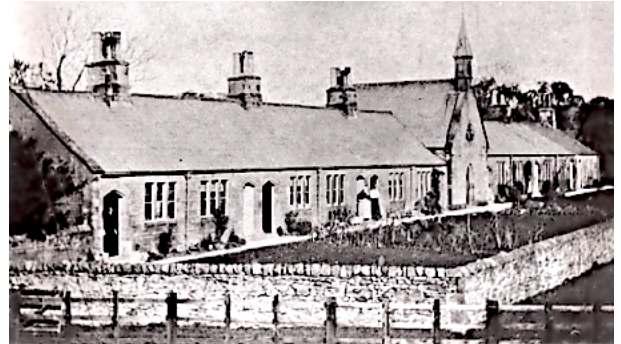


## Heelis family, hard working folk

Thomas Heelis, born in 1771 in Long Preston, was an agricultural labourer who had five children with his wife Elizabeth Preston. Despite the hard work Thomas lived until the age of 75 and Elizabeth until 82. Their last years were spent in Long Preston almshouses with their spinster daughter Margaret, one of five children. Daughter Margaret spent her last 20 years in Long Preston almshouses too. The almshouses had been founded in the 17th century by James Knowles, a London merchant originally from Long Preston but were rebuilt in 1858 [ph1]. They housed ten deserving elderly 'inmates', native to Long Preston, who received 6 shillings per week.



Their daughter Ann and son Richard Heelis married siblings James and Mary Carr. Richard, another agricultural labourer and Mary stayed in Long Preston. James (Jimmy) Carr was believed to be *'the last malefactor to grace the Sticks, which I can now bring to mind at the foot of the Market cross, where many pints enlivened his captivity.'*[ph3] Jimmy had also been dared to speak to Queen Caroline when she came through Settle. *'So, for a pint he rushed up and put his hand in at the window which she took. and then Jimmy said, "Eh! God bless you ma'am what a nice life soft white hand ye hev."'*[ph3] Queen Caroline was only on the throne for just over a year so we can pinpoint this to 1820/21.

I believe Jimmy was the last malefactor to grace the Stocks, which I can now bring to mind at the foot of the Market Cross, where many pints enlivened his captivity.

Queen Caroline once came through Settle and the butchers dared Jimmy Carr to speak to her at the Lion door. So for a pint he rushed up and put his hand in at the window which she took, and then Jimmy said "Eh! God bless you ma'm what a nice life soft white hand ye hev."

Jimmy died a year after his wedding to Ann Heelis but that was sufficient time to father two daughters. Ann and James' daughter Elizabeth Carr married Richard Towler, and they lived in Settle with their expanding family. Richard took work where he could get it, weaving, driving a horse and cart and as a grocer. Richard broke several ribs and *'otherwise badly crushed'* when his wagonette was upset while running an errand for Mrs Wetherell at the Golden Lion [5]. Elizabeth died after the birth of her seventh child in 1869 and is buried in the Ancient graveyard with three infant daughters and Richard is buried close to the Heelis family in the grave Old AX60.

...without assistance.—Only so recently as Saturday last an accident occurred to Richard Towler, a driver in the employ of Mrs Wetherell, of the Golden Lion Hotel, Settle, who, on his returning from Chatburn with a wagonette, and when near to Forest Beck, the wagonette was upset. Towler, who was found to have several ribs broken and to be otherwise badly crushed, was conveyed to his home in Settle.

Thomas and Elizabeth's youngest son Henry, born in 1819, began his career as a farm servant and then gamekeeper for the wealthy farmer, John Preston, at Mearbeck. According to his grandson, John Masters Heelis, in an article in 1956, it was at that Henry's dog discovered Attermire Cave and he told Mr Preston, his employer [1]. The internet doesn't provide records to back up this claim although suggests that there were extensive excavations during the 1870s, finding

### Dog found cave

**L**IMESTONE caverns and potholes have been discovered in unexpected ways. For instance, famous Lancaster Pot was located when a man sat on a grassy bank and felt air rushing up from the ground. Attermire Cave, which has yielded many animal and human remains

from prehistoric times, was first explored after a dog rushed into a small hole in the fells around Settle after a rabbit.

The men who owned the dog was Henry Heelis, gamekeeper for Mr. Preston, of Mearbeck. His grandson, John W. Heelis, who lives in Blackpool, recalls that his grandfather was puzzled when the dog began to bark, for it was like a hollow echo and seemed to indicate that there were extensive caverns. He told his employer, who realised the importance of the discovery.

jewellery, human bones and other Romano-British finds. In the 1920s **Tot Lord** discovered the remains of a chariot in the cave which is incredible considering the precarious access to the cave. This story of the discovery of the cave bears great similarities to the story of the discovery of Victoria Caves in 1837 by **Michael Horner**. This was either a great coincidence, or a creative lapse of memory by someone in the Heelis family!



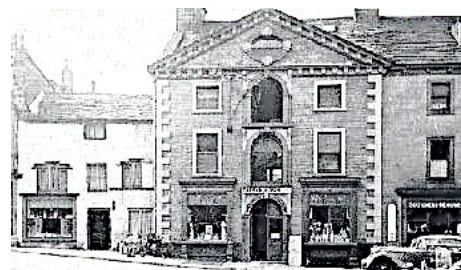
In 1847 Henry married **Grace Newsham/Newsholme** from Rathmell. They lived in Long Preston and Henry worked as an agricultural labourer while Grace set about giving birth to three sons and a daughter. Grace and Henry moved to Settle during the 1850s, still labouring. They spent their last 15 years in the 'poor houses' on Albert Hill in Upper Settle. Just like his father, Henry's family only just managed to keep themselves above the bread line. Henry was 73 when he died and Grace was 60. They are buried in the unmarked grave *Old AX54*.

Henry and Grace's eldest son, **Thomas**, was apprenticed to a tailor and worked in Barnoldswick. Later he worked as a Coop salesman and insurance salesman in Skipton. He and his wife **Margaret Dugdale** had four sons.



Henry and Grace's only daughter **Jane**, born in 1859, was described in census returns as an 'idiot'. After Henry and Grace died poor Jane spent some years in Giggleswick Workhouse, the only medical provision available for the poor, and died in Menston Asylum aged 38.

Henry and Grace's son **Richard**, born in 1854, followed his father and worked as a servant for John Preston (Jnr) at Mearbeck Farm. His wife, **Mary Ann Masters**, was from Leicestershire but had come to Settle to work as a housemaid for four elderly sisters living together in Stackhouse. After their demise she worked for **Susannah Tatham**, also in her 80s, the widow of **John Tatham** who established the Tatham department store in Cheapside [ph2]. Richard also found employment at Tathams [1] and so perhaps that is where Richard and Mary Ann met.



Richard and Mary Ann married in 1882 and moved to Bradford and had seven children although three of them, **Clara**, **Lily** and **Charles Henry** died in infancy and were buried in Bradford. During the 1890s the remaining family returned to Settle where they lived in Bowskill's Yard, off Castle Hill, for almost 50 years. Richard worked as a quarryman and a stableman.

Mr. Heelis's father worked for Mr. Tatham, a Settle grocer, and the story is told that one day a woman customer requested some string. Mr. Tatham handed her the ball, telling her to help herself. After some time she was still unwinding string, and the grocer observed: "I wer just measurin' thi conscience!"

Infant daughter **Mary Ann** died just after they returned to Settle in 1895. Their daughter **Grace Ethel** began a life in domestic service, working for the family of **John Vincent Harger** of the family of Settle cabinet makers and fretwork manufacturers. On 20 March 1907 Ethel, aged 21, went missing after visiting her parents [3]. Nearly four weeks later her body was found some four miles away 'in the River Ribble in Wigglesworth too badly decomposed to tell whether there were any marks of violence' [2]. Coroners referred to marks of violence to indicate an attack rather

## SETTLE MYSTERY SOLVED.

### RIBBLE GIVES UP ITS DEAD.

At Settle yesterday, the Coroner held an inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of Ethel Heelis, aged 21, a domestic servant, who disappeared from her home at Settle on the 14th of March.

A Longpreston youth named Arthur Carr told of finding the body on Sunday opposite Wigglesworth Hall, some four miles below Settle. The body was about a foot off the edge of the water, and greatly decomposed.



than suicide. **Dr Hyslop** had recently diagnosed Grace Ethel as anaemic and suffering from 'sleeplessness and hysteria'. That poor girl. Obviously there was no provision for mental health care in those days – a stiff upper lip was expected.

So, five out of seven children had predeceased Richard and Mary Ann. Daughters Grace Ethel and infant Mary Ann are buried with their grandparents in *Old AX54*. Richard was 76 when he died and is buried with Mary Ann, aged 74, in the unmarked grave *Old LX27*.

Richard and Mary's daughter **Louisa** worked as a housemaid for **Marie Auerbach** and partner **Esther Pickard** at Overdale Girls' School. At the time of the 1911 census the school was providing education for 27 young ladies from all over England, with one from the States. Louisa married **Tom Harrison**, a Tosside dairy farmer with whom she had a family. She must have liked the outdoor life as she lived to the age of 91, although husband Tom died aged just 52.

Richard and Mary's son **John Masters Heelis** lived with his parents in Bowskill's Yard until they died and then moved to Lancashire. At the time of the 1939 pre-war register John was listed as an 'unemployed branch exchange manager' living with a widow, 20 years his senior, **Sarah Ann Isabella (Reid) Walmsley**, described as a pensioner and musical instrument repairer, and her brother Thomas.

1	Walmsley John M	HEELIS	M	15 Jan 96	M	Branch Exchange Manager (Birel Servant) unemployed
2	Walmsley Sarah A		F	24 Mar 67	W	DA Pensioner (Retired Musical Instrument Repairer)
3	Reid Thomas H		M	10 Mar 65	W	Retired Mill Operative (Street)

John had changed his name to John Heelis Walmsley. Sarah Ann had previously been married to **Arthur William Walmsley**, musical instrument repairer, and Sarah had learnt the trade from him. John and Sarah had been together since around 1931 when Sarah's husband died. John and Sarah retired to Blackpool and she died there, aged 85, in 1952. During the 1950s John had several of his remembrances published in the papers as well as the one about his grandfather's dog discovering Attermire Cave, allegedly. John was remembered as an enthusiastic member of local brass bands and recalled amusing stories from their tours including a pair of trousers lost through a train window and a trombone full of punch [1]. John also claimed to have a stock of over 100 violins, including one made by a young Stradivarius [4], perhaps originally acquired through Sarah's husband. Obviously, we cannot be sure of the accuracy of his tales!

### Trombone with punch

**D**AYS when nearly every Daley village had its brass band, and the members cheerfully trudged through winter snow or roasted in summer heat to entertain local folk, are recalled by Mr. John Walmsley Heelis, who lives in retirement at Blackpool.

He remembers when Settle Band played at Hellifield Sports and sat near an anti-bill during a break. When they were travelling home by train, one of the bandmen, irritated by ants, removed his trousers and shook them out of the carriage window. A passing train caught them and dragged them out of his hands. The train was held up at Settle Station until the stationmaster had dashed to his house and brought along an old pair of trousers.

Brass bands toured the villages at Christmas. When Mr. Heelis was supporting the Giggleswick Band it travelled by train to Clapham one Christmas Day and played at the Flying Horse Shoe Hotel. A steaming hot punch-bowl was passed round. One of the men loath to hand any punch back after the band had drunk its fill, poured the drink into his instrument, a trombone, and the fiery liquid was finished off as the band plodded up the road to the village.

### 100 violins

**M**ANY Settle people will remember Mr. John Walmsley Heelis, of Blackpool, as an enthusiastic member of local brass bands. During his youth in North Craven he played with bands at Settle, Giggleswick and Langcliffe.

Side by side with his interest in brass instruments, however, has gone a passion for violins. Mr. Heelis still makes and repairs them—a craft he learned over 25 years ago.

He has over 100 instruments in stock, many from the workshops of the old Italian masters. One was made by Stradivarius when he was about to be married at the age of 23, but the label bears the name of his master, for Stradivarius was not at that time working on his own.

When he was 66 John married a 74 year old spinster **Marion Lister**, whose father, **Robert Ramsbottom Lister**, had been a senior draughtsman building steam engines, but John died a year later in 1963.

Going back a generation Henry and Grace's son **William Heelis** married **Mary Ann Butler** who had been brought up in an orphan's home in Giggleswick with her brother **Phineas Butler**. Phineas

met a tragic end on the railway whilst clearing snow [2]. Poor Phineas didn't get much sympathy from the papers as they appeared more concerned about the passenger traffic.



#### FATAL ACCIDENT NEAR SETTLE.

Yesterday morning Phineas Butler, aged 28 years, was clearing the snow from the points of the up main line at Hellifield Junction, when he was knocked down and killed. The Settle and Carlisle line was cleared on Monday evening, and yesterday the traffic was resumed, the passenger trains, however, running late. Towards evening the wind rose, and a second block appears to have occurred between Hawes Junction and Dent. The slow train due at Settle at 6.53 last night had not left Hawes Junction at ten o'clock. The passenger traffic is completely demoralised. More snow fell during the day.



William was the manager of the stables at Ashfield [LSA]. Mary Ann and William didn't have children and are buried in the same unmarked grave as her brother Phineas, Old AX55, in the grave next to William's siblings and grandparents.



*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'.*

*Illustrations kindly provided by Teresa Gordon. 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 Guardian, 2 – Leeds Mercury, 3 – Hartlepool Daily Mail, 4 – Bradford Observer, 5 – Yorkshire Post*

*LSA - Lambert's Settle Almanac, with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust*

*ph1 – credited to [longprestonheritage.org.uk](http://longprestonheritage.org.uk), ph2 – credited to the Back in Settle facebook site, contributed by Mick Harrison, ph3 – with thanks to Giggleswick Church archives.*