

# Thomas Oates, a quaint character with an unfortunate spelling issue

Thomas [ph1, 2 below], born on 21 December 1808, was the eldest son of William Oates and his wife Elizabeth Wainman. William was a successful draper who ran his business from Great George Street in the centre of Leeds. Thomas took an apprenticeship in bootmaking.



In October 1836 Thomas married Ann Baldwin, the daughter of John Baldwin, a nailer, in Settle. Thomas set up his shoemaking business in Kirkgate in Settle. He took pride in his *'Practical Philosophy which provides for the comfort and ease of the human foot to merit a share of that patronage which a discerning public can bestow; the admirers of taste may be supplied without any puffing'* [SC]. Presumably some of his customers understood that!

**THOMAS OATES,**  
**BOOT AND SHOE MAKER,**  
KIRKGATE, SETTLE.

Desires to express his thanks for the many favours already conferred, and hopes by attention to that Practical Philosophy which provides for the comfort and ease of the human foot to merit a share of that patronage which a discerning public can bestow: the admirers of taste may be supplied without any puffing.

Thomas and Ann didn't have any children but Thomas provided an apprenticeship for Ann's younger brother John Baldwin and his nephew, another Thomas Oates.

Thomas was a Methodist man. In 1852 he gave an animated address at the opening of the new Langcliffe Wesleyan School [1]. He also taught in the Wesleyan school, to the benefit of numerous children [A].

**OPENING OF A NEW WESLEYAN SCHOOL AT LANGCLIFFE.**—The necessity of a school-room and a suitable place of worship for the Wesleyans at Langcliffe, in the Settle circuit, has for some time been felt a great desideratum, and it is no little gratification to that body of worshippers that a new building situated in the centre of the village has recently been erected to answer their purposes. The opening took place on Saturday last, when a large assemblage of persons were present to celebrate the occasion. About 150 sat down to tea provided for them in the school-room. In the evening a public meeting was held—Mr James Redmayne in the chair—and animating addresses were delivered by J. Dawson, Esq., of Bacup, the Rev. G. E. Young, of Clitheroe, Messrs. John Read (a member of more than 70 years standing), Thomas Oates, and Henry Robinson, coal dealer, of Settle, and others.—In the morning of the fol-

Starting in the ABC class, John and Thomas were taught by the likes of Thomas Oates. In time they progressed through every class. Once literate they escaped the mill and set themselves up in business, dealing in fruit and vegetables, and doing a spot of farming, and it was all thanks to the Old Wesleyan Chapel and a father's sound advice.



Thomas was known as an 'enthusiastic advocate of teetotalism', 'and his antics on the platform invariably amused his hearers, and we youngsters were highly diverted with his capers. As he warmed to his subject he would jump about the platform and the whole burden of his cry was "Teetotal! Teetotal!"' [CH]

Sadly, his passion for teetotalism was the butt of a few jokes, especially when he was unable to spell 'teetotaller' in a Spelling Bee competition to raise money for the temperance cause [CH]. He was up against stiff competition including Jane Isabella Preston, Arthur Overing, Mary Harger and Thomas Dixon.

The Penny Post introduced in 1840, provided affordable post to anywhere in the country. Inevitably the number of letters, letterboxes and postmen increased enormously. Thomas was one of those who supplemented his income as one of Settle's postmen, along with decorator Thomas Bordley.

Thomas was on the committee organising the Settle celebrations for the Royal Wedding of Albert Edward to Princess Alexandra in March 1863. He worked with Henry Snell, a tailor and fellow 'total abstinence' supporter.

Soon after the Royal Wedding, Thomas found himself being spat at by Henry Snell and admitted he was not on very good terms with him. Henry Snell denied it but 'admitted having made a noise with his mouth whilst passing Mr Oates against whom he could not refrain from expressing his indignation in consequence of the repeated annoyances exhibited by Mr Oates and different members of his family.' [2]. Henry was fined 5 shillings.

Thomas died in 1876, aged 67, just four months after the rather embarrassing Spelling Bee competition. Ann spent the rest of her life living with her brother John Baldwin and widowed sister Margaret and her children. Margaret had married the immensely successful joiner Joseph Harger, also from a staunch Methodist family.

Thomas and Ann were buried together with her parents, John and Marygaret Baldwin, at Giggleswick graveyard. The inscription suggests the stone was erected after Ann's death.

*In affectionate remembrance of Thomas Oates of Settle, born Dec'r 21st 1808 died August 27th 1876. Also of Ann wife of the above who died March 5th 1904 aged 89 years. John Baldwin of Settle*

Another quaint character whose like we shall never see again was Tommy Oates, who kept a shoemaker's shop in Kirkgate. Tommy rose to local fame as an enthusiastic advocate of teetotalism—temperance was too mild a term, and nothing short of total abstinence satisfied him. He was a frequent speaker at temperance meetings, when he became the most intemperate of men, and his antics on the platform invariably amused his hearers, and we youngsters were highly diverted with his capers. As he warmed to his subject, he would jump about the platform, and the whole burden of his cry was "Teetotal! teetotal!"

**SPELLING BEE.**—A numerous company gathered in the Music Hall, on Saturday evening last, to enjoy the second public appearance in Settle of the ubiquitous Spelling Bee. The first Bee buzzed in the Mechanics' Hall some eight months ago, on the occasion of the Wesleyan bazaar, and so exciting was the contest then that it is no wonder a second swarming has been eagerly looked forward to. The Rev. G. H. Brown occupied the chair, and on introducing the business of the evening, made some appropriate and humorous remarks on the peculiarities of the English language. Mr. Wildman acted as interrogator, and in accordance with his province in a notice circulated during the day, confined the first few stages of the contest to words of one syllable; and very destructive they proved, for after two rounds in each of the two Bees the combatants were woefully reduced, and a few catchy words, though in general use, soon decided the winners. There were above 20 entries in each tournament, and the two first prizes were won by Miss Jane Isabella Preston and Mr. Arthur Overing; and the two second by Miss Mary Harger and Mr. Dixon. Much amusement was caused by the discomfiture of that veteran abstainer, Mr. Thomas Oates, in his brave but unsuccessful attempt to struggle through the word "teetotaller." A Juvenile Bee was then arranged

**West Riding.**—*Oates v. Snell.*—This was an assault case. Mr. Oates stated that he was the letter carrier, and when passing down Chapel-street, in Settle, on Friday, the 24th ult., he saw the defendant coming up the street from an opposite direction. Not being on very good terms with the defendant he endeavoured to avoid coming in contact with him. However, the defendant persisted in passing close by him, and in doing so spit in his face. Mr. Oates called Thomas Ellison, a butcher at Settle, who corroborated his statement. In reply to the Bench, Mr. Snell denied the charge of spitting in complainant's face, and said he would spurn such a trick. He admitted having made a noise with his mouth whilst passing Mr. Oates, against whom he could not refrain from expressing his indignation in consequence of the repeated annoyances exhibited by Mr. Oates to himself and different members of his family. The Bench inflicted a penalty of 5s. and costs.

died July 6th 1839 aged 40 years. Margaret his wife died August 23rd 1829 aged 44 years. Jonathan their son died December 12th 1813 aged 1 year & 11 months.

Thomas' brother, Samuel Oates, was a blacksmith in Leeds. It was his son, Thomas, who had an apprenticeship with Thomas (Snr) in Settle. Samuel died in 1851, aged just 36, so young Thomas stayed in Settle with his uncle. In 1857 Thomas (Jnr) married Jane Walker who had been orphaned and spent her childhood in Giggleswick workhouse. As a teenager she worked in domestic service for tailor Richard Knowles in Kirkgate. Thomas ran his shoemaking business in Duke Street and they had three children.



Unfortunately, in July 1862 Thomas the younger was declared bankrupt [3]. At the time of the following census, Thomas had taken Jane and three children back to Leeds for a fresh start and later moved to Bournemouth.

**COUNTY COURT.**—This Court was held on Thursday before T. H. Ingham, Esq., judge.—*Re Thomas Oates, the Younger, a Bankrupt.*—This being the meeting for auditing the accounts of the bankrupt's estate, the same were presented and passed, and a dividend of 5s. in the pound declared.—*Re Wm Hornby, of Horton.*

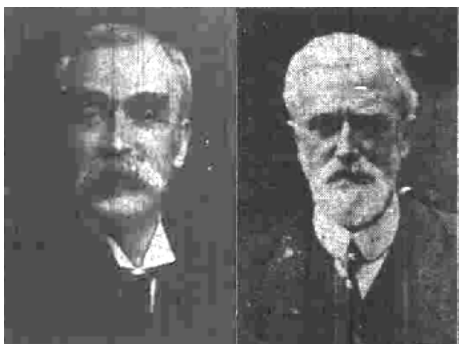
Thomas (Snr) Oates' other apprentice, brother-in-law John Baldwin pursued his career with leather at a tannery in Burnley. John was also a preacher in the Methodist circuit around Burley, Colne and Padiham for 65 years. 'As he had a conscientious objections to the using of vehicles on the Sabbath, he walked some thousands of miles in the fulfilment of his appointment.' John had signed the temperance pledge aged 11 and 'would not even allow alcoholic drink to be kept in his house for medicinal purposes' [4]. John was 84 when he died.

circuits as a local preacher. As he had conscientious objections to the using of vehicles on the Sabbath, he walked some thousands of miles in the fulfilment of his appointment during that period. He was also a class leader for almost the same length of time. The temperance movement found in him a vigorous and staunch supporter, he having signed the total abstinence pledge so long ago as September 1, 1835. He would not even allow alcoholic drink to be kept in his house for medicinal purposes. The deceased gentleman had reached the advanced age of 84 years.

John had five sons with his wife Agnes Turner but only two survived infancy. Sons Thomas [4-right], a teacher for 52 years and headmaster and Joseph [4-left], a book keeper for 42 years at an ironworks, continued the temperance cause and had many positions of responsibility within the Wesleyan church. However Thomas attracted a complaint from 'a heavy ratepayer' that he was taking time out of school to object to the issuing of alcohol licenses! [5]

### VETERAN COLNE SCHOOLMASTER.

As we stated last Saturday, Mr. Thomas Baldwin, the esteemed head of the Lord-street Council School, Colne, has severed his active association with the teaching profession after 52 years' work. He was born on



### A SCHOOLMASTER'S RIGHTS.

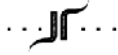
(THE EDITOR "NORTHERN DAILY TELEGRAPH.")

Sir,—Through the medium of your paper I should like to ask the members of the new Educational Committee for the borough of Colne (which I understand has taken the place of the old School Board if it intends to allow Mr Thomas Baldwin, one of the schoolmasters, to attend the licensing sessions during school hours for the purpose of objecting to licenses, as he has done in the past. Seeing that he is paid out of the rates, I think he ought to attend to the education of the children during school hours, and if he wants to preach temperance, do it in his own time, and not the ratepayers'. I don't feel disposed to pay a School Board rate if the money is to be devoted to the temperance party.

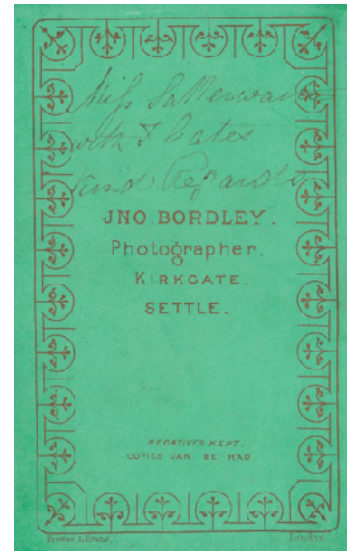
A HEAVY RATEPAYER.



The wonderful photo of Thomas Oates, postman, at the top of this account was included with a cover from photographer **John Bordley** which included the name Miss Satterwaite [ph1]. This is most likely to be **Martha Satterthwaite**, the third wife of the naughty church sexton, **William Perkin**.



*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'.*



*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 – Kendal Mercury, 2 – Lancaster Gazette, 3 – Lancaster Guardian, 4 – Burnley Express, 5 – Northern Daily Telegraph*

*[A] – credited to The Tot Lord Town Trail, Richard Whinray*

*ph1 – credited to the Back in Settle Facebook page, photo by John Bordley, Ben Mackenzie collection, ph2 – thought to be 'Uncle Oates' with the kind permission of Allan Gould, a relation*

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

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

