

## Christopher Watkinson & the ups and downs of 19th century life

Christopher Stephenson Watkinson, born in Addingham in 1826, was the son of **George Watkinson**, an agricultural labourer and his wife **Sarah Stephenson**. On 3rd March 1851, in Settle, Christopher married **Elizabeth Horner** of the famous Settle family. Just like Elizabeth's father, **Michael Horner**, Christopher was a tinner/cooper so it's likely they met via William, possibly through an apprenticeship or business arrangement?

Christopher and Elizabeth looked after his widowed dad, George, in Selby for his last few years and then moved to Bradford. Elizabeth gave birth to four sons but three died in infancy – **Christopher Stephenson**, **George** and **George William**. A second **Christopher Stephenson Watkinson** survived, thank goodness. Such was life in the 19th century.

Christopher died in 1866, aged just 39 and was buried at Ilkley with his dad George. Elizabeth came back to Settle with surviving son Christopher and had to work as a charwoman to make ends meet. She lived in Turner's Yard behind the Market Place (behind the current Coop). In 1872, aged 47, Elizabeth married 65 year old widower **Oliver Carr**, a labourer from Gisburn Forest and they lived at the top of Kirkgate. His five grown up children by his first wife, **Mary Silverwood**, had moved away. Despite being much younger than Oliver, Elizabeth died in 1888, aged 63 and Oliver died 1892, aged 85. They are buried together in the unmarked plot *Old AX5* just inside the church gate.

Surviving son **Christopher Stephenson Watkinson** had his photo taken at the Horner Studios when he was a young lad [ph3]. He started working life as an errand boy, then a warehouseman and a grocer's assistant. His prospects improved considerably when he met and married **Mary Chapman** from Stallingbusk, on 2 June, 1879. *Mary [ph1]* was the eldest of ten children of **Christopher (Kit) Chapman** and his wife **Elizabeth Metcalfe** who was profoundly deaf due to an inherited condition. Kit's father died when he was just nine but he worked his way up from a



C S Watkinson, photograph by the Horner Studio.  
Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)



farm labourer to become one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the Dales. Kit established himself as a grocer and carrier and then, using his horses and carts, took on the Royal Mail contract covering the area from Skipton to Leyburn. The family moved to

Grassington and added to their business with a Temperance Hotel [ph1].



The transport business thrived so that 48 horses were needed. Caring for horses was a difficult job. In 1899 Kit was taken to court for using a horse in an unfit state, and fined 40 shillings. However his exemplary work up to that point was emphasised [1]. *‘Mr Chapman had been in business for 30 years, having carried the Government mails for 16 years. The fact that during that time there had not been a single complaint brought against him showed that he deserved some consideration at the hands of the magistrates.’*

### THE GRASSINGTON MAIL CONTRACTOR AND HIS HORSE.

At the Skipton Police Court, on Saturday, Christopher Chapman, bus proprietor, Grassington, and the contractor for the Royal Mails from Skipton up the Dales, was summoned by Inspector Clayton, of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, for allowing a horse to be worked in an unfit state, and Harry Stubbs, driver, in the employ of Mr. Chapman, was summoned for working the horse. The

Kit provided tourist excursions, church outings and horse drawn hearses for funerals. Incredibly, in 1905 Kit bought a Char-a-banc, the first of many, which seated 28 passengers on padded seats. The Char-a-banc replaced 12 horses and had a speed of 12mph. These were the earliest days of petrol engines but the first vehicle is estimated to have travelled some 200,000 miles. The photo shows a congregational choir trip to Southport in 1911 – what a journey! [ph1]

Kit and Elizabeth celebrated their Golden wedding in 1910 [ph1]. Kit died on August 5th 1914, the day after Britain declared war on Germany. Elizabeth followed on the 26th August. Kit’s family successfully continued the business until, in 1930, it was *‘absorbed by the West Yorkshire Road Car Company’* but not without suitable tributes being given to Kit.



So, Christopher Stephenson Watkinson had a great set of in-laws. Christopher and Mary lived on Bowskills Yard above Castle Hill to have their two sons and two daughters. Mary died in 1909, aged just 48. Christopher moved to the newly built High Hill Grove with his daughter Sarah Jane and died in 1913, aged 58. Christopher and Mary are buried with two sons. Son Christopher Stephenson Watkinson died a toddler. Son George William Watkinson, a printer, died after an operation for appendicitis and peritonitis on a military

### MELANCHOLY HOME-COMING.

The Settle (I) Company of the 3rd V.B. West Riding Regiment, returned from Salisbury Plain on Sunday evening in melancholy circumstances, for during the week Private George Watkinson, a printer, aged 20 years, had died in camp after being operated upon for appendicitis and peritonitis. His remains were brought to Settle by the special train which conveyed the returning Volunteers, and yesterday the body was interred with military honours. The funeral was largely attended by Volunteers, public bodies, and the general public. During the service the Vicar (the Rev. W. E. Linney) gave a short address, and at the close of the burial rites the "Last Post" was sounded, and three volleys were discharged over the open grave.

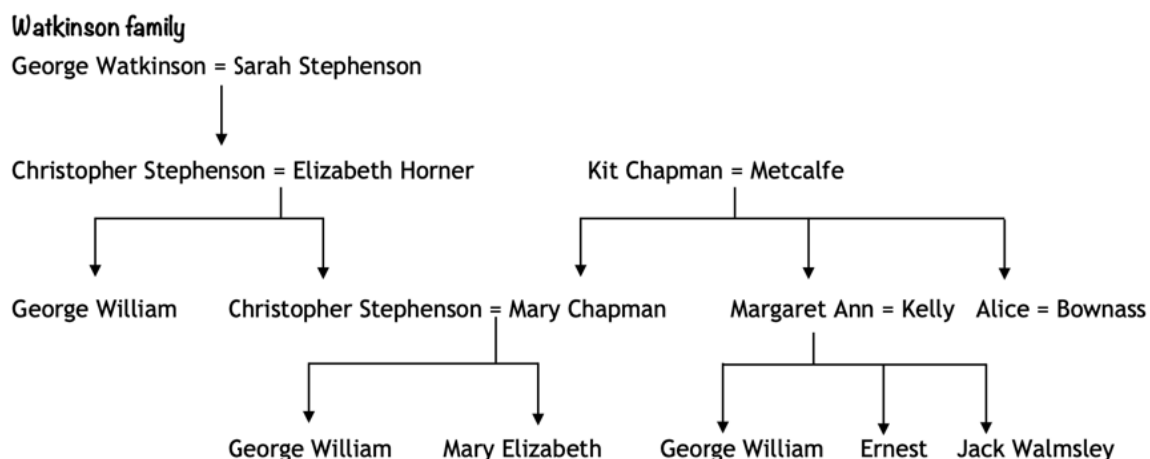


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camp [2]. He was 20 years old and was given a military funeral. The gravestone is exquisitely engraved. Both their funeral cards featured the same design as the gravestone. The grave plot, Old B5 is directly behind that of Christopher's mother Elizabeth and her second husband Oliver Carr.



*In loving memory of Christopher S Watkinson died May 21st 1913 aged 57 years. Also Mary his wife died August 15th 1909 aged 49 years. At Rest. Also Christopher Stevenson their son died Dec 2nd 1889 aged 9 months. Also George William their son died August 9th 1906 aged 20 years, B5*



This fine photo [ph1] was probably taken around 1891 after the death of infant Christopher. It's another Horner photo, obviously.

Christopher and Mary's eldest daughter **Mary Elizabeth Chapman** married **Arthur West**, a stonemason's labourer, who may have contributed to the fine gravestone. They were buried in the unmarked *New HX26* with their spinster daughter **Phyllis West**. Christopher and Mary's other daughter **Sarah Jane** married a policeman, **Albert Grove**, and they lived in Burnley.

Mary (Chapman) Watkinson's younger sisters **Margaret Ann Chapman** and **Alice Chapman** came over from Buckden to join her in Settle. At the time of the 1891 census they were both working as servants at the Commercial Temperance Hotel on Duke Street, run by the **Haytons**.



Margaret Ann [ph1] had three illegitimate sons before she married. Three month old **Ernest Chapman** was buried in *Old BX4* next to grandparents Christopher and Mary. Her son **George William Chapman** was adopted by **William and Mary Ann Petty** in Giggleswick. His second wife, **Elizabeth Ann Irving** had previously been married to **Thomas Harger**, the extremely successful cabinet maker. It had been a very short marriage as they married when Elizabeth Ann was 20,

### Settle Graveyard Project



and quite pregnant with their first of two sons, and Thomas was 66. Thomas died ten years later. Elizabeth Ann married a third time after George William died, this time to Settle's **Alfred Pilkington**. Margaret Ann's eldest son, **Jack Walmsley Chapman**, brought up by his Chapman grandparents, was 27 when he died from illness in Egypt in March 1915 [ph2]. His short life was commemorated on the gravestone of his grandparents in Linton, near Grassington. When the Grassington peace celebrations took place at the Cenotaph, the family remember that 'Mr and Mrs Walmsley' attended the ceremony to lay a wreath. The most likely candidate for Jack's father was **John (Jack) Walmsley**, a



boatman on the Skipton Canal. He was married at the time of his liaison with Margaret Ann. His wife died soon after little Jack was born. At the time of the 1911 census 49 year old John was found on his boat on the Bingley Canal, described as 'married', but with a 37 year old female 'servant' on board. An interesting arrangement. Mary and Margaret Ann's younger brother Christopher Chapman [ph2] also died of wounds on the Western Front in December 1917, aged 36, leaving a widow and two daughters.

When she was 29, Margaret Ann married Settle's **Paul Ignatius Kelly** in 1895 and had a further six children with him. Paul [ph1], initially a postman, joined the family business in Grassington working for Kit until they emigrated to Canada. Paul was the eldest of nine children of **James Kelly**, an Irish tailor, who moved to Settle during the 1860s. James ran the King William Inn for a while but this obviously didn't prevent Kit Chapman in his Temperance Hotel giving his consent to the marriage.



Mary (Chapman) Watkinson's sister Alice [ph1] married **George Bownas** [ph1] and they had five children. George was the eldest of three illegitimate children of **Jane Bownas**, the daughter of a tailor from Linton, near Grassington. Poor Jane spent much of her life in asylums so the three children were brought up by aunts and uncles. At the time of the 1891 census George worked as a Royal Mail Cart Driver in Skipton, lodging with none other than **James Chapman**, Alice's elder brother, also a Royal Mail Cart Driver. The family business provided matchmaking as well as employment!



## Settle Graveyard Project

In 1916, George and Alice's eldest son Robert Bownas [ph2], aged 17, burst into tears when he was turned away at a Recruitment Meeting to sign up for the war, but was accepted a year later, joining the 4th Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment. Just 7 days after reaching the Western Front in France, Robert's platoon were put in a desperate position in the Battle of Estaires and most were lost. Robert was 19, but looked so much much younger, didn't he? Like so many others, that was an awful war for the Chapmans.



*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'.*

*With many thanks to descendant Chris Binns for his help with this account and the wonderful photos. His book 'Old Kit Chapman, a carrier who was the pioneer of motor transport in the Dales' is a pleasure to read. Illustration kindly provided by Teresa Gordon. The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.*

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*ph1 – with kind permission of Chris Binns, ph2 – credited to Craven's Part in the Great War, ph3 – Image 2022.1.68.12 from the Horner Photographic Studio Collection provided courtesy of the Museum of North Craven Life*



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