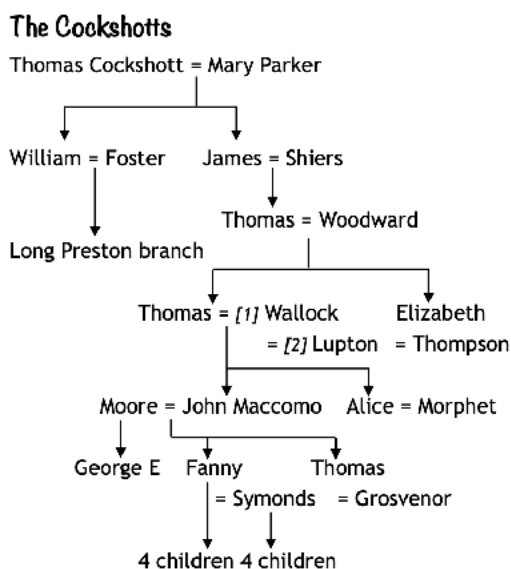


John 'Como' Cockshott, unlucky, misunderstood or naughty?

John Cockshott is famously, and appropriately, pictured in the stocks in Settle [ph1]. He probably spent a bit of time in them.



We know that John's 2x great grandparents married in Wigglesworth in 1785 and the men in the family tended to work as farmers and farm labourers. One branch of the family stayed in the Long Preston area and had very successful careers as farmers. John's grandfather, **Thomas Cockshott**, a farm labourer and his wife **Fanny Woodward** moved to Settle during the 1840s. John's father, another **Thomas Cockshott** married **Sarah Wallack**, a blacksmith's daughter from Malham. Both Thomases worked as carters and farm labourers and they were some of many working class families who lived in the cheaper accommodation in Upper Settle. Thomas and Sarah had four children, **John**, **Alice** and **Thomas** but little Thomas and the first Alice died in infancy closely followed by Sarah in 1853. They are buried in unmarked graves in the Ancient graveyard.

Thomas married again in 1859, this time to **Ann Lupton** who was a fisherman's daughter from Morecambe. Although Ann's mother had died soon after her birth Ann embraced motherhood and had an impressive ten children. In 1865, Thomas was dealt with rather severely for being drunk and riotous [1]. Perhaps because of this, by the time of the next census the expanding family had moved to Airton and then to Coniston Cold to work in the silk mill.

DRUNK AND RIOTOUS.—Thomas Cockshott, of Settle, (who did not appear) was convicted in the penalty of 2s. 6d. and costs—together 11s.—for being drunk and disorderly on the night of last Saturday week. This was said to be his first offence and the man poor, but for which the bench seemed disposed to have dealt more severely with him.

CHILD BURNED.—On Monday, January 22nd, a child belonging to Thomas Cockshott, of Upper Settle, but lodging with its uncle, was severely burned up the arm and one side of the face. It appears that during the absence of its aunt the child had spilled some turpentine upon its "brat," and had gone to the fire to dry it, when it took fire, and the child was seen enveloped in flames; it ran into the street, and fortunately some one extinguished the flames. We understand it is in a fair way of recovery.

What happened to son John Cockshott? In 1855 John, aged seven (or sister Alice, aged five) was severely burned on the arm and face after spilling turpentine on its 'brat' (cloak) [5C]. The newspaper typically and unhelpfully described the child as 'it' throughout. Whether or not this was an contributory factor, John was rather wild in his youth and there are several reports of his arrests throughout the 1870s. The building of the railway provided an employment opportunity for John. But, in 1871, railway labourer John was sent to prison for six months with hard labour

At the Settle petty sessions, on Tuesday, John Cockshott, a labourer, who had been apprehended at Gookmere, near Clitheroe, was charged with having, on the 19th ult., stolen a £5 Craven Bank note, the property of the Midland Railway. The note had been sent by

costs, or 14 days' imprisonment.—John Cockshott (better known as "Maccomo"), and Robert Campbell, were charged with being drunk and fighting in the streets of Settle on the 24th ult. Fined 10s. and costs each.—James Clayton, of Langcliffe, charged with

for stealing a letter containing a £5 Craven Bank note, owned by the Midland Railway, from an omnibus carriage [2]. The bank note was intended for **Henry Duncan Robinson**, a Settle solicitor. John was the only person inside the carriage at the time. Perhaps this wasn't John's brightest move. In 1876 he was one of several charged with being drunk and fighting and was fined 10 shillings [3]. In 1879 John was imprisoned again for 1 month for being drunk and riotous [4]. The prison records for this offence state he had a further two previous convictions in 1873 and 1877. The prison records and one of the newspaper reports suggest he was '*better known as Maccomo*'. Why? The real '*Martini Maccomo*' [ph2] worked for a circus called '*The Grand Star Menagerie*' during the 1850s and 1860s. He was known as the '*African Wild Beast Tamer*' using whips, pistols and knuckledusters during his performances. Unsurprisingly, there were reports of numerous. Perhaps John Cockshott was good with wild animals too?

labourer. The money was paid.—John Cockshott was charged with being drunk and riotous near Giggleswick on the 1st April, and sent to prison for one calendar month with hard labour —William Moorby, labourer.

Cockshott, John
of Como



John's criminal antics declined around the time of his decision to marry. This wasn't straight forward either. In June 1878 John, aged 30, married **Mary Ann Cummings** (or **Mary Ann Batton**) somewhere in the Settle registration district. Mary Ann was not local. Mary Ann was ten years older than John and, unfortunately, died in July the next year and was buried in Giggleswick churchyard on 6 July 1879. Her address was given as the workhouse so perhaps she died with pregnancy or childbirth related issues? John's last drunk and disorderly prison sentence was on 9 April 1879, just a couple of months before her death. Undaunted, John quickly recovered and, on 10 November that year, just five months after Mary Ann's death, married **Eliza Jane Moore**.

Eliza Jane was the daughter of a brickmaker from Banham, Norfolk and was one of hundreds of workers from that area who left to find work in Settle during the 1860s because of the East Anglian agricultural depression. The Settle cotton mills had resumed business, thanks to Hector Christie, so there was an employment opportunity for girls like Eliza Jane. In 1877, Eliza Jane had given birth to a son, **George Edward Moore**. He was born in Giggleswick workhouse, the only provision for unmarried mums. George had a private baptism suggesting that he was a weak baby and may not survive until a public baptism was arranged. He did survive but only to the age of 12. For a single mum, Eliza Jane's marriage to John provided an income, protection and security, in theory, although he may not have been the most reliable candidate. Eliza Jane and John had two more children. John made a living as a labourer, a grocer and then a boarding house keeper in Upper Settle. Eliza Jane's brother **Edward Moore**, a labourer, lived with them throughout. Eliza Jane's son George was buried in the unmarked grave **OLD BX42**. Eliza Jane who had died in 1915, aged 67 followed by John in 1917, aged 73 and they are buried with young George.

John's nickname inadvertently tells us on another of his hidden talents! The Giggleswick Fair, held on 12 March each year, was a highlight for local folk. There were all sorts of events and competitions including a smoking competition, to smoke an ounce of tobacco in the shortest time, a women's race and a gurning competition. In a case of questionable journalism, Bill Mitchell wrote, '*It was said that the competitors were ugly to start with but when they began to grin and grimace, it was like being in a Chamber of Horrors. Apparently one resident of Upper Settle, by the name of Como, always carried off first prize*' [ph3]. Perhaps the effects of that childhood fire helped John to win this every year?

Another event was 'Gurning', which consisted of pulling faces through a horse collar. It was said that the competitors were ugly to start with but when they began to grin and grimace, it was like being in the Chamber of Horrors.

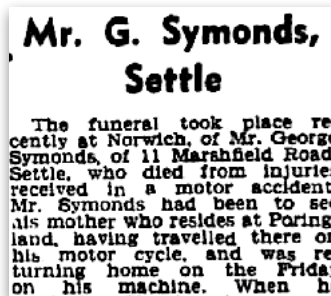
Apparently one resident of Upper Settle, by the name of Como, always carried off the first prize.

John and Eliza Jane's daughter **Fanny** had four illegitimate children before marrying. Her daughter **Harriet** died aged 10. At the age of 62 Fanny's daughter **Sarah** married **John Hallam**,

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who descended from the **Cheetham** family. Her son **John Thomas Hallam** became a Lancaster cowman and son **Harry Hallam** lived in Chapel Lane, Settle with his family and worked in the quarries. When she was 32 Fanny married a Horton quarry labourer, **George Symonds**, from Norwich and they had four children although son **Edward** and daughter **Bella** died in infancy. George later worked for the Coop and then Settle Rural District Council Sanitary Department and they lived at 11 Marshfield Road.

George died in a motor cycle road accident in 1955 aged 65 whilst visiting his mother in Norwich [5], and Fanny died two years later. Fanny is buried in the unmarked grave *OLD EX48* with the two infant Symonds children, her daughter Harriet (Cockshott), and John Hallam, the husband of her daughter Sarah. One of George and Fanny's surviving sons **George Symonds (Jnr)**, a labourer, married **Emma Limmer** the mother of blacksmith **Alf Limmer**. George (Jnr) is buried in the unmarked grave *NewHX19* with **William and Mary Limmer**, Emma's parents.



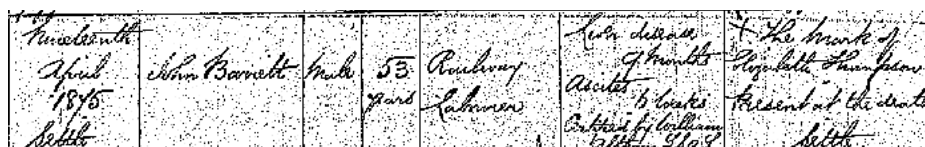
John and Eliza Jane's son **Thomas Cockshott** lived at Sutcliffe House, next to the Folly, in Settle and worked as a fireman in the gas works having held similar positions in Cleethorpes, Grimsby and [4]. Whilst in Grimsby, Thomas married **Louise Mary Grosvenor** and they had two daughters, **Dorothy** and **Winifred**. Winifred (Winnie) remained a spinster and ran a decorating shop in the Market Place in the shop occupied by Field to Home now. Sister Dorothy helped until, aged 42, she married **Arthur Crafts** from Nottinghamshire. Thomas and Louise Mary are buried in grave *New J17*.



In loving memory of Thomas Cockshott fell asleep Feby 5th 1938 aged 56 years. Peace perfect peace Also his wife Mary passed away March 15th 1959 aged 79 years, New J17

John Maccomo Cockshott's sister **Alice Cockshott** married **John Morphet** and they had ten children. Their daughters **Letty** and **Rose Mary Morphet** married siblings **John** and **Thomas Winskill Grisedale** of the well known Settle furniture business.

Thomas Cockshott (Snr) had an aunt **Elizabeth Cockshott** who married a labourer and cousin **Robert Thompson**. Robert died just after the birth of their fifth child, a daughter, who Elizabeth named **Robina**. Elizabeth had to work as a charwoman to make ends meet. Soon after Robert's death she found a bit of extra cash and company from recently widowed **Luke Ralph**, a gardener who lived with her until he died. Elizabeth had the unpleasant duty of being at the death of a railway navvy who had been working on the construction of the Settle to Carlisle railway. **John Barrett**, a railway labourer from Cornwall, died in 1875 of liver disease. Without clean water, alcohol was integral to navvies' lives for rehydration and relaxation, occasionally with fatal consequences. John's widow, Elizabeth, from Devon, soon remarried another navvy, **James**



Gibbins. Elizabeth (Cockshott) Thompson died nearly 30 years after her husband and was buried in the Old graveyard *Old CX34* with three grandchildren.

John Maccomo Cockshott will have inevitably crossed paths with a possible relation, PC William Henry Cockshott. . . .



PC William Henry Cockshott

The new West Riding Police Force commenced officially on 1 January 1857 [5C]. Before that the 'Staincliffe West' police division had been ably led by Superintending Constable Cockshott, who was the logical choice to run the new force. This was a physical job and most police constables were tall, strong men. They were expected to be a role model with no weaknesses for vanity, alcohol, women, bribery, yet neither too innocent. This applied when they were off duty too and so a significant proportion of constables were dismissed for being drunk. Charles Dickens portrayed a rather bumbling PC Bucket in *Bleak House*.

William Henry Cockshott had been appointed in October 1852 on a salary of £125, the best of ten candidates, following three years as a sergeant in Manchester [10]. The newspaper notes PC Cockshott was required to keep a horse and dedicate his time solely to police work. Reports suggest he undertook his role dutifully although rather officiously. During the 1850s William worked with two unpaid 'constables' but by the early 1900s there were four.

William was from Skipton, the son of Thomas Cockshott, a successful cotton manufacturer in Addingham and could have been distantly related to our Wigglesworth family. William had married Margaret Preston from Elslack near Skipton. Her father was the innkeeper of the Cock and Bottle on Swadford Street in Skipton. William and Margaret's only daughter Sarah Cockshott was born a year before his appointment as superintending constable but she died in infancy. In Settle, they lived at the County Lockup

following years were 8, 21, and 28. Of these 85 were males, and 13 females; 20 could neither read nor write, 75 could read imperfectly, and three had received a good education; 73 were English, 21 Irish, 3 Scotch, and 1 a native of Wales; 15 were committed to the assizes or sessions for trial, 64 were summarily dealt with, and 19 were discharged. The following is a summary of the

APPOINTING OF SUPERINTENDING CONSTABLE FOR THE DIVISION OF STAINCLIFFE WEST.— Thomas Birbeck, Thomas Clapham, and J. W. Farrer, Esqrs., three of the magistrates for the division of Staincliffe West, in the West Riding, met at the Court House, Settle, yesterday week, for the purpose of looking over the testimonials of the various applicants for the appointments, and deciding on the merits of each. There were ten candidates. The gentleman selected was Mr. James Henry Cockshott, who was duly appointed to the office, at the West Riding Quarter Sessions, held at Knaresbro', on Monday last. The division of Staincliffe West comprises 42 townships. Mr. Cockshott will be required to keep a horse, and to devote the whole of his time to the duties of his office, at a salary of £125 a year. He is a son of Thomas Cockshott, Esq., of Skipton, and has been for 3 years a serjeant of police at Manchester.

The following is a summary of the offences with which the prisoners were charged:—

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Breaking into dwelling-houses..... | 2 |
| Burglary..... | 2 |
| Simple Larceny..... | 17 |
| Obtaining money or goods by false pretences..... | 2 |
| Assault common..... | 10 |
| Vagrant suspicious characters..... | 6 |
| Vagrants begging..... | 21 |
| Vagrant paupers..... | 3 |
| Vagrant neglect of family..... | 6 |
| Vagrant bastardy..... | 2 |
| Misdemeanour by threatening the life..... | 2 |
| Misdemeanour with intent to steal..... | 1 |
| Offence against the railway act..... | 2 |
| Drunk and creating a breach of the peace..... | 5 |
| Receiving stolen property..... | 1 |
| Deserters from the army..... | 2 |
| Rape..... | 1 |
| Forgery..... | 1 |
| Misdemeanour common..... | 7 |
| Total..... | 98 |

The Superintending Constable feels sorry he is not able to speak in such satisfactory terms with respect to the conducting of the common lodging-houses as in his former report, several of the keepers having been summoned and convicted in various penalties, for different offences, committed against the regulations of the common lodging house Act 1851, although the number of tramps who frequent the houses is considerably on the decrease. In the conduct of the public-houses and beer-houses the Superintendent is sorry to report, that the complaints brought before the Justices during the years 1855-6, are 3 in excess of the two former years; the numbers 1855-8, having been 14, whilst in 1853-4, there were only 11.

W. H. Cockshott, Snpl. Constable,

next to the Court House on New Street, later renamed Station Road, now used by the Operatic Society. The Police station later moved to Cragdale on the opposite side of the main road. During his time as Superintending Constable, William provided annual summaries of crime in Settle, which demonstrated that crime rates, under his leadership, fell over time. This report of 1856 is typical [6]. It is no surprise that the vast majority of those arrested were male and poorly educated, and that the majority of offences were poverty related. John 'Maccommo' Cockshott was one such 'criminal'. The common lodging houses had a bad year in 1856 with several keepers convicted for various offences, more so than in previous years.

The Settle Police were kept busy with numerous 'petty' offences; burglary, robbery, prostitution, poaching, vagrancy and transport and occasionally attending dead bodies. They also did their best to uphold the law in drinking establishments, lodging houses and fair trading in retail shops. Constables wives not allowed to work so as not to put them in a difficult position should crimes arise with employers or colleagues, but were expected to assist. Margaret had to make sure the courthouse was clean for which she received £1 10s in 1860.

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There are numerous reports of PC Cockshott in action [SC,CH,7,8]. The offenders include several of our graveyard residents. He accused lodging house keepers **Stephen Taylor** and **Mary Clapham** of 'permitting persons of opposite sexes to occupy the same sleeping apartments', and 'allowing a man to sleep in the house part of the building' (the Folly), rather than the dormitory. PC Cockshott also accused **Obadiah Baynes** of 'keeping his beerhouse open during the hours of divine service' and 'refusing to admit the constable', but Obadiah's loyal clientele disputed PC Cockshott's evidence! **Ambrose Preston** was fined £2 for poaching rabbits. **John Slinger** was found guilty of 'using fish roe to fish in the River Ribble' but the fines were dropped as he had such a large family of 9 children, as long as he gave up his fishing tackle.

There was only one glitch in William Henry's career. In 1854 he was found guilty of the 'assault' of **Matthias Wildman**, a Settle shoemaker who lived next to the King William Beerhouse (now a guesthouse) [9]. When Matthias came down a hill on his horse, quite fast, William Henry slapped him on his back, causing him to fall. William Henry alleged it was just friendly banter. In an article entitled 'A constable at fault' 'The Bench considered Mr Cockshott had exceeded his duty' and found him guilty. William Henry was only fined 1 shilling, so the court obviously didn't think it was too serious a crime.

A CONSTABLE AT FAULT.
Mr. Cockshott, of Settle, Superintending Constable, was charged by Mr. Matthias Wildman, a respectable farmer, living at Bonlster, near Giggleswick, with an assault committed on the 23d of May.

William Henry worked until his death in 1871, aged 50, still in Settle. He left £3,000, an enormous sum, to his widow and is buried with his brother and sister in Barnoldswick. Widow Margaret retired to Skipton with plenty of money to live on. William Henry was replaced as Superintending Constable by **Mr Copeland** from Otley. Mr Copeland had his work cut out to deal with the increase in crime as his appointment coincided with the influx of navvies for the building of the Settle to Carlisle railway.



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 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: 1,3,4,7,9,10 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Leeds Times, 5 – Lancaster Guardian, 6 – Kendal Mercury, 8 – Yorkshire Post

ph1 – with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust, ph2 – photo credited to Wikipedia, public domain, ph3 – credited to Old Characters of Giggleswick by G M Lawson.

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

Death certificate provided by the General Records Office, Crown Copyright