The coroner said there were 'no marks of violence on his person' implying that he was not assaulted. This inquest took place at the Royal Oak Inn.

The newspaper report said that Thomas seemed to have fallen in the river near King's Mill being 'the worse for liquor late on Saturday night' [1].

It also tells us he resided at Stainforth, perhaps at one of the 21 navy huts there. He had an alias 'Bill Farrer'. The Farrer family owned the Clapham area – perhaps Thomas resembled one of them? Thomas is buried in an unmarked grave in the Ancient graveyard.

SETTLE.

MAN DROWNED.—On Sunday last the body of a man was seen in the river Ribble near to King's Mill, Settle, and on its being got out of the water, it was identified as the body of Thomas Smith alias Bill Farrer, who had been employed on the new line of railway here. The body was conveyed to the Royal Oak Inn, where an inquest was held on Tuesday last, before Thomas P. Brown, Esq, deputy coroner, when evidence was given that deceased was seen the worse for liquor late on Saturday night, going in the direction of Giggleswick, and it is supposed he had mistaken the road, and wandered down to the river side, and accidentally fallen in. There were no marks of violence found on his body, and the jury returned a verdict of "Found dead." The deceased was 43 years of age, and resided at Stainforth.

Eliza took the three children back to Wakefield. Their sons found employment in her family's scythestone cutting business and their daughter married a man who was also employed there. Eliza died in October 1896, six months after their son Walter, in Ackworth just outside Wakefield.



James Lashbrook, Miner, died March 1874

James, born in 1846 in Westleigh near Barnstable, Devon was the second of five children of William Lashbrook, an agricultural labourer and his wife Mary Ann Lock. James worked as a farm servant in the farm next door to his parents'. However, in subsequent years he became a miner – this was a common occupation in the south west and will have prepared James to work on the railways as a tunneller.

James death certificate reports that he died on 28th March 1874, aged 28, 'accidentally killed by explosion of a dynamite cartridge'. The newspaper reports that James was employed as a

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miner 'in the tunnel, near Ingleton'[1]. It's not obvious where this tunnel would be, but someone with a more detailed knowledge will hopefully know.

However, James' death certificate details his death was 'at Settle' after being brought back for the coroner's inquest.

A MAN KILLED BY A BLAST.—An inquest was held on Saturday last before Mr. T. P. Brown, deputy Coroner, touching the death of James Lashbrook, a miner employed in the tunnel, near Ingleton, on the new Settle and Carlisle Railway. After hearing the evidence, a verdict of "Accidentally killed by a dynamite cartridge," was returned.

No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
61	Twenty eighth day of March 1874 at Settle in the Parish of Ingleton	James Lashbrook	Male	28 years	Miner	Accidentally killed by explosion of a dynamite cartridge	Information received from Mr. T. P. Brown Deputy Coroner for Yorkshire Inquest held 28 March 1874	Twenty first March 1874	Wm Cowburn Registrar

James is buried in an unmarked grave in the Ancient graveyard.

James' siblings also worked as, or married labourers and stayed in Devon and Cornwall. James' brother George died in the same year as James, aged 21. William's father lived to the age of 78, marrying his (much younger) second wife when he was 68.



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 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 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Yorkshire Post, 3 – Barnsley Chronicle