

## John Winskill, a most understated stonemason and builder

It's been suggested that the more 'interesting' life stories come from those whose lives are commemorated with gravestones. People rich enough to afford gravestones moved in circles from which achievements beyond finding a basic living were a reality. They were literate and could afford to place adverts and family notices in newspapers. However, this account is one of the most amazing stories from Settle graveyard, with or without a gravestone. John Winskill's life was not commemorated with a gravestone even though he developed most of the town's infrastructure.

John Winskill, baptised in 1817 in Kirkby Lonsdale, was one of at least ten children of James Winskill, a stonemason and his wife Eleanor Batty. In 1840 John he married Margaret Parkinson, a shoemaker's daughter, in Settle and they had three daughters and then three sons. They lived in the Back Stables area, behind the Golden Lion and later moved to Victoria Street in Upper Settle. John advertised his business as a builder, stonemason and grave stone cutter [SC,LSA]. John was immensely successful. In each census return the number of employees and amount of land he worked increased. At the time of the 1851 census he employed 25 men and had one apprentice. By 1871 employed 30 men and farmed 135 acres (with a labourer and a boy) and had two apprentices. By 1881 he farmed 157 acres and employed 72 men including masons, labourers and carters. This was a significant business and John was one of Settle's largest employers.

In August 1848 John did some work on Hellifield Green house for *William Wilkinson* (see *Wilkinson-Newsholme*), dismantling the old stone building and building a new home built on the same site. Family diaries tell us that the front was to be of best quality ashlar with a portico, the chimneys of tooled ashlar while old stone was to be used in construction of the scullery.

John had a variety of positions of responsibility in the town. He was a churchwarden at Holy Ascension church for five years. The church vestry records describe John's unsuccessful attempts to persuade the sexton *William Perkin* to update the burial plans 'Mr Winskill do require Messrs Perkin to supply the necessary sketch for completing the map of the graves in the church yard without delay.' Whilst being a churchwarden, John, *George Wilkinson Newsholme* and *Joseph Jackson* made a bit of business through the church alterations [SC]. John was a well known Rechabite, believing in total abstinence.

John was the 'Vice Chair of the Sanitary Authority', the equivalent of Health and Safety with an 'Inspector of Nuisances'. He was also a Poor Law Guardian assisting with the distribution of relief for the less fortunate. In 1868 he was appointed a director of the new 'Settle Mining

**JOHN WINSKILL,**  
Builder, Stone Mason, and Grave Stone Cutter,  
SETTLE.  
BEGS to announce that he keeps in Stock TERRA COTTA  
CHIMNEY POTS,  
YORKSHIRE GREY SLATE and FLAGS  
Of the best quality.  
The Grey Slate and Flags may be seen at the Railway  
Station, Settle, or in his yard, and will be delivered at any  
Station on the North Western Line. at moderate charges.

**J. WINSKILL & SON,**  
**Monumental Masons,**  
SETTLE.  
Headstones in Freestone, Blue Flag, Marble or Granite.  
Old Stones Restored and Rebuilt.  
None and Marble Fire-Places to order.  
DESIGNS AND ESTIMATES FREE.

EXPENDITURE.			
	£	s.	d.
Mr. G. Wilkinson, Joiner ... ..	145	0	0
Messrs Forster & An- drews, Organbuild- ers ... ..	236	13	0
Mr J Winskill. Mason	84	10	8
Mr J Jackson. Gasfitter	9	11	7

**SETTLE MINING COMPANY, LIMITED.**—A numerously attended meeting of shareholders of this company, which has been framed mainly with the object of searching for and getting coal in the neighbourhood, was held on Wednesday evening last. Mr. John Winskill, chairman of a committee appointed at a previous meeting, presided, and explained the progress which had latterly been made towards getting the company into working order, and the prospects of success connected with the undertaking. The following persons were then appointed directors:—Messrs. John Winskill, Joseph Jackson, T. A. Harvey, Thomas Holmes, and William Howarth. Mr. J. Cowburn, and Mr. Joseph Hargreaves, treasurers.

Company' along with several other respected Settle tradesmen: **Joseph Jackson, Thomas Anderson Harvey, Thomas Holmes and William Howarth**. Unfortunately, this turned out to be one of their less successful enterprises [1].

Margaret and John lived long lives and died within a year of each other, aged 73 and 77 respectively. John's obituary explains that *'Most of the houses and public buildings erected in the Settle district during the last forty years have been reared under Mr Winskill's direction'* [2]. The understated John Winskill was the man behind the building of Victoria Hall in Kirkgate in 1853 (**Robinson**) and the engineer appointed to replace the whole of the town's sewerage system in 1877. He also patented a revolutionary design for a limekiln which was 13.5 metres high. He ran the quarry in Eldroth, next to Black Bank Farm, which provided stone for his projects and had also provided stone for Settle's Town Hall.

### OBITUARY.

**DEATH OF A SETTLE TRADESMAN.**—Mr. John Winskill, of Settle, a retired builder and contractor, has died at an advanced age. The deceased was widely known and held in high esteem. Most of the houses and public buildings erected in the Settle district during the last forty years have been reared under Mr. Winskill's direction. For several years past Mr. Winskill was one of the Poor Law Guardians for Settle, in which office his practical knowledge stood him in good stead and saved the rates of the town more than a little.<sup>74</sup>



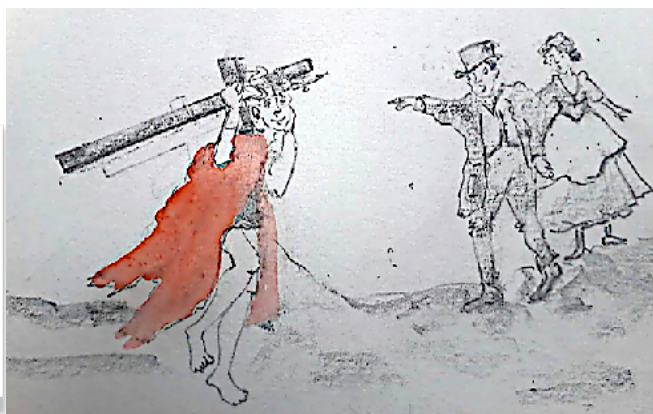
John and Margaret are buried in an unmarked *Old grave BX31*. A successful man such as John is a hard act to follow so what happened to their children? They had varying fortunes.

Eldest son **James**, born in 1847, worked a large farm of 360 acres in Airton and then in Cumbria with his wife **Elizabeth Coates** (whose step-mother was also James' maternal aunt!). Strangely, at the time of the 1891 census they lived in Nottingham. James described himself as a *'retired farmer'*. Later that year several newspaper articles suggested that James was having mental health difficulties, writing insulting letters to both the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury [3]. The full details of the hearing explained that he had been a successful Yorkshire farmer. He had been assessed, but doctors said they were *'too afraid to say he was insane'*. In 1896, James appeared in Calais dressed in red and carrying a wooden cross [4]. Oh dear, poor James. He died in Calais the following year. His wife Elizabeth returned to Settle and lived by herself on Mains View. She died in 1927, aged 77.

James Winskill, a clerk, was remanded in custody at Nottingham on Tuesday on the charge of writing insulting letters to the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

### A PECULIAR ARREST:

**CALAIS, May 24.**—A man named James Winskill, said to be a British subject, was arrested here to-day under singular circumstances. It appears that a decree of expulsion had been issued against Winskill for being concerned in a publication directed against Queen Victoria. This afternoon he appeared in the streets of Calais attired in red, and carrying a wooden cross on his shoulders. A considerable crowd collected, and Winskill was taken into custody.



John and Margaret's second son **John Winskill (Jnr)** born in 1851, continued his father's business for a while, living on Duke Street next to the Ashfield. In 1885 John was elected onto the

**SETTLE AND DISTRICT CONSERVATIVE CLUB.**—The annual general meeting of the members of this club was held in the billiard-room, on Tuesday evening last, John Birkbeck, junr. Esq., of Bankwell, the president, occupying the chair. The meeting was numerously attended. The treasurer's account for the past year having been adopted, the Rev. A. W. M. Close, and Messrs. John Winskil, junr., Richard Hardacre, John Henry Greenwood, Thomas Holmes, and Francis Twisleton were elected com-

mittee of the Conservative Club with several other town worthies [1].

However, from 1897 onwards, John [ph1] made his own mark as the land agent and steward for **Walter Morrison MP** at Malham Tarn Estate where he worked for over 30 years [5]. This was a highly respected and well paid position with immense responsibility, overseeing all issues on the estate whether or not Walter Morrison was in residence. He was known to be an excellent administrator and creative practitioner, setting up tree planting scheme and building a trout hatchery at nearby Tennant Gill to ensure the Tarn was always suitably replenished. From there, in 1903, John campaigned for the new Yorkshire Dales Railway, Hellifield to Scorton (Richmond) to pass through Kirkby Malham [5]. In the end it ran from Skipton to Grassington.

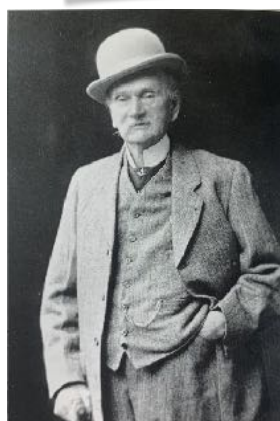
When Walter Morrison died in 1921 his estate was worth £2 million, which is equivalent to around £100 million today's value. Mr Morrison famously left generous bequests to his servants including £1000 to John and £3000 each to **William** and **Martha Skirrow** who worked as butler and housekeeper in his London property (where he lived when on Parliamentary business) and are also buried in Settle graveyard [2].

John's first wife **Ellen Hayes** [ph6] was the daughter of an agricultural labourer in Rathmell and worked in service for **Mary Hartley** at Whitefriars in Settle before marrying John. They had three daughters and a son although eldest child **Margaret** died after eight hours and is buried in the Ancient graveyard. Ellen died in 1900, aged 51. John's much younger second wife, **Harriet Britton**, [ph1] was also the daughter of an agricultural labourer and had worked in service as a housemaid at Malham Tarn Hall before their marriage. When she died of a heart attack in 1927 the vicar of Malham said of her, 'I did not know of anyone who was a better

**MALHAM TARN ESTATE AGENT.**

The death has occurred at Settle of Mr John Winskill, aged 79, for over thirty years estate agent for the Malham Tarn Estates, being employed in turn by the late Mr. Walter Morrison, his nephew Major J. A. Morrison, the late Mr. E. W. Fisher, of Oakfield Lodge, Huddersfield and the present owner, Capt. Hutton Croft.

There were few better known men in North Ribblesdale than Mr. Winskill who for over forty years had had an unbroken connection with the local government of the district, being a member of the Settle Board of Guardians from 1890 until 1930. At his death he was a member of the Settle Rural District Council. He was also a prominent Freemason.



Ellen Hayes, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

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mother, even to those who were no relation to her. She was a true mother to all who dwelt on Malham Moor.' John died in 1931, aged 80, living at Lower Trenhouse and is buried with both his wives in the unmarked *Old grave BX32* next to his parents. He left an estate worth nearly £1 million in today's value, but still didn't have a gravestone.

John and Ellen's son John was recorded as an architect's pupil in Accrington before a successful appointment, out of 107 applicants, as an Assistant Highway Surveyor in Bourne, Lincolnshire [LSA]. Unfortunately records stop after that.

25. Mr. John Winskill, jun., (son of Mr. John Winskill, of Malham Tarn), was appointed Assistant Highway Surveyor at Bourne, Lincolnshire, out of 107 applicants.

Daughter **Elizabeth Winskill** found herself in Croydon, perhaps with some work related to Walter Morrison? She married a schoolmaster **Robert Francis Jones** and they had three children although **Frank Winskill Jones** died an infant [ph3].

Unfortunately Robert died of pneumonia in 1907, aged just 36. Their daughter **Enid Myfanwy Jones** was brought up by grandad Winskill at Malham Tarn and later married Settle's garage owner, **John Butterworth Ellis**. Their son, another **Robert Francis Jones** worked for Martin's Bank in Settle (later taken over by Barclays) before signing up for the war. He was killed on the Western Front on 23 August 1918, serving with the Grenadier Guards, just a couple of months after starting active service. He was commemorated on the bank's Roll of Honour.



Elizabeth had a successful career working for 25 years as a nurse at 'St Luke's Hospital for the Dying' in Bayswater which was located just around the corner from Walter Morrison's London Residence. This was a terminal care hospital for 'respectable' people. She was presented with an oak bureau [ph3] to mark completion of 25 years of service in 1937 and her 'relations from the north joined the celebrations and had an 'excellent buffet'. Elizabeth retired on a pension of £55 per annum to Crosby, Liverpool.

### MALHAM LADY HONOURED IN LONDON

#### 25 Years' Hospital Work

Sister Jones, elder daughter of the late Mr. John Winskill, for many years agent of the Malham Tarn Estate, was on Saturday presented with a handsome oak bureau to mark her completion of 25 years' service as matron's assistant at St. Luke's Hospital, Bayswater, London. A numerous gathering included Sister Jones's relations from the north.

Meanwhile Elizabeth's younger sister **Annie Winskill** married **John Coates**, son of the Malham Moor farmer **Obadiah Coates**. The Coates family have farmed many of the Malham Moor farms for decades and the 'Obadiah Coates' horn burn mark 'OC' is still used today to identify sheep and can be seen imprinted on the door of the Smithy on Castle Hill in Settle. They had three sons, including eldest, **John Winskill Coates** [left, back row]. They are pictured with an elderly John Winskill sitting in the middle of the bench and niece Enid in front of the bench [ph4].

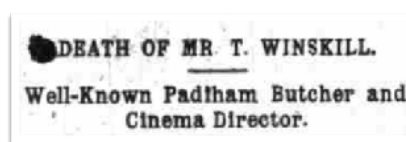
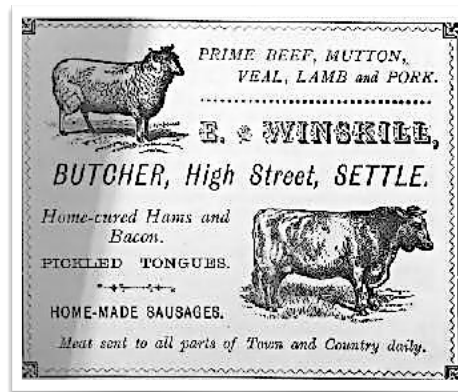


Going back a generation, John and Margaret's youngest son **Edward Winskill**, born in 1855, began life as a butcher [LSA]. In 1894 Edward provided steak, mutton and kidneys for the funeral feast of **John Wilkinson-Newsholme** charging £3 and 15 shillings. Edward decided to move into

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farming, with wife **Judith Topham** and they emigrated to Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1905, but came back again to live in Skipton before long.

John and Margaret's eldest daughter, **Agnes Winskill**, married **John Ainsworth**, a blacksmith from Padiham which is where they also settled. Agnes gave birth to at least 12 children before being widowed. When she died in 1910, Agnes left some of her estate to her nephew, her sister Ellen's son **Thomas Winskill**. Nephew Thomas was the first of two illegitimate sons, born when Ellen was 21 and **George Foster Winskill** followed when she was 31. George Foster Winskill died in infancy. The chances are that he was the son of **George Foster**, a grocer who was already married. George had worked in Settle but moved to Farnworth near Bolton. Ellen's son Thomas was brought up by grandparents John and Margaret, and then served an apprenticeship in building with uncle John Winskill (Jnr). Despite this training Thomas became a butcher and had his own family with **Betty Butterworth** in Padiham. Thomas' obituary describes a popular man who was chairman of the Padiham Butchers' Association, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Globe Cinema and a member of the Liberal Club. Well done Thomas. Thomas and Betty died in Padiham but for some reason were buried back in Settle, in *Old C32*.



*In loving memory of Thomas Winskill died Sep'er 10th 1922 aged 57 years. Also of Betty his wife died Jan'ry 16th 1927 aged 70 years. May they rest in peace.*



At the age of 32 Ellen Winskill married **Thomas Cook**, a farmer's labourer from Tosside and they had their own family, also living in Padiham. John and Margaret's third daughter **Jane Winskill**, born in 1845, died aged ten.

Meanwhile, John Winskill (Snr)'s elder brother **Thomas Winskill**, a stonemason, eventually joined John in Settle during the 1850s with his wife **Dorothy Just** and seven children. Thomas died in 1867, aged 52 and Dorothy died in August 1885, aged 77 and is probably buried with him. Thomas and Dorothy's daughter **Mary Ann Winskill** married **John Grisedale** of the well known furniture business at the Folly in Settle.

Thomas and Dorothy's son **James Winskill** was a shoemaker [LSA] who married **Ruth Dakin** who had come to Settle from Castleton, Derbyshire to find work in service at Stackhouse. James and Ruth had 12 children, five of whom died in infancy. Their son **Thomas** followed his dad in the shoemaking trade and found employment at Burnley Coop. Thomas made a name for himself through photography, becoming a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society [7].

**JAMES + WINSKILL,**  
**BOOT AND SHOE MAKER,**  
KIRKGATE, SETTLE,  
Wishes to thank the inhabitants of Settle and neighbourhood for past favours, and begs to inform them that he has always on hand a large and well-assorted stock of  
LADIES', GENTS', & CHILDREN'S  
BOOTS, + SHOES, + SLIPPERS, + LEGGINGS, + &c.  
ELASTICS REPLACED ON THE SHORTEST NOTICE.  
Agent for the Waterproof K Boots,  
As advertised in the Field newspaper.  
The most careful attention paid to the Bespoke and Repairs trade.

**WORK WHICH EARNED F.R.P.S.**

much ability. He enjoyed many hobbies during his lifetime, but amateur photography in all its branches was his favourite pastime. Such was his interest and valuable work that some years ago he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society. He had won many prizes in photographic competitions, and his collection of pictures and slides was recognised as one of the best in the country. For many years he had lectured to prominent societies, using lantern slides of his own photographs, and had established a reputation for himself in that direction. Mr. Winskill is survived by a widow, who is the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wharton, two sons and one daughter.

James and Ruth are buried in the unmarked grave *Old BX65* with their infant daughters *Lillie Ann* and *Annie Robinson Winskill*. *Ethel*, *Martha* and *William Jacob Winskill* were buried in the Ancient graveyard, hopefully with their grandparents.

This would seem like the end of the story of the Winskills. But it isn't!

Over 70 years after the death of John Winskill (Snr) in 1890, his funeral card, in pristine condition, was found in the pocket of a pair of trousers. The trousers were covering the legs of a skeleton found in the disused Buckden Gavel Mine below Buckden Pike.

In March 1964 a newspaper reported [8], '*Students find Skeleton in Old Mine. The skeleton of a man was found in a disused lead mine known as Gravel head, Buckden by four members of the Birmingham University Caving Club, They found the skeleton in a passage about a quarter of a mile from the entrance to the mine and about 30ft down a 70ft shaft. The skeleton was clothed in a one-piece boiler suit and rubber-soled boots and a felt hat lay beside it. [ph2].*



## STUDENTS FIND SKELETON IN OLD MINE

The skeleton of a man was found on Saturday in a disused lead mine known as Gravel Head, Buckden, in Upper Wharfedale, Yorkshire, by four members of the Birmingham University Caving Club who were exploring the mine for pleasure.

They are David Carlisle, aged 30 of Coine Road, Earby, near Skipton, Peter Dodda, aged 30, of Prospect Road, Maseley, Birmingham; David Nickerson, aged 19, of Rock Road, Pinedon, Northamptonshire, and Maurice Isaac, aged 21, of Redhill Drive, Falmouth, Bristol.

They found the skeleton in a passage about a quarter of a mile from the entrance to the mine and about 30ft. down a 70ft shaft. The skeleton was clothed in a one-piece boiler suit and rubber-soled boots and a felt hat lay beside it.

The students notified the Grassington Police and the skeleton was brought to the surface by members of the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association early yesterday.

Mr. Carlisle said: "It was a bit of a shock for us. There was some blackened flesh on the face, but the rest of the

body consisted entirely of bones which were sticking out of a boiler suit. At first I thought it was a dummy."

Very few people go into this mine because it is considered dangerous and exploration is discouraged by most pothole clubs. The mine was closed for working in 1860 because it was found to be unsafe.

A police spokesman said that there was nothing on the body to identify it. The boots belong to a period between 1910 and 20 years ago. They have a row of metal studs instead of lace-

holes at the top and these were in common use between 1910-20.

Asked if the man could have been murdered outside and then taken into the mine, the police spokesman said: "I think that is unlikely. The place where the skeleton was found is difficult to get to and you need proper tackle."

One theory is that the man may have been a vagrant who was foraging for scrap metal during the first World War when metal was scarce and valuable.

*It was a bit of a shock for us. At first we thought it was a dummy. Very few people use the mine as its is dangerous. The mine was closed in 1860. The police spokesman said there was nothing on the body to identify it. The boots, with a row of metal studs instead of lace holes belong to 1910 - 20. It's unlikely he was murdered as the place where is was found was difficult to get to and you need proper tackle. One theory is that the man may have been a vagrant who was foraging for soap metal during WW1.*



The case became known as '*The Mystery of Buckden Bill*'. The funeral card provided the best clue to the date of death of this person who was eventually thought to be **John Sunter Place**. John Sunter Place was born in Swaledale in 1844. His father, also John, was a mine agent and took up a position in Kettlewell and so son John Sunter Place found work in the Buckden lead mine. In 1868 he married **Mary Ann Wiseman** and they started their family of six children. The Buckden mines were overworked and ceased trading in 1877 so John and Mary Ann took the family to Burnley where John managed to find work as a lead miner.

Mary Ann's extended family lived in Settle and were Rechabites so, when fellow Rechabite John Winskill died, John Sunter Place went to the funeral. Very soon after John Winskill's death, John Sunter Place's own father, John Place, died. It seems 46 year old John Sunter Place may have decided to have a trip down memory lane, going back to his home and exploring his old mine. The trip involved a four mile walk and three shafts of climbing and it is thought he probably had a heart attack.

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His poor wife Mary Ann died in 1919, aged 73, without ever knowing what happened to her husband.



*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.*

*The story of the Mystery of Buckden Bill is available at [www.vetch.co.uk/buckden2/ThemysteryofBuckdenBill](http://www.vetch.co.uk/buckden2/ThemysteryofBuckdenBill)*

*Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Leeds Mercury, 3 – Hull Daily mail, 4 – Cheltenham Chronicle, 5 – Yorkshire Post, 6 – Pall Mall Gazette, 7 – Nelson Leader, 8 – Birmingham Daily Post*

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

*ph1 – credited to Bill Mitchell's book, Walter Morrison, a Millionaire at Malham Tarn, ph2 – credited to [www.vetch.co.uk/buckden2/ThemysteryofBuckdenBill](http://www.vetch.co.uk/buckden2/ThemysteryofBuckdenBill), ph3 – kindly provided by descendant Guy Ellis, ph4 – credited to family descendants via [Ancestry.co.uk](http://Ancestry.co.uk), username Patricia Rees, ph6 – Image 2022.1.68.111 from the Horner Photographic Studio Collection provided courtesy of the Museum of North Craven Life*



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