

## The Coroner, the Registrar and the Surgeons

The inquests of the navvies were held by coroner **Thomas Brown** or deputy coroner **Thomas P Brown**. The registrar of all the deaths was **John Cowburn**. Deaths were obviously certified by doctors but they were not all named. **Francis Green** certified two and **James Hartley** certified one.

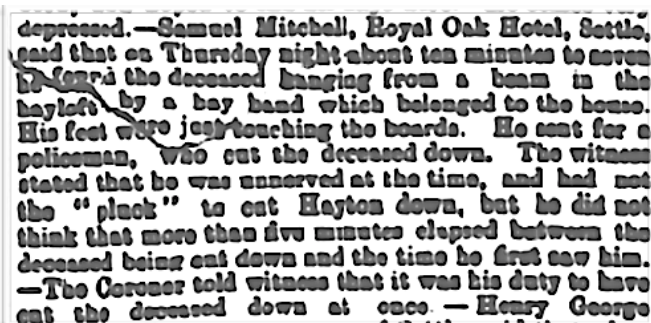
### Thomas Brown and Thomas Parkinson Brown, the coroners

Thomas Brown, a farmer's son, was born in 1801 in Airton, Malhamdale. In Skipton, in 1837, he married **Mary Bradley**, an innkeeper's daughter. By the time of the 1841 census he was working as a solicitor and coroner for the Skipton district. They had five children although two died in infancy. The only surviving son, **Thomas Parkinson Brown**, was born in 1838.

The internet tells us '*a Coroner is a government official who is empowered to conduct or order an inquest into the manner or cause of death, and to investigate or confirm the identity of an unknown person who has been found dead. The Coroner usually came from a legal or medical background and more often than not, was appointed for life by the respective County.*'

Obviously, son Thomas Parkinson Brown would carry on his father's business as a solicitor and 'deputy coroner' to his father. Father and son were exceedingly busy men. A quick search of 19th century newspapers throws up literally hundreds of articles. They presided over the six cases of suicide found in Settle's Ancient graveyard, the murder of beer seller Christopher Wright in Langcliffe by navy Ellis Parker/Nelson and the many navvies killed between Settle and Dent. Father Thomas held the inquests for **Thomas Burton** and **Abraham Cooling**, whereas son Thomas, 'deputy coroner' held the rest of them.

Father and son must have had incredibly strong stomachs and very thick skins. The newspaper reports of some of the deaths are graphic enough, never mind examining bodies in real life with associated odours. Son Thomas was not afraid to say things as they were. One of Settle's unfortunate young men ended his own life in the Royal Oak Inn in Settle, hanging from a beam. The innkeeper Samuel Mitchell found him and sent for a policeman who cut him down. Samuel said he felt '*unnerved at the time and had not the pluck to cut him down.*' In a poor quality article, Thomas Parkinson Brown made it very clear that it had been Samuel's duty to cut him down at once [5]. I'm not sure many people would have been able to do that.



depressed.—Samuel Mitchell, Royal Oak Hotel, Settle, said that on Thursday night about ten minutes to seven he found the deceased hanging from a beam in the hayloft by a bay band which belonged to the house. His feet were just touching the boards. He sent for a policeman, who cut the deceased down. The witness stated that he was unnerved at the time, and had not the "pluck" to cut Hayton down, but he did not think that more than five minutes elapsed between the deceased being cut down and the time he first saw him.—The Coroner told witness that it was his duty to have cut the deceased down at once.—Henry George

The Brown family lived together in the High Street in Skipton for their whole lives. Thomas (Snr) died in 1876. Son Thomas and his sisters remained single. Thomas (Jnr) died in 1905 leaving a whopping £72,000, worth well over £10 million in today's value, to the remaining sister Isabel who died three years later.

Thomas (Jnr)'s obituary explains that he had been the coroner of Skipton for over 40 years, taking over from his father. He was the senior partner of 'Brown, Charlesworth and Wood' solicitors so will have had good links with the *Charlesworth* family in Settle. Thomas also had responsibilities with the Board of Guardians and the Rural Sanitary Authority for over 25 years. He became the Superintendent Registrar for the Skipton District. Another report says he died of

**MR. T. P. BROWN, OF SKIPTON.**

The death took place yesterday at Harrogate of Mr. Thomas Parkinson Brown, of Skipton, at the age of 68 years. He had been in failing health some little time. The interment takes place at Skipton on Tuesday.

Mr. Brown only resigned the Coronership of the Skipton district in December of last year, having discharged the duties of that office for over forty years. He was senior partner in the firm of Brown, Charlesworths, and Wood, solicitors, of Skipton.

Owing to the absence of his father (who was then Coroner for the Skipton district) Mr. Brown had to hold his first inquest when he was under age.

Mr. Brown occupied the position of Clerk to the Guardians of the Skipton Union and to the Rural Sanitary Authority for over a quarter of a century, and at the time of his death held the office of Superintendent Registrar for the Skipton district, and was chairman of the Skipton Room and Power Company.

He was a Liberal, a Churchman, and an enthusiastic sportsman.

a 'Fatal Paralytic Seizure' but also showed a more human side to him, 'many public institutions in Skipton and district were objects of Mr Brown's benevolence, while the poor and unfortunate often found in him a sympathetic and practical friend' [2].

**SKIPTON SOLICITOR DEAD.  
FATAL PARALYTIC SEIZURE AT HARROGATE.**

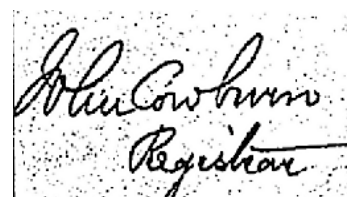
Many public institutions in Skipton and district were objects of Mr. Brown's beneficence, while the poor and unfortunate often found in him a sympathetic and practical friend.

Edgar Wood from Rotherham had been made a partner in Thomas' business in Skipton during the 1890s and took over as senior partner when Thomas died. Edgar had been working as deputy coroner and so also took over as coroner from Thomas, a post which he held for 38 years until his death aged 82. I don't think an equal opportunities recruitment policy was necessarily used for this appointment.

*'Coroner's Inquests were usually held within the space of 48 hours following a death that appeared to be of a suspicious or unexplained nature. They were usually held in a local public-house, ale house, municipal building, or parish workhouse, but sometimes in the building where the death occurred. The account of the inquest appearing in local newspapers included the name of the deceased, where they died, and how they died. Some casualties were taken to the hospital so the inquest would be conducted there, rather than where the person was living.'* This explains why some of our navvies are buried in Settle rather than where they lived and died, at Batty Wife for example.

## John Cowburn, the registrar and his dad

John Cowburn was the registrar for all the deaths in this study and so we have numerous examples of his handwriting and signature.



John's father, another John Cowburn, had been an attorney and solicitor in Settle. In the 1840s John (Snr) took advantage of investments in 'railway mania'. In partnership with Edward James Norris, 'Cowburn and Norris' was set up to manage the business of a railway planned between Lancaster and Newcastle upon Tyne [3]. The reality was that a third of all planned railways failed, including this one. Eventually John became insolvent [4]. The wrangling over his estate continued several years after his death. Despite all of this, John must have been well regarded as he had been elected to the prestigious position of High Constable for the West Riding in 1847.

**LANCASTER & NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE RAILWAY.**

**R**UMOURS having been industriously circulated to the prejudice of this undertaking, we beg to assure the Applicants for Shares that the intention to Abandon the Line never existed, and that every exertion will continue to be made to bring the matter before the ensuing Parliament.

**COWBURN & NORRIS,**

Solicitors to the Projected Company.

## Settle Graveyard Project

In 1850 John was taken to court by *John Johnson Hartley*, a local ironmonger for failure to honour a rather substantial promissory note [5]. Oops.

On the 7th Aug. 1850 John Cowburn, having become insolvent, executed a deed whereby he assigned all his personal estate, and covenanted to convey all his real estate to the defendant John Ellis, in trust for the benefit of his creditors. In the month

**HARTLEY v. COWBURN.**  
The case was not defended. Mr. Martin and Mr. Overend were for plaintiff. Plaintiff, Mr. John Johnson Hartley, is an ironmonger at Settle, and defendant is a solicitor at the same place. This action was for a promissory note, value £425, with interest, dated 9th December, 1847. The signature of defendant was proved by Mr. Seed, clerk with Mr. Pearson, Kirkby Lonsdale, and the jury brought in a verdict for £425, with £51 interest.

**MELANCHOLY ACCIDENT.** On Monday, February 12th, an accident, attended with fatal consequences, occurred to John Cowburn, Esq., of Settle. He had been skating on Birkbeck Wear, and was about to finish, when he unfortunately went against a piece of rough ice, and fell heavily. His cheek was cut through under the eye. He was out on the Tuesday and Wednesday, but on the following Tuesday he was no more. It is supposed that Erysipelatous inflammation had spread fatally to the brain. He held the offices of Clerk of the County Court and Chief Constable for the Division of Staincliffe West, for which offices his Son is a candidate.

John had a most unfortunate death in 1855 whilst skating on the ice at 'Birkbeck Wear', near Anley [6]. The severity of 19th century weather was frequently commented on by newspapers. As was so common in those days, John appeared to die from infection picked up at the time rather than from the injury itself.

Son John Cowburn (Jnr), born in 1837, was just 18 when his father died and he did well to continue the family business in Settle. He worked as an auctioneer, a Registrar of births, marriages and deaths, and a High Bailiff [3], working for the courts to execute warrants and court orders. John married Elizabeth Marsden Ayrton, the daughter of Henry Ayrton, the innkeeper of the Royal Oak in Settle and she gave him four sons. Unfortunately, sons John, aged six, and Richard, aged three, both died in 1873, presumably of an infection.

Despite being busy as the Registrar, especially during the railway construction years, in 1876 John was secretary to the Yorkshire Banking Company involved in setting up Craven Pure Oil Cake and Corn Mill Co Ltd using Bridge End Mill [CH].

Tragically, John also had a premature and sudden death later that year, aged just 39. Just the week before he had advertised an auction of livestock for John Henry Dale after the death of his father *David Hall Dale* who had previously taken the railways to court with a significant victory [CH].

North Craven Industrial and Provident Building Society paid John tribute as a most efficient and trustworthy official [7].

John's children had incredible lives and the full account is provided by the graveyard project.

**APPOINTMENT.**—We have before omitted to state that Mr John Cowburn, of Settle, has recently been appointed High Bailiff of the County Court, at Settle, in place of Mr James Wilkinson. In that capacity, Mr Cowburn officiated in Court the first time on Thursday, the 15th inst.

**The YORKSHIRE BANKING COMPANY, Settle.**  
Sec. (pro tem.)—Mr. JOHN COWBURN.  
Office—NEW-STREET, SETTLE.

This Company is formed to lease the "BRIDGE END MILL," Settle, of HECTOR CHRISTIE, Esq., who has offered it on very reasonable terms taking into consideration the admirable situation of the Premises and the Water Power in connection therewith.

The objects of the Company are to manufacture pure Oil Cake, also to carry on the Business of Corn Millers.

There not being any Manufactory of this description within a large radius, and there being a great and increasing consumption of Oilcake and Feeding Stuffs in this neighbourhood, the promoters have every confidence of success, and anticipate that a great portion of the Shares will be taken up by consumers of the productions of the proposed Company.

of management. The report concludes with a testimony of respect to the memory of Mr. John Cowburn who as Settle agent and joint secretary, was a most efficient and trustworthy official.





## Surgeons to the Settle to Carlisle Line

### The Green brothers, surgeons to the Settle to Carlisle Railway

Edwin Septimus Green, born in 1843, was one of eight children of **Joseph Septimus Green**, a surgeon in Co Durham. Edwin qualified as a surgeon in Edinburgh, regarded as the most prestigious training college for medics at the time. In 1867, he married **Harriet Anderson** from South Shields and they moved straight to Settle, living in the large house opposite the Golden Lion. They had three daughters.

Edwin was appointed surgeon to the Settle to Carlisle Railway. His Settle and Horton-in-Ribblesdale district included the Ingleton Fells and Batty Green. Edwin also served the Settle Union Workhouse in Giggleswick. He was only 27 when he died under tragic circumstances, being dragged by his horse for nearly a mile [5]. Another report explains he was the '*surgeon in connection with the Settle to Carlisle Railway*' and '*had never lost a case*'. He was given '*a full choral service in respect to his memory*'. Even though he was only in Settle for four years before he died, perhaps the manner of his death contributed to the decision to dedicate a beautiful church window to him at Holy Ascension? The window design includes the phrase '*He went doing good*'.

**SERIOUS ACCIDENT.**—An accident of a serious nature happened to Mr. E. S. Green, surgeon, of this town, on Tuesday last. Mr. Green had ridden his horse to Swarthmoor, which is distant a few miles from Settle, and where he had some hay-makers at work who were leading hay. The horse Mr. Green had ridden was being fastened to the hay cart, to be used as a trace-horse, when, before it got properly yoked, it suddenly started off at full gallop, Mr. Green having his legs entangled in a rope attached to the horse and was dragged along the road a considerable distance—nearly a mile—towards Little Staithforth, where, fortunately, the runaway was stopped by Mr. E. Johnson, who was coming along the road in his conveyance which he pulled across the road, and succeeded in stopping the horse. Mr. Green was found to be very much bruised and lacerated, his clothes were literally worn through with being dragged and coming in contact with the road, and the flesh was torn from him in a frightful manner. Mr. Green was able to be removed to his residence the same evening, and medical aid was promptly in attendance. At the time of writing (Thursday) we understand Mr. Green to be in a very critical state.



Widow Harriet, her mum and their daughters moved to Portsmouth. When they died, the bodies of Harriet and her mum were brought back to Settle for burial. Harriet's mum was one of the oldest people in the Ancient Graveyard.

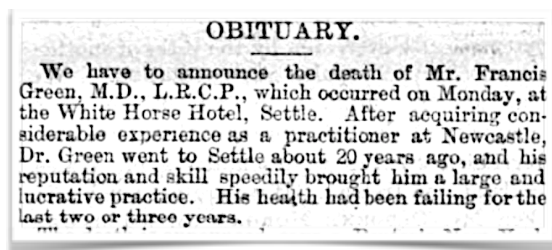
*In loving Remembrance of Edwin Septimus Green, surgeon, born at Houghton-le-spring, Co Durham, Nov 13, 1843, died at Settle Aug 3 1871. Also of Harriet his wife who died June 22nd 1899, and of Harriet Anderson, her mother who died March 22 1904, age 92, D2*

Unsurprisingly their three daughters married wealthy professionals. Daughter Emily married the Rev'd Thomas Charlesworth, son of the Settle solicitor.

This was not the end of the Greens' story in Settle. Edwin's brother, Francis Green, took over as railway surgeon. Francis certified the deaths of navvies James Harry Smith and Robert Ralph and probably others too. As was the norm for professional bachelors, Francis resided at the inns.

**BOARD OF GUARDIANS.**—At the fortnightly meeting of the Guardians of this union, held in the Board-room, on Tuesday last, Mr. Francis Green, in succession to his brother, the late Mr. E. S. Green, was appointed medical officer for the district of Settle, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, and Ingleton Fells; also to the small-pox and fever hospital at Batty Green within the above union.

At the time of the 1881 census he was at the Commercial Hotel and died in August 1890 at the White Horse Hotel. He is buried in *Old grave B13*. His obituary describes '*His reputation and skill speedily brought him a large and lucrative practice*' [1].



*In loving memory of Francis Green, Surgeon of Settle. Who died Aug 25 1890 aged 53. Jesu. Mercy, OLD B13*



## James Hartley, surgeon

Thomas Cooper's death was certified by James Hartley. James, born in 1828, was one of at least ten children of **John Hartley** and **Esther Kendal** of Catteral Hall in Giggleswick. James married **Fanny Howson** and they had two children. James worked in the large house on the Market Place opposite the end of the Shambles, later occupied by *Dr Charles William Buck*. Later it became a bank. Newspaper reports indicate that James was kept very busy responding to numerous railway related accidents. James and Fanny retired to Carshalton, Surrey to be with their son Reginald.



*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 [settlresearch@gmail.com](mailto:settlresearch@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 – Leeds Mercury, 2 – Preston Herald, 3 – Kendal Mercury, 4 – County Courts Chronicle, 5 – Lancaster Gazette, 6 – Westmorland Gazette, 7 – Lancaster Guardian*

*CH - with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer*