

## The Three Fishers of Settle

In the early 1890s, three friends, **William Capstick**, blacksmith, **Matthias 'Thi' Nowell**, grocer and **James Hartley**, coal merchant went fishing at Malham Tarn. Thanks to an unusually successful fishing trip they became local celebrities and a bit of local scandal ensured their names were embedded in local history.

For some reason, 'WC and TA', (most likely *William Clark*, the innkeeper of the White Horse and Thomas Altham, a grocer) decided to have a bit of banter at the fishers' expense. They wrote a 15-verse poem called 'The Three Fishers'.

*Now Capstick and Hartley, and bold little Thi  
Went up to the Tarn in the month of July;  
They went up in style in a nice wagonette,  
On a fishing excursion, no doubt, you may bet.*

*They had rods, they had lines, and a big umbrella,  
To cover the whiskey, and keep it so mellow,  
And as you'll remember t'was fearfully hot,  
They appointed Matthias to look after the tot.*

*They's a bit lot of fish, some forty or more,  
Which lick'd into fits all they's e'er done before  
That with pride and conceit their bosoms were full,  
And increased as each fish from the water they's pull.*

*They had haddock so fine, and some nice little perch,  
And all over the Tarn for 'fresh herring' they search;  
Says Capstick, "I'll tell thee what Thi, there's no more,  
We must have caught 't last when we were up her  
before."*

*What with unhooking fish, and filling the tot  
Lile Thi, all the day, ne'er a wink of sleep got;  
And if he just chanced on a nice little doze, A big fish on  
the head quite disturbed his repose.*

*However they managed to have such a kill,  
As always before, their catch had been nil  
Is a mystery that cannot very well be explained,  
Unless put down to the experience they'd gained.*

*They packed up their fish, then homeward did go,  
They thought they'd done wonders, no doubt it was so,  
And if ever they go up again may they mend  
And when they return don't forget they've a friend.*

It also included the verses:



**THE THREE FISHERS.**

2nd Canto.

**N**OW Capstick and Hartley, and bold little Thi  
Went up to the Tarn in the month of July;  
They went up in style in a nice wagonette,  
On a fishing excursion, no doubt, you may bet.

They had rods, they had lines, and a big umbrella,  
To cover the whiskey, and keep it so mellow;  
And as you'll remember 'twas fearfully hot,  
They appointed Matthias to look after the Tot.

They'd a big lot of fish, some forty or more,  
Which lick'd into fits all they'd e'er done before;  
That with pride and conceit their bosoms were full,  
And increased as each fish from the water they'd pull.

They had haddock so fine, and some nice little perch,  
And all over the Tarn for "fresh herring" they search;  
Says Capstick, "I'll tell thee what Thi, there's no more,  
We must have caught 't last when we were up here before."

What with unhooking fish, and filling the tot,  
Lile Thi, all the day, ne'er a wink of sleep got;  
And if he just chanced on a nice little doze,  
A big fish on the head quite disturbed his repose.

However they managed to have such a kill,  
Mas, always before, their catch had been nil,  
Is a mystery that cannot very well be explained,  
Unless its put down to the experience they'd gained.

They packed up their fish, then homeward did go,  
They thought they'd done wonders, no doubt it was so,  
And if ever they go up again may they mend,  
And when they return don't forget they've a friend.

ZXF 24/1/16

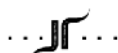
Now a bottle they's got, full of whisky they'd thought, As Nowell remarked, "good as ever was bought". When Capstick sings out, and Jim says "What's matter?", "I'm dinged if they haven't put up mineral water".

"That's intended for me" says lile Thi with a smile, "But it's rather too much to bring it six mile, So we'll take it back home for I call it a sin, To drink mineral water unless mixed with a gin"

Not everyone appreciated the joke. Friends of the fishermen issued a leaflet attacking the authors:

'There's two men in Settle who sit at their ease, to scandalise people just as they please, They walk up and down and call themselves mashers, they can't leave alone Three Poor Little Fishers.'

Interestingly, both of the suspected authors William Clark and Thomas Altham had moved away from Settle by the time of the following census return. Perhaps this contributed to their decisions. So who were our fishermen?



## William Capstick, a blacksmith (and fisherman)

Blacksmiths and saddlers were at the heart of the Victorian transport system as horses were used for all transport and William Capstick will have had a further boost to business during the building of the railways in Settle.

**William Capstick** [ph1, left] was born in 1824 into a family of blacksmiths in Austwick. His brother Charles was a blacksmith and sister Elizabeth married blacksmith *Luke Ralph* who were buried with a wonderful inscription on their stone.

*My sledge and hammer both declined, My bellows they have lost the wind,*

*My fire extinct, my forge decayed, and in the dust my vice is laid.*

*My coals have spent, My iron gone, My nails are drove, my work is done.*

In 1848 William Capstick married **Agnes Garnett** and they lived in Chapel Street in Settle, bringing up four daughters and a son. William Capstick was remembered for building and pioneering the use of tricycles in Settle in the 1880s [CH].

Agnes died in 1882 and is buried with their infant daughter Annie. William married his second wife **Ann Carter** in 1884. On 21st November of 1891, William had an 'unsatisfactory visitor' who stole from him. The burglar was his second wife's nephew, **Josiah Taylor** [1].

Surprisingly, Josiah was not just a young lad getting up to mischief, but a 52 year old justice of the peace, alderman of the borough of Bolton and auctioneer with a wife and three children. The

And now I must go further back still, and tell of the coming of the velocipede to Settle. It was a crude bicycle, of French origin, suggested by the "Dandy Horse," which preceded it. The machine had two wooden wheels, shod with iron rims, the saddle was also made of wood, and mounted on an iron backbone, the pedals being on the front wheel. It would be about the year 1870 that it made its appearance in the streets of Settle. The rider made a somewhat triumphant progress through the streets, until, suddenly, the back-bone snapped in twain, and the rider found a hard seat on the roadway, much to the amusement of the spectators. About a week later, repairs having been effected, the rider, in negotiating Rathmell Brow, lost control of the machine, and crashed into the wall at the foot of the brow with disastrous consequences. Little more was heard of the machine, but I remember it gave an idea to William Capstick, then a veteran blacksmith in Settle, who made a tricycle for his son James to ride on, and we boys had some rare fun out of it.

**AN UNSATISFACTORY VISITOR.**—At the Settle Police Court yesterday, Josiah Taylor, of Bolton, who described himself as an ironfounder, was charged in custody with having stolen £30 and two gold rings from the dwelling house of Mr. William Capstick, blacksmith, Settle, on the 21st November, 1891. The prisoner has admitted to the police that he took a smaller sum than that stated whilst on a visit, Mrs. Capstick, the wife of the prosecutor, being his aunt. Formal evidence having been tendered, the prisoner was remanded in custody until to-day.

**BANKRUPTCY OF A BOLTON AUCTIONEER.**  
**EXTRAORDINARY REVELATIONS.**  
Mr. Josiah William Taylor, a justice of the peace, and until recently an alderman of the borough of Bolton, came up for his examination in bankruptcy before Mr. Registrar Holden, at Bolton, on Monday. The debtor carried on an extensive business as an auctioneer and valuer, and a receiving order was made on the petition of a creditor, the statement of affairs showing a net deficit of £3,500. In examination

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reason for his misdemeanour was that just a week before, Joseph had been declared bankrupt [2] – he was a desperate man. How humiliating! Josiah was remanded in custody until the court session 11 months later in October 1892, and was then given a further two months imprisonment. This was the Victorian justice system.



18. Mr. J. B. Wookey visited Settle with a number of boys from Dr. Barnardo's Homes, and gave an Entertainment in the Victoria Hall.—Mr. Wm. Capstick died at his residence, in Chapel Street, Settle, after a long and painful illness.—First Annual Meeting of the members of the Settle Golf Club.

According to Charles Green, the Settle gardener, William was said to be a jovial man [ph1]. William died after 'a long and painful illness' aged 72 [LSA].

*In memory of Annie, infant daughter of William and Agnes Capstick of Settle who died October 15th 1854 aged (5) months. A few ....feld, and she....dead. Also of William Capstick, died Nov 18th 1896. Also of Agnes his wife, died Jan 12th 1882, C8*



Widow Ann died in Austwick in 1905. Both of William's wives worked in service before marriage. Agnes worked at the impressive Casterton Hall in Kirkby Lonsdale and Ann worked for Lorenzo Christie, owner of the Langcliffe Mills when he had retired to Stackhouse Hall. Daughter **Margaret** also worked as a housemaid for the *Birkbecks* at Anley Hall before she married a Leeds tram car driver, **Benjamin Fanthorpe**.

Daughter **Elizabeth Capstick** was educated at the pioneering Ripon Teacher Training College for women, run by the Ripon Diocese. This college was established in 1846 by sisters Catherine, Winfred and Mary Cruse to help address the need for teachers in the church run National Schools after finding, '*the demand for schoolmistresses is said to be greater than the supply in the ratio of ten to one*'. Ironically the college was first approved following an outbreak of Scarlet Fever in the building which had been used for male trainees. The building was deemed unsafe for male trainees, but would be fine for ladies. It was a strict and strenuous regime but regarded as the best training for ladies in the country. It's now part of the York St John University.

When she was 23 Elizabeth married **Samuel Womack**, a commercial traveller/glass bottle manufacturer/book keeper, but, unusually, didn't give up her teaching. In the following census return she was juggling the motherhood of **Oscar William Capstick Womack** with teaching.

Samuel Womack	Head	Man	24	Glass Bottle Manufc	Casterton
Elizabeth	Wife	Mar	23	School Mistress	
Oscar W.C.	Son		5		

Daughter **Agnes Annie Capstick** married an engineer **Charles Arthur Goldsborough** from Shipley. In the small world of Settle, it transpires he was the first cousin, twice removed from **Sarah Goldsborough**, the wife of the well know Settle tanner *Matthew Whittam*.

William and Agnes' daughter Alice married **Alfred Temple**, a pawnbroker. Alfred's grandmother was **Agnes Atkinson** buried close by in *grave C10*. Son James found work as a railway clerk in Hellifield.



## Matthias 'Thi' Nowell, grocer (and fisherman)

Matthias [centre, ph1] was born in 1839, also in Austwick, the illegitimate son of **Ann Nowell**. Ann's father **Thomas Nowell** was from Gisburn and married **Agnes Ward** from Austwick and so the Nowells of Austwick began. Matthias was brought up by his mother, grandmother and uncles. Matthias started his career as a grocer's assistant in Blackburn. In 1864 he returned to Settle to take over the well established business of *Edward Thomas Foster* on Constitution Hill [SC].

There are numerous adverts for his business selling not just tea, but also coffee, patent medicines for animals, paraffin oil candles, soap, lard, tar, butter and eggs [LSA].

**SHEEP! · SHEEP! · SHEEP!**

— ESTABLISHED 1831. —

**MATTHIAS NOWELL,**  
(LATE EDWARD T. FOSTER.)  
**GROCCER, &c., SETTLE,**

*Begs to inform his numerous Customers that he has received a large quantity of*  
**Butter, Pale & Brown Grease, Margarine, Whalesfoot, Tallow, Oil, Archangel Tar, American & White Tar, for making Sheep Salve,**  
*which they will find of good quality, and as cheap as any house in Yorkshire.*

McDougall's Sheep Smear and Dip; Nowell's Sheep Paste, Powder and Liquid Dips; Little's, McLeod's, Barratt's, Long's, and Tomlinson and Hayward's Dipping Compositions; Noxona and All-round Dips; Nowell's Celebrated Sheep Salve; Foot-rot Ointments; Luddington's Celebrated Oils, Ruddle.

**Calf, Milk and Cow Hands; Strong Hemp Halters, Cart Ropes, &c.; Farmers' Brushes & Brushes.**

— FRESH BUTTER AND EGGS BOUGHT. —

**E. T. FOSTER,**  
**Tea Dealer, Constitution Hill, Settle.**

Begs to return his grateful thanks to his numerous friends and customers in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Westmorland for the liberal support he has received from them during the 30 years he has been in business. He also begs to inform them that he is declining business in favour of Matthias Nowell, whom he had as his assistant for several years, and solicits a continuation of their favours to his successor.

E. T. Foster returns his sincere thanks to the Graziers and Farmers of the above counties who have so liberally purchased Butter and Tar for Sheep Salve from him, and begs to inform them that the business will be carried on at the same place as usual by Matthias Nowell for whom he solicits their patronage.

Settle, Feb. 1st, 1864.

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**MATTHIAS NOWELL,**  
**TEA DEALER AND GROCER,**  
**CONSTITUTION HILL, SETTLE,**

Begs leave to announce that he has succeeded to the business of Mr. E. T. Foster, Tea Dealer, and respectfully solicits a continuance of the liberal support which has so long been conferred upon his predecessor.

M. N. assures those who may favour him with their commands that he will devote his best exertions to deserve their patronage and support.

Settle, Feb. 1st, 1864.

Whilst retaining his business premises on Constitution Hill Matthias seemed to prefer to live in the company of others. At the time of the census returns he was found living with widow *Ellen Skirrow* on Kirkgate, at the Naked Man Inn with *Jane Batty* and at the White Horse with *William Clark* who later wrote the mischievous poem. In the 1901 census he lived on Constitution Hill next door to the *Brynning sisters*, Edward Thomas Foster's nieces.

Matthias died in March 1911, aged 72, leaving his £48 to *Samuel Hodgson*, cabinet maker. Matthias' probate records described him as an oil and dip merchant. He is buried with his great niece *Sarah Mary Nowell* in the unmarked Old GX24 - see *Nowells*



The third fisher [ph1, right] was **James Hartley**, the son of Isabella Hartley, the landlady at the Golden Lion, and brother of *John Johnson Hartley*. James Hartley and his wife/widow *Jane Foxcroft* were successful coal merchants. They lived in Langcliffe but traded from Settle Station [LSA]. They had ten children, impressively. Son **Walter** continued the business in Langcliffe and the rest moved away to work and start their own families.

AND GENERAL ADVERTISER.

**Mrs. J. T. HARTLEY**  
(Widow of the late James Hartley),  
**COAL AND COKE MERCHANT,**  
**SETTLE STATION.**

All Orders promptly attended to.

\* JAMES + HARTLEY, \*  
**COALS \* and \* COKE \* MERCHANT,**  
**SETTLE STATION.**  
.....  
ALL ORDERS PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO.

Settle Graveyard Project



*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'.*

*Newspaper cuttings with kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Lancashire Evening Post, 2 – Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser,*

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

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

*ph1 and poem – with kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust*