

Dr Robinson, Settle surgeon for nearly 40 years

Thomas, born in 1792 in Clapham, was the youngest of at least ten children of **Edmund Robinson** and his wife **Isabella Grime**. Most of Thomas' siblings worked as agricultural labourers so it's not clear how Thomas gained his education and apprenticeship as a surgeon. Thomas' sister **Ellen Robinson** married **Christopher Parkin** and their son **William Perkin** came to Settle. William was a stonemason and soon became the church sexton, a post he held for 46 years. He had a few problems with both roles because he was illiterate. But that's another story, and probably explains the change in the spelling of their surnames.

Thomas was good friends with **Reverend John Howson**, the Second Master at Giggleswick School, and **William Lodge Paley**. William Lodge Paley was a schoolmaster at the National School and, fortunately for us, wrote a diary, commencing in 1814, giving numerous entries about Thomas' work as well as local and world events, these in 1814 [WLP].

Oct. 1.—Spent some hours pleasantly last night at Mr. Howson's in company of him, Dr. Robinson and J. Howson. Our British troops taken Washington in America, burnt the Public Buildings and taken 205 cannon, etc., with less than 2,000 men opposed to near 9,000, with small loss. Robert Lister, having long had a white swelling in his knee, his leg was amputated to-day by Drs. Robinson, Anton, Wilson, Rogers, Bailey and Foster. [No anæsthetics at this date.—ED.]

Oct. 28.—An impromptu by the Rev J. Howson at a convivial meeting in my school consisting of his Reverence, Dr. Robinson and myself with sober glee and I hope harmless jests. We spent a few hours after the arduous fag and toil of teaching. These two gents are my only intimate friends here—
"To tell the various squalls
And every hap that falls
Within these learned walls
What muse shall dare.
Where magisterial state
Rules over the sad fate
Of many a stupid pate
That rattles there."

In those days, the roles of surgeons and medical practitioners differed. Medical men had studied at university to diagnose illnesses whereas surgeons performed operations following an apprenticeship. Alongside these roles, apothecaries provided a variety of 'medicines'. In reality these roles overlapped. So, according to the diaries, by 1814 Thomas, aged 22, had completed his apprenticeship and was working in Settle. Entries show that Thomas's work included providing pain relief, accoucheur (male midwifery), and dentistry. Sometimes he performed more drastic amputations with the help of fellow surgeons and apprentices, but without pain relief, of course. William Lodge Paley suffered from bad teeth so there are numerous entries about that with some interesting treatments.

May 5, 1822 — Called to see Dr Robinson, who has been severely afflicted with a Rheumatic Fever but is now able to walk about the room. He advised me to rub my gums with brandy at bedtime.

May 30, 1822 — Took six bottles to Dr Robinson and got him to pull the tooth out he thought worst. It proved so decayed that it broke in many pieces and he had to take it out by pieces.

June 5, 1827 — Dreadful night in face and ear and sent for Dr Robinson, and Mr W Holden with him, he said the nerves in my face were disordered and put some bruised ginger in a roast potato and lay it on my face as hot as I can bear.

June 18, 1827 — Dr Robinson called and lanced my gums which gave me relief and had a glass of mixture.

Sep 27, 1827 — Pain very bad and met Dr Robinson on road and my resolution about having a tooth drawn was nearly gone and I had an instinctive fear of the operation, but he and Mr Bailey got me fixed and a candle brought in and the Dr could clearly see that the farthest tooth was bad and would have it out, but the operation was painful, as he had to go into my mouth so



often. There was a hole down the middle and it bled till I went to bed, but I enjoyed a sound night's repose.

In 1828, Thomas prepared a very solemn and grim poem for the funeral of *Mrs Mary Oliver* who died aged 52. It included the lines, 'How feeble is our mortal frame, what dying worms we be', and 'Whate'er we do, where'er we be, We're travelling to the grave.' Most Victorian.

When he was 23, on July 23 1815, Thomas married *Elizabeth Marshall* 'to whom he has been long attached'. The wedding was in Liverpool. Elizabeth's brother, *John Marshall*, was a surgeon in Liverpool. It is possible that Thomas and John trained together. William Lodge Paley described Elizabeth as 'a very stout woman' and the marriage prompted William to review his own situation – but he never married.

Thomas and stout Elizabeth had four sons and two daughters, the eldest, *Edmund John Marshall Robinson*, born just three months after their wedding. Edmund was named after Thomas' father. The family lived in the Market Place behind the Shambles, probably in the building now used as a curry restaurant. Their son *William Henry Robinson* was apprenticed to Uncle John Marshall in Liverpool but died in Nigeria in 1845, aged 21. Their daughter *Agnes Isabella Robinson* died, aged 20, in 1837 and was buried in Giggleswick graveyard (as Settle church had not yet been built).

BISCUITS for the FUNERAL of
MRS. OLIVER,
Died November 7th 1828. Aged 52.
Thee we adore, eternal Name,
And humbly own to thee,
How feeble is our mortal frame!
What dying worms we be.
Our waisting lives grow shorter still,
As days and months increase;
And every beating pulse we tell,
Leaves but the number less.
The year rolls round and steals away,
The breath that first it gave;
Whate'er we do, where'er we be,
We're travelling to the grave.
PREPARED BY
T. ROBINSON, Surgeon, Settle.

July 23.—Bonaparte has surrendered to Captain Maitland of the *Bellerophon* when he found there was no way of escaping our cruisers. What a lesson to vain man!—Report says Dr. Robinson is just married to Miss Marshal to whom he has been long attached.—R. Mason's

called in an hand carriage. At Dr. R's had rum and tobacco and chat, what was agreeable. Mrs. R. is a very stout woman. My intimate friends marry so fast, I must either seek a mate also or new intimates.

Thomas was appointed as Medical Officer to the Settle Poor Law Union. His responsibilities covered the whole area from Settle, Giggleswick, Langcliffe, Stainforth and Rathmell and as far afield as Arncliffe and Horton-in-Ribblesdale. In 1851 the Union presented Thomas with money to buy a watch to be inscribed 'Awarded by the board of guardians of the Settle Union, to Mr Thomas Robinson, of Settle, surgeon, for his assiduous attention, and successful treatment of the typhus fever, 30 Sept. 1851' [1]. Contagious diseases such as typhoid would spread very quickly through the workhouses and, in those days, there was little treatment apart from social distancing, which wasn't a strength either.

TESTIMONIAL.—The guardians of the Settle Union, having recently voted a sum of money (since sanctioned by the poor law guardians,) to Mr. Thomas Robinson, surgeon, Settle, in consideration of the increased and onerous duties devolving upon him as the medical officer for this union, during the prevalence of the typhus fever. It is intended to purchase a watch with the sum so voted, which is to bear the following inscription. "Awarded by the board of guardians of the Settle Union, to Mr. Thomas Robinson, of Settle, surgeon, for his assiduous attention, and successful treatment of the typhus fever, 30th Sept. 1851."

Thomas died six months later, aged 59, after a few weeks' illness, 'highly esteemed by his fellow townsmen' [2]. His death notice indicated he had also worked as Settle's Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, so had an enormous workload. He must have been very well regarded to hold both those elected positions. Thomas died a day before *William Beecroft* who, at 98, was the oldest man buried in Settle's

On Tuesday last, after a few weeks' illness, Thomas Robinson, Esq., of Settle, surgeon, aged 59 years. In connexion with his practice as a surgeon, he was for a number of years, and up to the time of his death, the medical officer for the Settle Union, and was also Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages. He was highly esteemed by his fellow townsmen, and his loss will be felt by many.

On Wednesday last, Mr. Wm. Beecroft, of Settle. He was the oldest inhabitant, and died at the advanced age of 98 years.

graveyard. Thomas was buried in Giggleswick graveyard in an unmarked grave, surprisingly, hopefully with his daughter Agnes Isabella.

Two weeks later Thomas' position as Registrar was filled, unopposed, by 22 year old **John Lister** who spent a lifetime working for the Settle Union [2]. Thomas was replaced as Medical Officer by **William Thomas Holme Burrow** of Settle, winning a vote, 22 to 11, over **Mr Christopher Leech** of Blackburn.

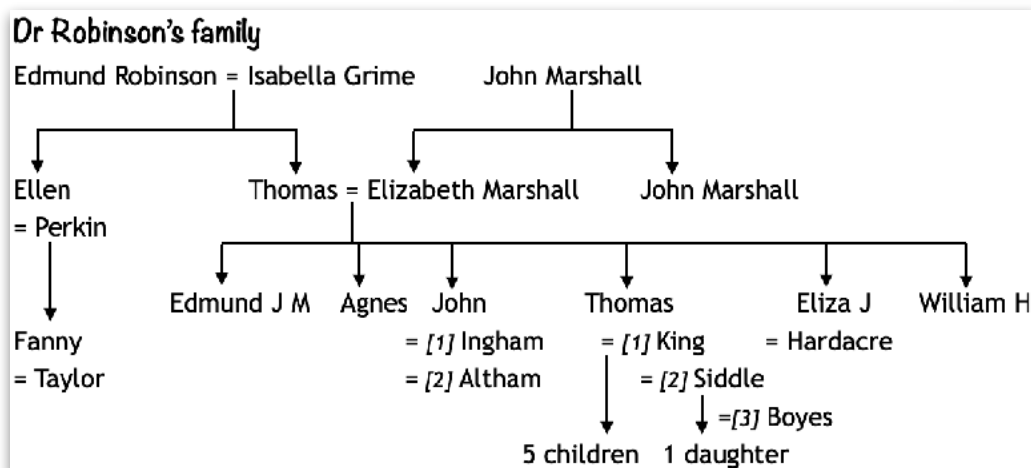
Widow Elizabeth moved to live in one of the apartments in Parker's Buildings, built by **Stephen Parker**, next to the Folly in Settle. She lived with eldest son **Edmund John Marshall Robinson** who had returned from 27 years serving in the army, mainly in India. In 1866 Elizabeth had to take Edmund to court for having used threatening language towards her [5C]. He was bound over to keep the peace subject to financial sureties. However, he failed to pay up and was sent to Wakefield House of Correction for six months instead. Edmund returned to live with poor Elizabeth who died in 1872 and joined Thomas in Giggleswick graveyard. At the time of the next census, aged 65, Edmund's housekeeper was **Fanny (Perkin) Taylor**, his cousin William Perkin's daughter. Fanny, separated from her husband, had her son **John William Taylor** with her. Edmund died in 1883, aged 67 and was buried in Giggleswick churchyard.

SPECIAL SESSIONS.—Feb. 28th. Before Wm. Robinson, John Birkbeck, and George Stansfeld, Esqrs., Edmund John Marshall Robinson, a native of Settle, but who has served 27 years in the army, mainly in India, was apprehended on warrant, charged on the information of his mother (widow of the late Dr. Robinson) with having used threatening language towards her. Bound over in two sureties of £25 each and himself in £50 to keep the peace for 6 months, or in default to be committed to prison for that time. The sureties not being forthcoming he has been sent to Wakefield.

Thomas and Elizabeth's second son **John Robinson** married **Jane Ingham**, the daughter of **Henry** and **Jane Ingham**, the bread bakers at the Folly. John and Jane moved to Burnley where John worked as a butcher. They returned to Chapel Square in Settle during their 50s. Jane died in February 1890, aged 69. At the time of the next census, just over a year later, 71 year old John lived with 41 year old servant **Jane Altham**. Yes, you guessed it — a year later, in 1892 they married. Jane was the fifth out of twelve children of the well known Settle apothecary **William Altham** and his second wife **Agnes Duckett**, daughter of farmer **Charles Duckett**. John retired and they moved to live in 7 Craven Cottages in Settle. John died in 1904, aged 85 and was buried with his first wife in Giggleswick graveyard. This section of the graveyard was opened well after John's parents died so he was not buried near them. Widow Jane moved away.



In loving memory of Jane wife of John Robinson of Settle died Feb 15 1890 aged 69 years. Also the above John Robinson died Feb 16 1904 aged 85 years. Sorrow vanquished, labour ended, Jordan passed.



Thomas and Elizabeth's third son **Thomas Robinson** followed his father to become a surgeon and chemist, probably learning the trade from his father. Aged 22 he married **Mabel King** whose parents had moved to Settle from Dent to run the Joiner's Arms Inn in Settle. Thomas and Mabel moved straight to Kettlewell where Thomas ran his surgery and had five children. He must have been doing well as they could afford a housemaid. Mabel had four daughters and then a son, **Thomas King Robinson**, who was just two when she died, aged 41. Three years later Thomas married again, to **Ann Siddle**. For some reason Thomas and/or Ann decided they did not want to bring up Thomas' children by his first marriage. One daughter, another **Mabel**, aged 13, died soon after her mother Mabel. Three others went into domestic service, with little Margaret aged just 11 at the time. Eldest daughter **Agnes Isabella Robinson** married local farmer **Thomas Foster Metcalfe** but he died just after the birth of their second child **Mabel Susannah Metcalfe** [ph2]. Agnes Isabella died eight years later. Mabel Susannah Metcalfe married **John William Furness**, a third cousin who also descended from Edmund and Isabella Robinson. Youngest son Thomas King Robinson lived with grandma Elizabeth Robinson. He became a grocer and, later, a registrar in Dewsbury. The daughter of Thomas' second wife Ann Siddle, **Alice Ann Robinson**, died aged ten, and Ann soon followed. Thomas married one more time, to **Alice Boyes** and they retired to Hornby where Thomas died, aged 79.



At the age of 36, in 1859, Thomas and Elizabeth's second daughter **Eliza Josine Robinson** became the second wife of **Thomas Hardacre**, a Settle draper, 20 years her senior, who had been declared bankrupt three years earlier. Theoretically Thomas had great potential. His father, **Turner Hardacre**, was a well respected business and tax assessor in the town. Thomas' first wife, **Sarah Littlewood**, had died at the birth of her fourth child and is buried with two infant sons, Charlie and George in *Ancient C23*.



In memorial of Sarah Hardacre Obit 22nd February AD 1853, AET 44, C23

It was four years after Sarah's death, in 1857, that Thomas applied for bankruptcy due to the depreciation of his property. Mr Commissioner made a point of Thomas' good character, saying he had '*most honourably brought his affairs to the court*' [3]. As a result, Thomas sold his houses, shops and cottages on the Market Place and Castle Hill to **John Johnson Hartley**. In July 1860, a year after marrying Eliza Josine, Thomas Hardacre advertised that he was giving up business [5C]. Soon after Thomas and Eliza Josine moved to Liverpool for a fresh start, perhaps with the support of Eliza Josine's relations, but Thomas died there in 1867, leaving an estate of under £100.

property. The bankrupt, believing that his affairs were becoming insolvent, had immediately and most honourably brought his affairs into that court, and the consequence was that a surplus would remain after 20s. in the pound had been paid to all the creditors. His Honor said he was pleased to bear testimony to the high character of the bankrupt, and there could be no objection to an immediate first-class certificate, which was granted. —*Leeds Mercury*.

GIVING UP BUSINESS.
THOMAS HARDACRE,
MERCER AND DRAPER, MARKET PLACE,
SETTLE,
Begg to inform the Public of Settle and the neighbourhood that he is giving up Business, and that he has reduced the whole of his Stock to Cost Prices in order to insure a clearance.
N.B. An early call is respectfully solicited as the Stock is well assorted and must be cleared out immediately.
Settle, July 2nd, 1860.

At the time of the next census Eliza was the 'housekeeper' to her elderly uncle and retired surgeon John Marshall at the imposing Wray House in Wray. She had previously worked for John Marshall at the time of the 1841 census while her brother William Henry Robinson was apprenticed to him. When Eliza died in 1876, aged just 53, she left an amazing £30,000 which would be worth several million today. How is this possible?





82 year old uncle John Marshall died in 1875 and Eliza Josine was the sole beneficiary of his estate of £30,000. John was buried in Melling, close to Wray near another **John Marshall**, a bachelor and possibly an uncle, who has a glorious marble memorial inside Melling Parish Church.

'Sacred to the memory of John Marshall Esq who departed this life 2nd December 1802, aged 56. Also the remains of his father William and his mother Catherine are deposited in the Sanctuary.'

So what did Eliza Josine do with all that money? Soon after John Marshall's death Eliza hosted the Wray Sunday School Annual Coffee Feast in which 70 children paraded through the grounds of the house and were regaled

with coffee and currant buns [1]. That's a lot of very excitable children! A week later she provided a treat for the *'older inhabitants of the village, rich and poor, irrespective of creed or party, to the number of about 70 persons.'* The elder females were presented with half a pound of tea whilst the men were given four ounces of tobacco. Speeches praised the generosity of Eliza and her late uncle [1].



THE ANNUAL COFFEE FEAST, in connection with the Wray Church Sunday School, which is always looked forward to by the juveniles with a great deal of pleasure, came off on Saturday last under most favourable auspices. In former years the expenses attending the treat were met by subscription, but this year Mrs. Hardacre, of Wray House, with her accustomed liberality, defrayed the entire cost herself. At two

seven o'clock, when they were all summoned by the bell to Wray House, and each child was presented with a package of toffee and a currant bun by Mrs. Hardacre. The company then assembled on the lawn and sung several select pieces, after which three hearty cheers were given for the generous donor, and they returned to the field, where the games were entered into with renewed vigour until dusk, when all returned home having spent a most enjoyable day.

WRAY.
FESTIVITIES AT WRAY.—We recorded last week that Mrs. Hardacre, of Wray House, gave a treat to the Sunday scholars and teachers connected with the Free School. On Saturday, the 19th instant, the same lady gave tea to the older inhabitants of the village, rich and poor, irrespective of creed or party, to the number of about seventy persons. The tables were profusely supplied with eatables of great variety and presided over by six charming young ladies.

pointed in 1877. In 1879 the Church was enlarged by the addition of a chancel and otherwise improved at a total cost of about £1,300. The new chancel was in part, and but for her untimely decease might have been entirely, the gift of the late Mrs. Hardacre, of Wray House. About this time, too, the church-yard

When she died, Eliza was part way through generous donations to the church for a new chancel [1]. Most of Eliza's estate was left to brothers John and Thomas with a sizeable chunk to the soon-to-be orphaned children of her niece Agnes Isabella (Robinson) Metcalfe. What a benevolent lady Eliza Josine was. It's such a shame she didn't have longer to enjoy that money.



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. 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.

Illustrations kindly provided by Teresa Gordon. Thanks to descendant John Perkins for his help with this account.

SC - Settle Chronicle, WLP – the diaries of William Lodge Paley with the kind permission of North Craven Building Preservation Trust

Settle Graveyard Project

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ph1 – credited to Bill Mitchell's book, Gossip from Giggleswick, ph2 – credited to descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username lensman51_gogo