

John James Corney, an extraordinary business partner

John James Corney was born in 1856, the illegitimate son of Ellen Corney. Ellen was the eldest of nine children of John Corney, a stonemason, and his wife Elizabeth Greenwood who lived at the beautiful 17th century Mire House in Dentdale towards Sedbergh. Ellen's youngest sibling (and John James' uncle) Robert Corney had been born six months before John James and so they were brought up as brothers.



Grandfather John died in a tragic accident in 1860, aged 56. He was working on the platform wall of the new Sedbergh station on the Ingleton branch of the Lancaster and Carlisle railway line. Whilst stepping out of the path of one train he put himself in the path of another coming in the opposite direction and had his feet crushed. John, 'an industrious workman', didn't survive the operation to amputate his legs. He was taken nearly 30 miles from Sedbergh to Lancaster (probably without pain relief) for the operation which, it was felt, may have contributed to his death [1,2].

SERIOUS ACCIDENT NEAR SEDBERGH.— On Friday, the 9th instant, a mason named John Corney, a resident in Dent, whilst working at the platform wall of the intended railway station at Bramhaw, near Sedbergh, observing a train of empty waggons approaching, stepped between what is called the six-feet between the up and down rails, and another train coming the contrary way, the poor fellow was thrown down, and the waggons passed over both feet, nearly severing them from his body. He was at once removed to the Infirmary at Lancaster, but he died the same night. He was 57 years of age,—a steady, industrious workman,—and has, we understand, left a widow and numerous family.

FATAL ACCIDENT.—An inquest was held on Monday, before L. Holden, Esq., at the Town Hall, upon the body of John Corney, a stonemason, who was seriously injured at the Sedbergh station, of the Ingleton branch of the Lancaster and Carlisle railway, on Friday. It appeared that deceased had the lower part of both legs severely crushed by some waggons running over them; and a surgeon was sent for, but none arriving, the wounded man was despatched to Lowgill station, in order that he might be removed to Lancaster by the train. Dr. Batty, of Sedbergh, examined him at the station, and sanctioned his removal to Lancaster. He arrived at the infirmary at half-past three, both legs were amputated at five o'clock, and the poor fellow, after rallying once, gradually sank and died a little before one o'clock on Saturday morning. Dr. Hall said the injuries were not of themselves fatal, but the man should not have been removed, and amputation should have taken place within an hour of the accident. The jury returned a verdict that the death was caused by accident, but censured Mr. Freeman, the contractor, and Dr. Batty, for allowing the man to be removed.

Elizabeth stayed at Mire House living with her family, including Ellen and John James, until she died in 1893 aged 83. Ellen never married and had another illegitimate son, John Greenwood Corney, 12 years later. Ellen died just two years after her mother.

John James undertook an apprenticeship in cabinet making. In 1879 John James married Isabella Iveson [ph1], a farmer's daughter also from Sedbergh, and by the time of the 1881 census they had moved to Settle, in Craven Cottages just round the corner from Bridge End Mill. How did they end up in Settle?



In 1862 John James' aunt Jane Corney married John Pullan in Dent and they both found work in Kendal workhouse, John as a porter, Jane as a cook. Their son John Richard Pullan (who would become a vicar) was born there. Some time after the time of the 1871 census John was appointed as the Master of Giggleswick workhouse with Jane working as the Matron. On the workhouse staff team were sisters Margaret Bell, cook and Mary Ann Bell, nurse who were cousins of John Pullan.

Unfortunately John Pullan died in 1877, aged just 37. Records show that Jane continued to be the Matron, now with her brother Joseph Greenwood Corney as the Master. Joseph died in 1896 aged 48 and then Jane worked with unrelated Edmund PM Whiffen from Brighton as the

Master. By the time of the 1911 census the workhouse was being run by George Addison and his wife. Jane lived in Lytham with her sister, Isabella (Corney) Clarkson. Jane probably spent over 30 years as Matron of the workhouse. Hopefully she had a good send off.

So John James Corney probably came over to Settle with some encouragement from his aunt Jane and uncle Joseph. He began to run a building business in Settle, doing well enough to invest in shares for the up and coming Settle Gas Company in 1887. He bought the shares from **Robert Grime** (who was later declared bankrupt) [3].

By the time of the 1891 census 35 year old John James, working as a joiner, Isabella and their first three children lived in Craven Cottages with John James' uncle Robert Corney who was also 35 of course. Robert was working as an 'ale and porter merchant'.

A year later, in 1892, adverts appeared for '**Brassington Bros and Corney, joiners, builders and contractors.**' [LSA, 3]. This partnership with **Henry Brassington** and his sons was extremely successful and continued until John James' death in October 1916, aged 59. An account of the company is given in the *Brassington* life story. John James died in Cheltenham on his way to the library suffering from diabetes and heart disease [4]. Nine months previously, John James and Isabella had gone to live with their daughter Elizabeth (Holden) and her family. Isabella was still living with them when she died in 1947 aged 76.

What about their children? John James and Isabella's fourth child **Christopher James** died in infancy in 1894 and fifth child **Robert Greenwood Corney** died aged eight in 1905. They both died in Settle but there are no local burial records.

Eldest daughter **Elizabeth Corney** married **Harold Henry Holden** [ph1] who descended from the fascinating Rathmell family. Harold Henry, an art master and Elizabeth appear to have met as he lodged in the same house as Elizabeth's brother **John William Corney**, an architect, and sister **Ann Iveson Corney**, a schoolteacher in Leeds. Harold was a very talented artist and teacher. His Wikipedia page tells us that during his life he was principal of the Leeds School of Art and then the Birmingham School of Art. He was president of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, a member of the Royal Watercolour Society and an Associate of the Royal College of Arts.

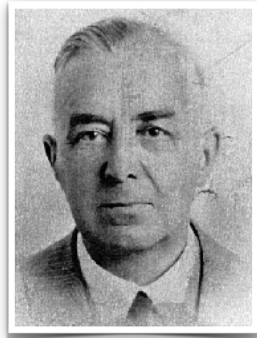
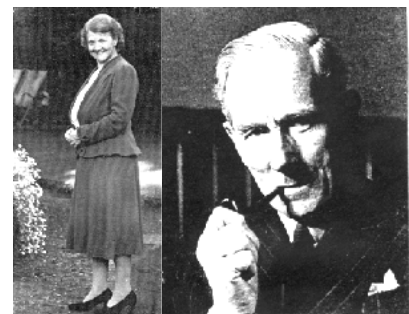
Son **John William Corney** [ph2] was a successful architect who worked in Northamptonshire and then for more than 20 years as deputy architect to Derbyshire County Council.

SALE OF SHARES AT SETTLE.—Yesterday, at the Craven Sale Rooms, Settle, Mr. Robert Grime offered for sale nineteen £5 shares in the Settle Gas Company (Limited), the shares being fully paid up; and ten £1 shares in the Settle Temperance Hotel Company (Limited), upon which 15s. per share has been paid. The gas shares were purchased by Mr. John James Corney, of Craven Cottages, at £8 3s. each; and the shares in the temperance hotel were knocked down to Mr. John Lund Brayshaw, solicitor, at the price of 7s. 6d. per share.

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BRASSINGTON BROS. AND CORNEY,
 Joiners, Builders, and Contractors,
 Bridge End Mill, SETTLE.
FIREPLACES AND RANGES
Supplied and set, suitable for cooking any of the Recipes in this book.
 ALL KINDS OF WORK EFFICIENTLY CARRIED OUT.

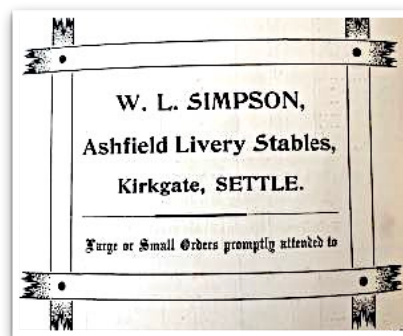
TO JOINERS.—Wanted, four good Joiners at once; constant employment to suitable men; none but good, steady workmen, with characters, need apply.—Brassington Bros. & Corney, Bridge End Saw Mills, Settle.

A RETIRED BUILDER'S SUDDEN DEATH IN THE STREET.—The Coroner has been notified of the death of Mr. John James Corney, aged 58, a retired builder and engineer, who was living with his son-in-law, Mr. Harold H. Holden, A.R.C.A. (headmaster of the Cheltenham School of Arts and Crafts), at Alandale, College-road. Mr. Corney had suffered severely from heart attacks and sugar diabetes for some years, but during his stay in Cheltenham (since January last) his health had somewhat improved, and he was able to walk about. It was his habit to visit the Free Library in the evening, and on Saturday, about 6.30, he left home with the intention of going there. About two hours later he was found lying dead in a lane leading from Para-

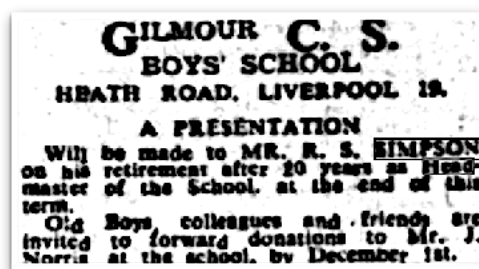


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Daughter **Ann Iveson Corney** began her working life as a schoolteacher in Leeds. She married **Richard Stanley Simpson** who had a career as a headteacher in Liverpool. Richard was the son of a Settle butcher **Richard Whitaker Simpson** who died when Richard (Jnr) was just eight. Richard (Jnr)'s sister Eva died in 1899 just one hour after birth and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Old graveyard CX51. Richard and his siblings were brought up by their aunt **Sarah Emma Simpson** who had married **John William Dugdale**. John and Sarah ran the Ashfield Temperance Hotel together. Sarah Emma's parents had previously run the Golden Lion Inn in Settle. Richard (Snr)'s brother **William Louis Simpson** married **Sarah Jane Dugdale**, half-sister to John William Dugdale and they ran the Ashfield Livery Stables for a while [LSA].

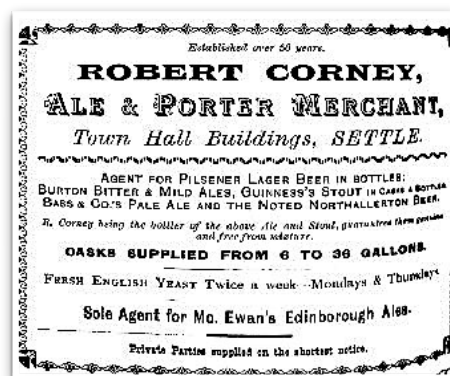


Anyway, Ann's husband Richard Stanley Simpson served for 20 years as headmaster of the Gilmour County Secondary Boys School in Liverpool [6].

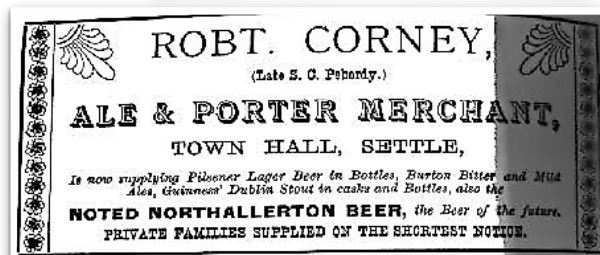


That's really not bad for the family of an illegitimate lad from Sedbergh. John James should have been very proud.

However that's not the end of the Corney family in Settle. John James' uncle Robert Corney lived with him at the time of the 1891 census working as an ale and porter merchant.



Just after the 1891 census, Robert, aged 35, married Margaret Bell who had been the cook at the workhouse for her cousin John Pullan and his wife Jane (Corney) Pullan. During the 1890s Robert advertised his business at the site now occupied by the Tourist Information at the Town Hall, a business established over 50 years [LSA]. He provided Fresh English Yeast for bread making too. One advert tells us the previous business owner was **Storer Clement Peberdy** who had quite a disturbing life story (*Atkinson-Old graveyard*).



DEATHS OF TOWNSMEN.—The death occurred on Saturday last of Mr. Robert Corney, at his residence at the Town Hall, at the comparatively early age of 42 years. The deceased was a native of Dent, but for some years past had carried on a business as ale and porter merchant at **Settle**. Formerly he acted as steward on board the large Atlantic liners, and in that capacity made a great many voyages between this country and America. Australia was also not unknown to him. He was a Churchman and a Conservative, and belonged to the Castleberg Lodge of Freemasons, and in **Settle** made a wide circle of friends by his genial good humour. His brother, the late Mr. J. G. Corney, was master at the Giggleswick Workhouse, and the present matron, Mrs. Pullan, is the deceased gentleman's sister. The interment took place at Dent on Wednesday last. The brethren of the Castleberg Lodge of Freemasons walked from the house to **Settle Station**, from whence the body was conveyed by rail to Dent.—We have also to announce the death

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Robert died in 1898, aged 42. His obituary explained he had acted as a steward on board large Atlantic liners between Liverpool and America with occasional trips to Australia. He *'made a wide circle of friends by his genial good humour'* [7]. His body was accompanied by the brethren of the Castleberg Lodge of Freemasons to Settle Station from where it was taken to Dent for burial.

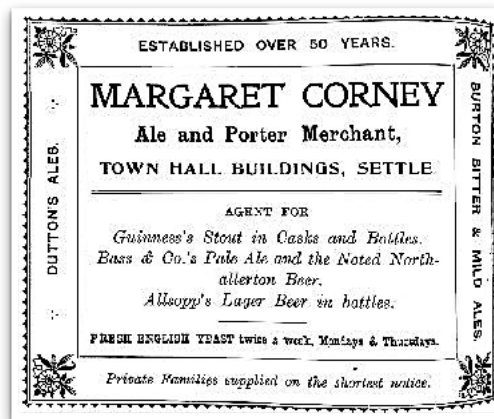
Widow Margaret continued the business successfully with her widowed sister Mary Ann. After working as a nurse at the workhouse, in 1886 Mary Ann Bell became the second wife of **Samuel Woolstencroft** who had been the headmaster of Langcliffe School since 1881. Samuel's first wife had died just a few months before. Perhaps Mary Ann had been helping out at the school?

The school needed all the help it could get. As hundreds of workers had moved into Langcliffe from all over the country to work in the rejuvenated Langcliffe mills, admissions to the school from the age of three to fourteen, rocketed. When Samuel took over there were 97 pupils in the tiny school [A]. Inspectors criticised the facilities, heating and the quality of teaching of arithmetic. As time went by there were disputes, court appearances and even a lock-in after disagreements between the governors and the vicar, Rev Samuel Sandberg. Inspectors suggested that the headmaster, Samuel, should be *'relieved of the instruction of infants'* and to *'attempt fewer subjects. Discipline is only fair. The infants are much neglected and in a backward condition'*. There were floods, and outbreaks of measles and scarlet fever. Desperate pupil teachers were caught giving *'surreptitious aid'* to children in exams. This all took its toll on Samuel's health.

On January 31st 1898, 59 year old James Samuel Woolstencroft wrote in his log book, *'Master absent from duties, suffering'*. Just a week later, Samuel died of pneumonia and a teaching assistant **Mary Agnes Procter** inadvertently found herself running the School [A]. *'I Mary Agnes Procter took temporary charge of this school. The master James Samuel Woolstencroft died on Sunday evening Feb 6th from pneumonia. The school the previous week had been in the charge of the assistant mistress.'* Two days later the school closed for Samuel's funeral, presumably at Langcliffe. At the school, governors appointed new staff and made improvements to the building. The inspectors reported *'a very marked and gratifying improvement.'* Mary Agnes Procter's life story is given in the account of the **Chapmans**.

Samuel Woolstencroft died just a couple of months before the death of Robert Corney so Mary Ann spent the rest of her life with sister Margaret, helping to run the ale business.

Despite this family contributing so much to life in Settle, there are no burials here. There were probably family graves back in Dent, Sedbergh and Langcliffe.



31st Master absent from duties, suffering
Feb 7th I Mary Agnes Procter took temporary charge of this school. The Master James Samuel Woolstencroft died on Sunday evening Feb 6th from pneumonia. The school the previous week had been in charge of the Assistant Mistress.
1st Mr. Perfect visited the school.
2nd School closed as it was the day appointed for the funeral of the Master. Notice could not possibly be given to H. M. J. as it was only decided to do so the evening of the 8th Feb.

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. 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 – Cumberland Pacquet, 2 – Westmorland Gazette, 3 – Yorkshire Post, 4 – Gloucestershire Echo, 6 – Liverpool Echo, 7 – Lancaster Standard

A – credited to The Bell Rings Across the Green, a History of Langcliffe School, a fabulous little book, thanks to John and Helen Reid

ph1 – photo credited to relations via ancestry.co.uk, username jimandro2007, ph2 – username Cliff Ottley-Thistlethwaite, ph3 – kindly provided by Roger Taylor

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