

## Quirky Findings in the Early History of Settle Church

by Sarah Lister of Settle Graveyard Project

### Why isn't this church named after a saint like most others?

Holy Ascension church, built in 1838, Holy Trinity in Rathmell and The Epiphany at Austwick are distinctive in being named after a mystery instead of a saint. Why not?

The third of the four windows above the altar represents the Holy Ascension. The set of windows were dedicated to benefactor **Ann Swale**.

The Irish designer, **Michael O'Connor**, was known for '*none of the Victorian dimness and fussiness of small detail.*' His work is also on display at the Royal Academy. Michael worked with the Pugin studio - **Augustus Welby Pugin** had designed the windows for the Palace of Westminster after a fire in 1834. Augustus was born 1812 so was at his creative peak in 1838 but died 1852, aged 40, from hyperthyroidism and syphilis contracted in his teens. His last years were spent in an asylum. The circular window was added in 1866.



The huge painting '*The Ascension*' was designed to inspire worshippers returning from altar. It was designed by **Mick Potter** and took four years to complete. It was dedicated in 2005. It is so big it also helps the acoustics of the church.

Do you like it? Some do, some don't!



## Why was this church built?

In the early 19th Century the north of England, including Settle, had very high numbers of non-conformist worshipers. In Giggleswick St Alkelda's anglican church was built before 1066. The Quakers' the Friends Meeting House was built in 1678, the first Methodist Chapel in Chapel Street in Settle 1796 and the Zion Chapel in 1816.



Why was non conformism so popular? It was free to worship in the non-conformist chapels – you didn't have to pay £80 for a pew each year plus weekly fees so the working classes had a simple choice.

In addition, the population of England almost doubled between 1800 and 1840 helped by the smallpox vaccination and the end of the plague. The industrial revolution created jobs, better wages and so more food and there was better hygiene in brick built houses. The established churches could no longer accommodate everyone.

So in October 1831, William IV introduced '***An act to amend the Acts for building (or enlarging) and promoting the building of additional churches in populous parishes***' Towns were allowed to build a new church if the Parish had a population of over 2000 and where the church could not accommodate over a third of them. They had to raise endowments of over £1000 and the new church had to be 2 miles or more from the existing Parish church. Once built the church had to offer a third of their pews free.

St Alkelda's previously served the townships of Giggleswick Settle, Rathmell Langcliffe and Stainforth and each would have its own church within 30 years of the Act. Settle church is not 2 miles from Giggleswick, unless you go a long way round but this seemed to be overlooked! In 1835 the headmaster of Giggleswick School, the vicar at St Alkelda and three landowners met to discuss the idea. Where did they meet? In the Golden Lion Inn on Duke Street!



## How was this church built?

£1690 was pledged by **William Wilkinson** and the remaining £3000 by other wealthy folk, including Ann Swale of Langcliffe Hall. **William Bolland** at the Townhead estate agreed his land could be used. So now they needed an architect.

**Thomas Rickman**, born in 1776 in Lewes, Sussex, was a Quaker. In those days Quakers were not allowed to go to university, nor to study arts so he undertook an apprenticeship in apothecary and then accountancy. He married his first cousin which meant he was kicked out of the Quakers, but readmitted when his wife died and he remarried. In 1825, aged 49 he wrote several essays on ***Gothic Architecture as a stimulus for Victorian Gothic Revival*** and, as a result, was a pioneer of the 'Early English' high church movement. This became the characteristic design for churches built as a result of the 1831 act. Thomas built 49 churches and died of liver disease in 1841, just after this church was built. He probably liked his alcohol.



Holy Ascension church was built to accommodate a congregation of 800 people including 200 in the gallery upstairs (together with the original organ). Yes really! It was consecrated on 26 oct 1838 – there is a date plaque over one of the entrance doors. This was the first new church in Craven 1838 in over 300 years, shortly

followed by one in Stainforth in 1842, Rathmell in 1843 and Langcliffe in 1851.

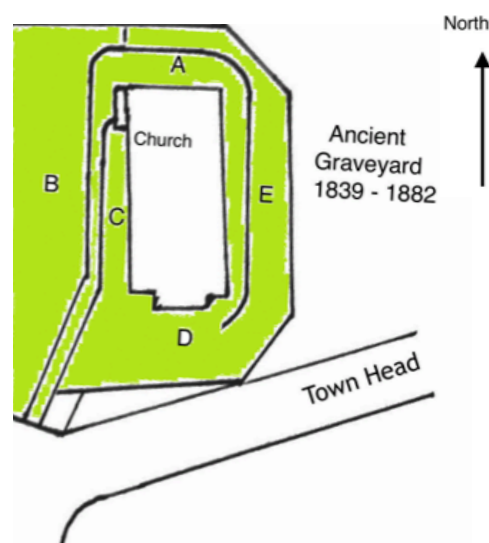
This new high church was welcomed by the community and there was an influx of people from Settle and the Giggleswick congregation. Some of the early gravestones, including that of **James Metcalfe** have latin inscriptions to reflect this. The church attracted some of the best classical organists to serve here.

*‘Deus, propitius esto mini peccatori’ Sacred to the memory of James Metcalfe, late schoolmaster of Settle who died July 22nd 1844 age 40 years. Also of 4 of his children who died in their infancy. ‘Death is as necessary to our constitution as sleep we shall rise refreshed in the morning.’*



The first line translates as ‘God forgive me’ from a Gregorian motet written in 1639.

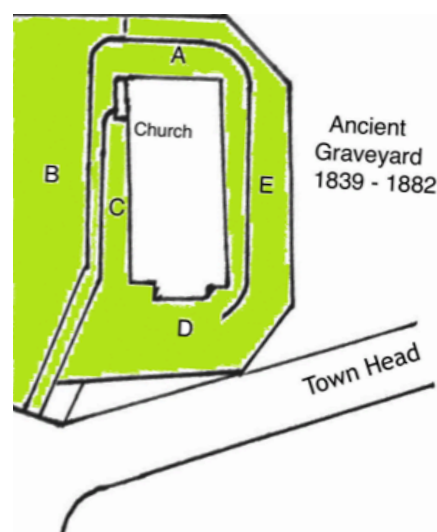
The original ‘Ancient’ graveyard was immediately around the church. The land from William Bolland at the old Townhead wasn’t big enough to build the church in the usual east-west orientation and so it faces north-south. As a result the traditional ‘east window’ above the altar actually faces south.



In the Ancient graveyard one third of all burials were commemorated with gravestones. This is a significantly higher proportion than many other churches. Over the same period at Giggleswick only one in ten burials are commemorated with a stone. Incredibly, in Settle’s Ancient graveyard one in ten names engraved on gravestones are not actually buried in the graveyard. One gravestone has two names on it but neither are buried in the church! That’s not allowed these days.

## The Ancient Graveyard

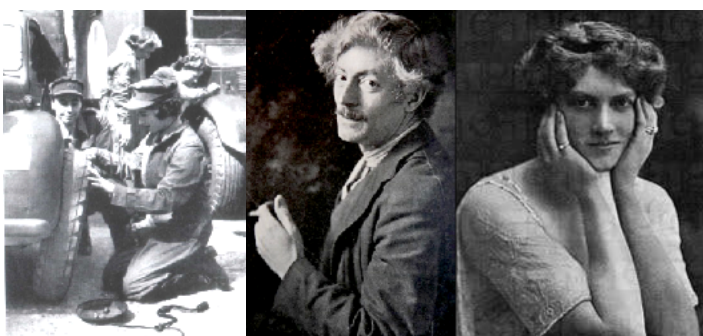
As was traditional, the wealthy bought their grave plots behind the altar in area D – the best position for the resurrection. Later, once this area was full, other wealthy folk had their plots by the church door in area C. Area A is at the north of the church, furthest from the altar and there are only two gravestones there. It contains the bodies of many working class people and people passing through the town to find work.



Gravestones traditionally face east because at the resurrection of Christ he will arrive from the east. Vicars face the opposite way to their flock to welcome them so face west. In Area D those buried during the ministry of the first vicar face east, those during the ministry of the second vicar face west. The Ancient graveyard contains burials from the Methodist faith as well as victims of suicide. In many other churchyards and cemeteries they are buried in separate, unconsecrated ground.

The first burial was for **Christopher Edmundson**, a solicitor who

died of a heart attack aged 36. His descendants were extremely wealthy, mixed with the aristocracy and even socialised with Princess Elizabeth. In total contrast, the second burial was for **James Clemmy** who was less



than a week old. He was the illegitimate son of Judith Clemmy who came to find work at the mills. After James died she moved to Otley, married and had a family there. James was buried in an unmarked grave in the infants' corner alongside over 20 other infants buried in the first six years that the graveyard was open.

At the beginning of this Project the infants' corner was used as a compost heap but since we have found out about these burials there are plans to convert this into a memorial and reflection area for all child burials.



## Who were the first vicars?

The first vicar was **Hogarth Swale** - remember that name? He was the son of the benefactor Ann Swale – there were no equal opportunity recruitment policies in those days. Hogarth served in Settle for 10 years, during which time he had 'Ingfield Manor' built for his retirement, now known as the Falcon Manor Hotel. After serving in the south of England and then in France he returned for his retirement.



It wasn't all plain sailing for Hogarth though. His wife died at the birth of her second child **John Lambert Swale**. As expected, John became a military man but, definitely not expected, he disappeared off the coast at Tenby soon after his wife **Blanche Voyle** had a son **Charles Alured Swale**. John was never seen again. Blanche spent the rest of her life in an asylum. Charles returned to Settle to live with Hogarth and was a keen sportsman and performed with the Settle Amateur Operatic Society. Tragically, perhaps inheriting a weak gene for mental health, Charles took his own life, aged 43, after being accused of having a pecuniary interest in the sale of some land.



The second vicar was **William Frederick Pierson** who came from Hertfordshire and he served from 1848 until his death in 1883. William married **Margaret Birkbeck** from the local family of bankers and JPs. William paid for a quarter of the costs of building the vicarage on Station Road, next to the water tower. William tried to make the church even more well respected, donating the alabaster font and pulpit and eagle lecturn. The font was originally at the back of the church to welcome people into the church, of course.



His children had respectable careers except for the youngest **Alfred Graeme Pierson**. Alfred had an accident to one of his eyes but that probably didn't explain his marriage to **Beatrice Bing**, alias **Minnie Palmerstone**, a burlesque stage dancer in London. It transpired Beatrice had been married twice before - and was still married and so became a trigamist! The marriage was annulled. Charles married again but died aged just 34.

Pierson, Alfred Graeme (Town). Son of Rev. W. F. Pierson, The Vicarage, Settle. Left Christmas, 1874. Went to Cambridge, but an accident to one of his eyes prevented his going in for a degree. Died at Botches, Sussex, on the 15th March, 1896.

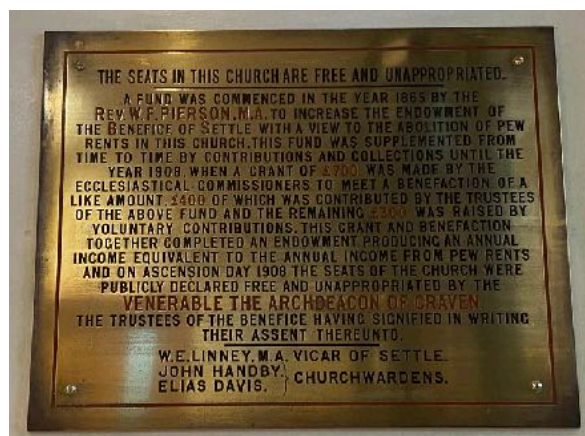
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER**

**A WOMAN WITH THREE HUSBANDS.**

In the Divorce Division, yesterday—before Justice Butt—two suits for nullity of marriage were heard in

Back in Settle, the 1851 religious census reported: *Pews cost £80 plus weekly fees. It appears very desirable that the charge of Fees payable to the Parish Church for services performed in this new church should in some way be removed. It also said: The patrons of this church are unwilling to reduce these fees.*

Oh dear. In 1865 William established an endowment scheme to pay for those pew rents although this was not achieved until 1908. A plaque just inside the door celebrates this fact.



In 1851 the congregation of the church was around 200, rather than the 800 planned for, so it was decided to move the organ downstairs and remove the front rows of pews. This should have been a simple job but in the process they found that steam from the heating apparatus and soot from the lamps had ruined the workings and so it cost much more.



The man in charge of heating and lighting was the sexton, **William Perkin** who served for over 40 years. He may have got into a bit of trouble! William also got into trouble because it was his job to dig graves and keep the burial plan up to date, to show in which plots people were buried. The vestry records tell us (on repeated occasions):

*Mr John Winskill (the churchwarden) do require Messrs Perkin to supply the necessary sketch for completing the map of the graves in the church yard without delay.*

William Perkin never did update the burial plan and so we will never know the exact location of over 400 burials! Why didn't William record the locations? William married three times as his first two wives died. The last two of the weddings were in this church. His documentation shows that he was, in fact, illiterate so would have been unable to update the burial plan. You have to wonder why the church didn't realise?

*William <sup>his</sup> Perkin*  
*Nancy Southwite*

*William <sup>his</sup> Perkin*  
*Martha <sup>mark</sup> Southwite*

The sexton's wife was expected to clean the church. William's third wife, Martha, was also mentioned in the vestry records for poor standards of cleaning!

## Reverend Pierson's challenges

In 1858 William arranged for new stained glass windows to be designed and fitted in the west of church. Another window was dedicated to Ann Swale, one to *Isabella Henlock*, a generous benefactor and one to the children of the *Birkbeck* family who died in infancy. One is dedicated to *Edwin Septimus Green*, the surgeon appointed to the Settle to Carlisle Railway who was dragged to death by his horse aged just 24. The window reads, '*He went doing good*'. In 1866 a third of the pews were removed and replaced with open benches and the circular window was added above the altar.



These days, the graveyard is overshadowed by the Settle and Carlisle Railway which was built from 1869 - 1876. It must have been chaos in Settle, including at the church. The railway was a heroic feat – 72 miles of hostile terrain with 14 tunnels and 22 viaducts, all built by pick and shovel. It was one of the last railways built as it was such a challenge. It was an extremely dangerous job for the navvies and a plaque in our porch commemorates the lives of those who died through accidents during the construction. There is a matching plaque at St Leonard's church at Chapel-le-Dale near Ribbleshead.

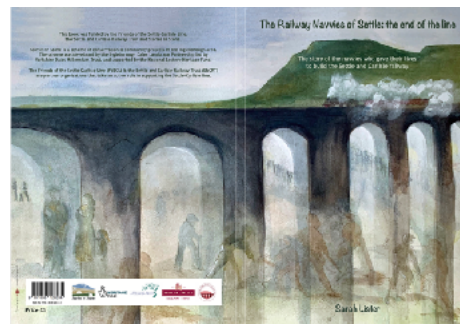
*To the memory of those, through accidents lost their lives in constructing the railway works between Settle and Dent Head. This tablet was erected at the joint expense of their fellow workers and the Midland Railway Company 1869 - 1876*



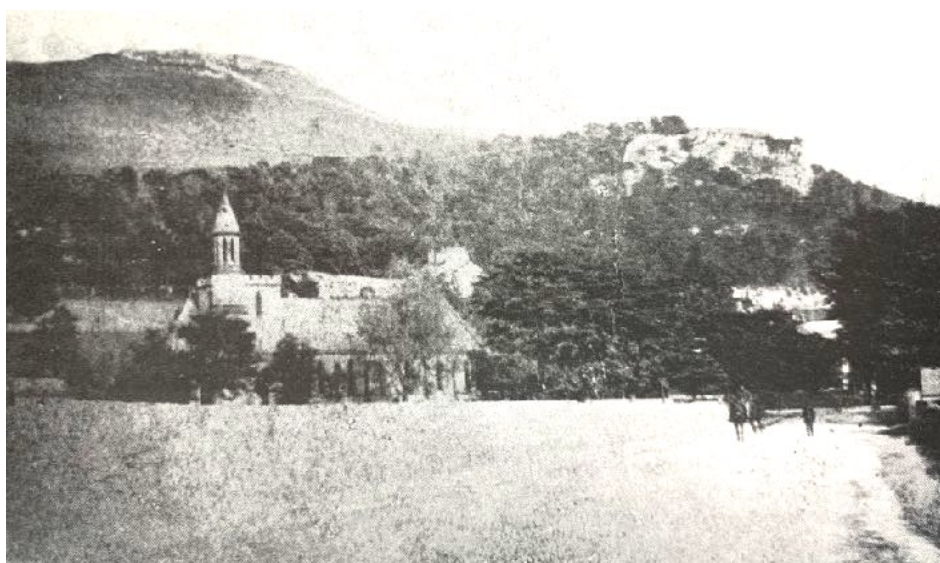
Research by Settle Graveyard Project in 2020 identified 21 navvies who died and are buried in out graveyard poles another 30 family members, mainly infants. More than half the navvies died of disease – navy

Settle Graveyard Project

huts don't provide conditions conducive to social distancing. The full findings are available in the book *'The Railway Navvies of Settle: the End of the Line'* available from the church.



This photo is dated before the building of the railway. The church is at the foot of the hill below Townhead with empty fields in front of it. On the right you can see workers walking across the field towards the Langcliffe Mills.



At some point the path to the mills was contained within walls — in one photo it appears there may have been some sort of sports in the field in front.



## Problems in the Ancient Graveyard

The Ancient graveyard was filling up – vestry records mention concerns as early as 1870. This was the case across the country, causing concerns about the spread of disease. In 1881 Rev Pierson and a churchwarden petitioned the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, to issue an order for closure of churchyard. It was officially closed January 1882.

As a result, no-one was allowed to be interred in the Ancient graveyard meaning new burials could not be placed with their relations. The only choice was to be buried in the graveyard at Giggleswick instead. Unless, of course, you were wealthy. Those from wealthy families continued to be buried in family plots well into the 20th century.

Rev Pierson died 1883 after 46 years in post. His replacement, selected from over 20 candidates was *Rev Jackson Mason* who had served at Pickhill in Thirsk for 20 years. When his wife, *Eleanora Hammond* died he came to Settle. His salary was *'not a lucrative one, only amounting to £174, inclusive of parsonage house'* Jackson was from wealthy stock so the salary was probably not an issue. Interestingly Jackson was the uncle, via his wife, of *Lillie Langtry*, the well known socialite and mistress to Prince of Wales, later Edward VII.

**SETTLE.**  
APPOINTMENT OF INCUMBENT FOR **SETTLE.**—The trustees of Ascension Church have appointed the Rev. Jackson Mason, M.A., vicar of Pickhill, near Thirsk, and formerly curate of Cantley, near Doncaster, to the incumbency of **Settle**, which became vacant about two months ago owing to the death of the Rev. W. F. Pierson, who had held the living for upwards of thirty years. There were over twenty candidates for the office. The living is not a lucrative one, the net income only amounting to £174, inclusive of parsonage house. The newly elected incumbent enjoys a high reputation in his present diocese. He has been vicar of Pickhill upwards of twenty years.



Jackson faced one main issue – the graveyards was still full. Families complained about being separated and the people at Giggleswick church was unhappy that their graveyard was filling up so rapidly. In 1884 *Dr Edward Atkinson*, the medical officer insisted that a new

The Clerk laid Dr. Atkinson's annual report before the Board, and amongst the matters requiring the attention of the Sanitary Authority during the year 1884, is the provision of a cemetery for Settle and Giggleswick, the Settle Churchyard having been closed by Order in Council, and the new portion added to the old parish ground at Giggleswick is being rapidly filled.—A committee was appointed to select a suitable site and obtain terms of purchase and report to the Board.—The

graveyard was required at Settle. Most people felt the obvious place was Townhead meadow, to the east of church. *'Until the 11th hour it was understood by the church officials that Mrs Perfect and Mrs Clayton of Townhead were willing to dispose of a portion of Townhead meadow, which it was obvious to all should be added . . . Those ladies had, however, declined to part with the land and those who were acting in the matter were reduced to a more limited scheme.'* This appeared to be a classic case of *'Not in my backyard'*. In the end Mr Hartley's triangle of land next to the railway was purchased for £350.



adjoins the churchyard, and until the eleventh hour it was understood by the church officials that Mrs Perfect and Mrs Clayton, of Townhead, were willing to dispose of a portion of Townhead Meadow, which it was obvious to all should be added to the rest to make the scheme complete. Those ladies had, however, now declined to part with the land, and those who were acting in the matter were reduced to the more limited scheme.

cemetery. New ground was accordingly purchased, and the addition recently made to the old ground virtually settles the cemetery question for all time so far as Settle is concerned. The entire cost of the extension proved to be £1144 1s. 10d. For a parish containing less than four thousand inhabitants this may appear to be a considerable sum to expend on the project, and yet the entire outlay has been provided for solely by voluntary subscriptions and one offertory at the church. It is only fair to add that members of every religious denomination represented in the district have given generously to the fund.

It cost £1144 1sh 10d, regarded a considerable sum for a parish of less than 4000 inhabitants. it *'settles the cemetery question for all time so far as Settle is concerned'*. In reality it lasted 45 years until 1929 when the New graveyard was acquired. *'It is only fair to add that members of every religious denomination represented int he district have given generously to the fund.'* This ensured burial space for Catholic and Methodist worshippers. We find them mixed in amongst all the other burials rather than in a separate area which is quite unusual.

Perhaps as a gesture of goodwill, *'Jackson Mason intimated his willingness to inter in the enlarged portion of the churchyard all paupers belonging to the township of Settle who die in the (Giggleswick) workhouse. Indeed, the graveyard contains Union graves randomly distributed across the graveyard, as were victims of suicide.'*

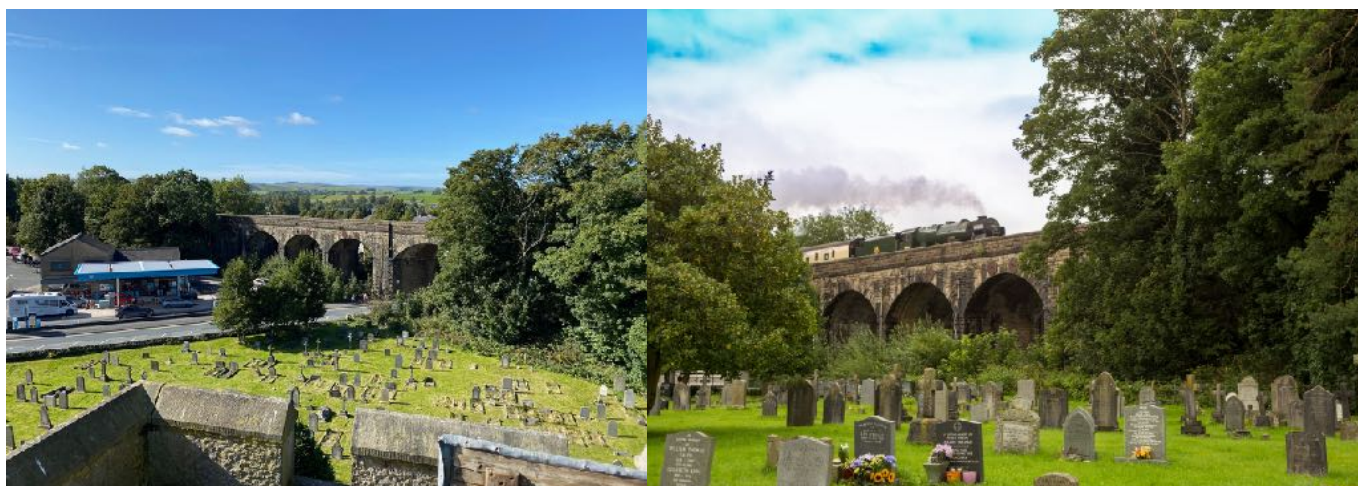
Jackson Mason, M.A., vicar of Settle, intimating his willingness to inter in the enlarged portion of the churchyard all paupers belonging to the township of Settle who die in the workhouse so long as he remains in charge. This decision having disposed of the ques-

## The Old Graveyard

And so the Old graveyard was eventually in place ready for burials by November 1885. The railway embankment can be seen at the left of the photos. The photo on the left was taken before the Old graveyard was established with the gates to Townhead on the right. The photo on the right shows that the footpath to the mill had been removed and the lych gate installed. In addition the Old graveyard land extended closer to the gates of Townhead.



The Old graveyard nestles below the railway. If you are lucky you may see a steam engine saluting our burials on its way to Carlisle.



Families could now be buried in the same churchyard, if not in the same part of the graveyard. The first burial in the Old graveyard was a 5 month old nephew of one of the navvies, **Samuel Henry**, who died of pneumonia and was buried in the Ancient graveyard.



Samuel and his nephew could not be buried together as the Ancient graveyard was closed (and they were not wealthy!). Incredibly the nephew was called **Henry Henry** and he is buried in an unmarked grave just in front of church door.

This gravestone commemorates the lives of **Thomas Ayrton** and his wife **Jane**. Thomas died before the Ancient graveyard was closed and Jane died after the Old graveyard was opened – she was actually buried in the kerbstone grave in the plot behind although commemorated on her husband's stone.



To mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 funds were raised from wealthy folk for a new peal of eight bells. Jackson paid for one and another was bought from the estate of **Christopher Beverley** who had attended Giggleswick School and ran a brewery in Wakefield. A Beverley family crest is to be found on that bell.

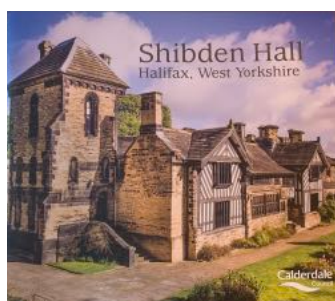


Jackson Mason died in 1888 to be replaced by **Rev Richard Craven Garnett**. Richard also lamented the situation of pew rents and even offered £20 of his own money each year to boost the endowment fund. Yet again he had little support from the local folk and accepted '*the process will be a slow one.*'

Richard oversaw arrangements when Settle became a Parish in its own right – according to the statute of 1853 this could only happen upon the death of the vicar at Giggleswick which took nearly 40 years. Richard's wife died during an outbreak of scarlet fever in 1893 and is buried in the Old graveyard. He remarried and moved to Worcestershire to be replaced by **Walter Edward Linney** in 1902 who remained in post for 19 years.

In 1909 there were 289 regular communicants. In 1912 a new organ was installed made by JJ Binns of Leeds. It is still going strong to this day.

Soon after stained glass windows on the east side of the church were built. One, designed by William Morris from a Burne Jones design commemorates the lives of sisters ***Maria Louisa*** and ***Alphonsine Sarah Jarry***. These spinsters were daughters of ***Etienne Jarry*** who started his life as chorister in the court Louis 16th at Versailles – his father was a steward there. When the French revolution took place Etienne managed to escape to serve in the French army during the Napoleonic wars. Etienne was injured by a British sabre, captured and imprisoned in Northamptonshire. When hostilities ceased, he converted from Catholicism and married a local agricultural labourer's daughter, settling in Halifax. Daughter Alphonsine worked as a governess at Shibden Hall, tutoring **John Lister**, before moving to Settle on their parents' inheritance. The sisters were later



described as *'Two elderly French ladies, devoted sisters, truly Cranfordian in aspect and, withal, intellectual, always carrying about with them an air of old fashioned dignity which was a pleasure to witness.'*

The other window was dedicated to siblings ***Sidney James*** and ***Doris Jane Procter***, a nurse, who both gave their lives in WW1. The window depicts St Elizabeth of Hungary, a patron saint of nurses. Doris Jane is also commemorated at York Minster where the five sisters window was dedicated to women who made the ultimate sacrifice in WW1.



Names in ***bold italic*** have their full life stories presented on the website and church burial records detailed on the next page.

# Contact the Graveyard Project:

The project is ongoing and it's always great to hear comments and ideas from interested folk, especially if you happen to be a descendant of one of our churchyard burials.

Email [settleresearch@gmail.com](mailto:settleresearch@gmail.com) to contact Sarah Lister with any queries about the project and to receive latest info and Tuesday Tales

Settle Graveyard Project Facebook Page for latest news, events and Tuesday Tales



Research findings are posted on this website. Follow the link to Settle Graveyard Project on the home page. These pages are updated weekly.

[www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk](http://www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk)

Findings are being added to the church burial records which are now available to the public online at

[www.settlechurch.uk/hagryd](http://www.settlechurch.uk/hagryd)

