

## Robert Garner, a farmer with a sense of humour

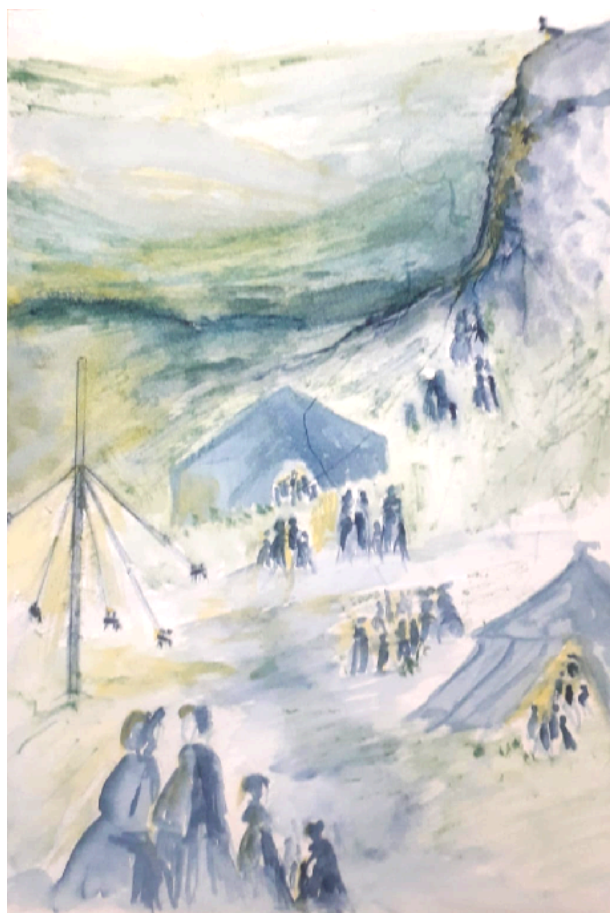
**Robert Germain Garner**, born in 1828, was a farmer from Horton-in-Ribblesdale. After marrying a Westmorland farmer's daughter, **Sarah Wills**, in 1860 Robert moved straight to Settle. They lived in 'Victoria Street Farm' opposite the National School in Upper Settle. Robert was included on the electoral register so must have been farming land 'worth over £50', presumably making a reasonable living.

Robert's farm was not far from the grounds below Castleberg Rock which, in those days, were used as a recreation ground with admission costing a penny. For some reason, **Henry Snell** bought a ship's figure-head to attach to the rock and it was stored in Robert's barn. *'Robert covered it with hay and then reported it to the police that there was a man in his barn who would not be moved. The sergeant and constable visited the barn and after many exhortations to the figure to "get up" found to their annoyance that a joke had been perpetuated upon them.'* His prank on Giggleswick policeman **PC Lindsay** was well remembered by Settle folk [CH]. He wouldn't get away with that today!

It seems that Henry Snell had bought a ship's figure-head at Barrow which represented some great warrior, and for convenience it was put into the barn previous to its being bolted into Castleberg Rock.

around, but no traces of them now remain. In my younger days a penny was charged for admission to the grounds, the key being kept by John Taylor, the clogger. There were swings, a round-about, a saw-saw, and a skittle alley, all of which gave the youth of the town endless pleasure in those days. Winding walks lead to the summit of the rock, the face of the latter being the natural habitat of a species of yellow gilliflower, which found a precarious root-hold in every nook and cranny. At one time, too, a figurehead of a ship protruded from the base of the rock, but whence that alien object came I never learnt. The view from the summit was regarded as one of the finest in Craven. The little town nestled

opposite the entrance. The ship's head figure, which used to be fastened in the front of the Rock, was supposed to be an effigy of Lord Nelson and was fixed up by James Hardaker, who at that time rented Castleberg. When the figure reached Settle it was deposited in Robert Garner's barn. Robert covered it with hay and then reported to the police that there was a man in his barn who would not be moved. The sergeant and constable visited the barn and after many exhortations to the figure to "get up" found to their annoyance that a joke had been perpetrated upon them. I think they forgave the farmer, as I never heard of any proceedings against him on this account.



Robert must have been a good gardener as, in 1881, he was invited to assist the judges of the North Craven Horticultural Society [2].

Robert and Sarah had five daughters and three sons. Second son **Joseph** died in April 1885, aged just 19.

This was during the years when the Ancient graveyard was legally closed as it had become 'dangerously full' and burials had to be in Giggleswick unless there was already a family plot. Presumably Robert had already bought an empty plot so Joseph could be buried in there.

The Gardens, East Marlon; and for amateurs' and cottagers' classes, the two last named judges, assisted by Mr. Robert Garner, Settle, and Mr. R. Irving, of The Gardens, Anley, Settle. After the prizes were awarded, the judges and committee assembled at the Royal Oak, Settle, where Mrs. Barry provided a most enjoyable and ample repast. After dinner, Mr. J.

**Joseph Garner 1866 - 1885, Elizabeth Garner 1863 - 1949, Ancient D25**

The land for the Old graveyard was acquired and opened in November 1885. From that point onwards the church didn't allow any further burials in the Ancient graveyard (although there were some exceptions which tended to be for wealthier residents.) Robert died in May 1886, aged 58 and, as he couldn't be buried with his son, his grave was in the Old graveyard, in *plot001* by the church gate, just a few yards from that of Joseph. His gravestone was the second erected in the Old graveyard. The Garners were one of several families split by the graveyard situation. If Robert had died just a few months earlier, he may have been allowed to be buried with Joseph, although could also have been forced to be buried at Giggleswick.



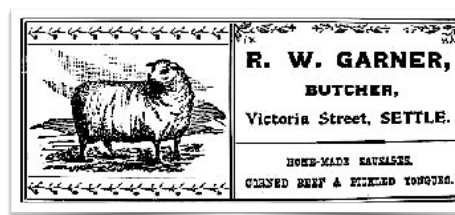
Their spinster daughter **Elizabeth** who died in 1949, aged 85, joined her brother Joseph in *Ancient D25*. By 1949 space was at a premium in all areas of the graveyard and the threat of disease from the Ancient graveyard had subsided. Elizabeth was the very last burial in the Ancient Graveyard. Elizabeth had spent much of her life in the domestic service of the wealthy folk of Settle including the solicitor **George Kenneth Charlesworth** (some of whose family are buried in the Old graveyard) and **John Gorges Robinson**, a JP for Yorkshire (living in Marylebone), the great nephew of **Susannah Constantine Robinson**. Robert and Sarah were buried with their grandson and their stone also commemorated their son Joseph, again.



*In Loving Memory of Robert Garner Died May 26th 1886 aged 58 years. Also of Sarah widow of the above who died Jan 19th 1925 in her 87th year. Also of Joseph second son of the above who died April 28th 1885 aged 19 years. Also of Robert Garner Freeman grandson of the above who died Nov 6th 1900 aged 2, 001*

On the back of this gravestone is an inscription commemorating Robert, Sarah and Joseph which filled the whole stone. When infant grandson **Robert Garner Freeman** died the stone was turned round and re-engraved to include the inscription for him. Daughter **Sarah Jane Garner** had married **George Freeman**, a 'domestic chauffeur' from Surrey. They lived in Shropshire but little Robert was brought back to Settle for burial.

Robert and Sarah's eldest son, **Robert Wills Garner** took an apprenticeship in butchery with **Francis Twisleton** before becoming a butcher himself, trading in Victoria Street [LSA]. He didn't marry and is buried in the *Old graveyard K34* with his spinster sisters **Margaret** and **Mary**. Margaret had worked as a confectioner whereas Mary had worked as a housemaid to **John Birkbeck** at Anley and **Walter Morrison MP** of Malham Tarn at his London residence. Her fellow servants in London were husband and wife **William** and **Martha (Duxbury) Skirrow**.



*In loving memory of Robert Wills Garner born Sep 15th 1861 died Oct 19th 1924. Mary Garner born Jan 18th 1869 died Sep 2nd 1924. Margaret Garner born March 9th 1880 died April 4th 1962.*



Son **John Thomas Garner**, a farmer married **Ellen James**, a stonemason's daughter, who was born just five weeks before him. Incredibly John Thomas and Ellen were buried on the same day, 13th June 1962, both aged 86 and are buried in grave *NewE38*.



*In loving memory of John Thomas Garner, 1875 - 1963. Also Ellen his wife, 1875 - 1962, New E38.*

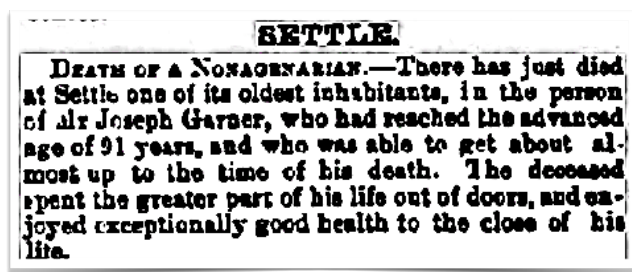


Daughter Jane married Frank Briggs, a gardener from Lincolnshire. They are buried in the grave NewH3. John Thomas and sister Jane were next door neighbours, living at Cragdale Farm at the junction of High Street and Victoria Street.

*In loving memory of Jane Briggs 1880 - 1941 also her husband Francis 1866 - 1951, New H3.*



Robert's father, another Joseph Garner, outlived him, dying in 1889, aged 91, having spent a life working as a farmer in Stainforth with a short spell as a postman. Joseph spent his last ten years in Settle with Robert's family but was probably buried with his wife Betty Germain back in Stainforth. In 1887 Joseph was seen on the Town Hall steps with gardener *Elias Dickinson*, aged 88 (who died in 1895 and is buried in the Old graveyard) and Thomas Hardacre, aged 82, a Settle stonemason's labourer (who died 1889 and is buried at Giggleswick), and another Thomas Hardacre, aged 82, who was a retired agricultural labourer living in the almshouses in Long Preston and died in 1894 [CH, 1].



**LONGEVITY IN THE SETTLE DISTRICT.**—A remarkable group of men was formed by chance on the Town Hall steps, Settle, yesterday. It was composed of four persons, whose united ages reached 340 years, or an average of 85 years. The names and ages are as follows:—*Elias Dickinson*, 88; *Joseph Garner*, 88; *Thomas Hardacre*, 82; *Thomas Hardacre*, Long Preston, 82.

Robert's siblings also worked in farming. Brother Joseph Garner died of typhoid, aged 19, sister Elizabeth James married Stainforth farmer Thomas Parker, and brother John Garner farmed with wife Ellen Procter in Langcliffe.

The Garners were often referred to as 'Garnett' throughout their lives. Yorkshire accents again!



*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. It has been written in good faith with no offence intended. If I have inadvertently included errors or breached any copyright I apologise and would welcome corrections.*

Life stories can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project](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'.

*Illustration by Teresa Gordon. The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.*

Newspaper cutting with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 — Bradford Daily Telegraph, 2 — Lancaster Gazette

CH - with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer, LSA — with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust