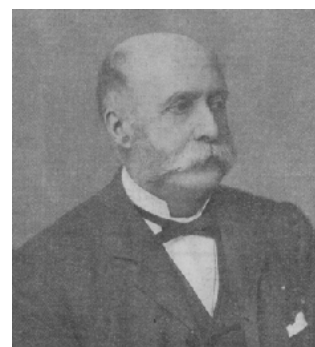
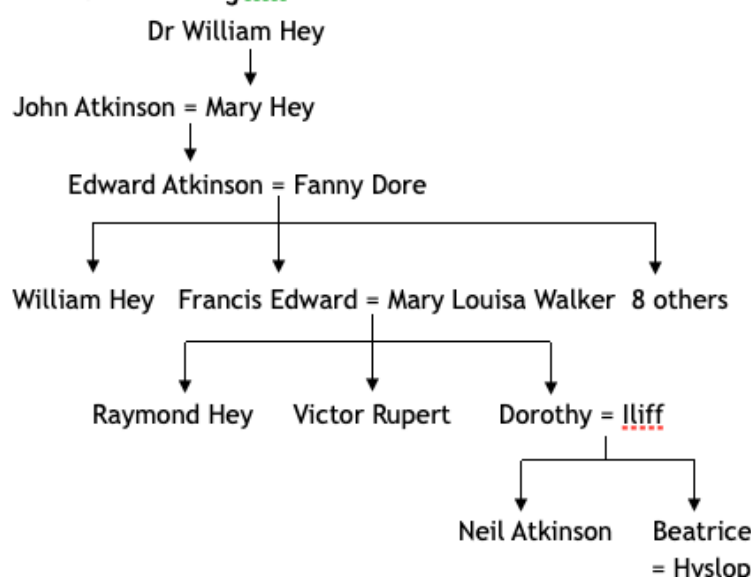


# Surgeon Francis Edward Atkinson, scandal and tragedy

Dr Atkinson came highly recommended. His father was **Edward Atkinson**, [ph1], whose obituary portrayed a brilliant man. Edward served as a military surgeon in Jerusalem and the Crimea, working alongside Florence Nightingale. Then he settled in Leeds 'working as Consulting Surgeon and Medical Officer to the Infirmary. He taught medicine and was a pioneer in the creation of Leeds Ambulance Service. He had been the President of the Yorkshire British Medical Service. Edward also seemed to be a nice man *'having a genial and happy disposition with domestic tastes, kind and sympathetic, and with a keen sense of humour, he was in private one of the most loveable of men.'*



Dr Atkinson's family tree



...y. Having a genial and happy disposition with domestic tastes, kind and sympathetic, and with a keen sense of humour, he was in private one of the most lovable of men. He took interest in the pursuits of those much younger than himself, and, by his uniform courtesy, he endeared himself alike to friends and patients, and, also to colleagues and pupils. He was an ardent Churchman, but never took much part in public affairs.

Francis Edward Atkinson's maternal grandfather was **Dr William Hey**, born in 1736, another Leeds surgeon. William was a surgeon at Leeds General Infirmary from its opening in a temporary building in 1776. He had several medical procedures named after him with uses in amputation and skull surgery, amongst others. William was the Mayor of Leeds twice. So Dr Atkinson had some excellent credentials!

**Francis Edward Atkinson** was born in January 1852, two and a half years before his parents marriage. At the time of the 1851 census, Edward studied Medicine at King's College and lived at the house of William Bowman, one of his tutors. The housemaid in his digs was **Fanny Dore**, from the Isle of Wight who became the mother of his children. Oh Edward. It was a long time, and possibly another pregnancy before Edward *'did the right thing'* and married Fanny in 1854. This may also explain why Francis Edward was brought up in Ripon by his grandmother (Atkinson).

Edward and Fanny went on to have a further two daughters, who both died

Edward Atkinson	Physic.	Up	21	Student in Medicine
Eliza Bowman	Brw		6	Scholar at Home
George Pickham	Surv	Up	34	Brwman
Harriet Howlett	Surv	Up	33	Brw
Fanny Dore	Surv	Up	23	Housemaid

in infancy and eight sons, most of whom had successful careers across the world in medicine or the church. Tragically, in 1872 Edward and Fanny's eight year old son, **William Hey Atkinson**,

drowned at Silverdale together with his 26 year old governess, Miss Mary Maria Rodier, who tried to save him. They were staying at the Royal Hotel, Silverdale [1]. Father Edward died in 1905, aged 75 and was buried at Silverdale too.

# **A BOY AND HIS GOVERNESS DROWNED IN MORECAMBE BAY.**

A very distressing case of drowning happened at Silverdale, on the shores of Morecambe Bay, on Friday last, by which William Hey Atkinson, aged eight, the third son of Mr Atkinson, surgeon, of Leeds, and the governess, Miss Rodier, about 26 years of age, lost their lives. It appears that Mr Atkinson sent his seven children down to Silverdale on Thursday week, in charge of the governess and a nurse named Jane Pardon. They stayed at the Royal Hotel, and on Friday forenoon Miss Rodier took four of the elder boys down to the beach—the deceased and his brothers Robert, Cyril, and John. The boys went on to the sands

to a place where they had not been before, and were wading together near a pool. The eldest, Robert, a boy ten years of age, came out, and William attempted to cross, when he came to the bank of the pool and disappeared under the water. Miss Rodier was some little distance off at the time, and hearing the children's cries she ran to the spot, and without a moment's hesitation rushed into the water to attempt to rescue the drowning boy. She was unable, however, to do this, and her brave act cost her her life. After a brief struggle she sank. The boy came to the surface four or five times, but there was no one near, and he too sunk. One of the boys ran for assistance, and a fisherman, named William Hall, recovered the bodies in about an hour.

On November 6th 1880 Francis Edward was appointed to work in Settle as the Medical Officer for Craven Combined Sanitary Authorities, covering the area from Silsden to Sedbergh, replacing Dr Frederick William Barry. Dr Barry later died after a fall in the Grand Hotel in Birmingham, the effects of which were exacerbated by an attack of influenza and assuming an unusual position whilst cutting his toe nails — yes really! [7]

13—Dr. Atkinson, Medical Officer of Health for the Craven Combined Sanitary Authorities, re-appointed for three years.

neck produced faintness, he (Dr. Vinrace) formed the opinion that Dr Barry must have got his neck in a very constrained position while trimming his toe nails on Monday night, and the pneumo-gastric nerve became compressed and inhibited the heart's action. The Coroner, in summing up, said it was a most distressing case. Dr. Barry was a gentleman of exceptional ability and great qualifications, and had rendered very important service to the Government in the work committed to him. A verdict of death from natural causes was returned.

In 1881, aged 29 Francis Edward married Mary Louisa Walker and they lived at Whitefriars, next to the Royal Oak in Settle. Mary Louisa's father Benjamin Walker, JP, had set up a successful engineering company 'Tannett Walker & Co' in Leeds with his wife Sarah Tannett's family. It enjoyed a world wide reputation for its industrial engineering inventions, specialising in hydraulic pumps and engines.

He was reappointed as medical officer every three years and by the time he died had worked in the role for 48 years [LSA]. His reports give us an insight into the precarious health and safety conditions of the 19th century. In 1884 he raised concern about the provision for graveyard burials — Settle church graveyard had been closed as it was 'dangerously full' of bodies and the new portion of Giggleswick graveyard was filling rapidly. The 'Old' graveyard for Settle church was purchased within a year [2]. In 1882 Francis reported on the water supplies in the town which were, according to his report, greatly inadequate. Only 77 out of 430 houses in Settle had a constant supply, 149 an irregular supply, 191 used pumps from wells and 13 shops and offices had no supply at all. Nearly half the population had supplies which were liable to pollution. As a result, sewerage systems were less efficient.

In the 19th century a third of all deaths were due to infectious disease. In 1883 Francis had to report on a case of typhoid in Bentham from drinking impure water and an epidemic of scarlet fever in Long Preston with 25 cases in just 15 houses 'there being great carelessness on the

**THE SALUBRITY OF THE DISTRICT.**—The annual report of Dr. Atkinson, the medical officer of health for the combined Craven district, states that the lowest rate of infant mortality in the combined districts occurred in the Settle Rural Sanitary district, being 8.0. The Settle district had also the highest percentage of deaths of persons over sixty years of age, namely 44.0, which was the highest percentage ever reached by any of the districts.



part of the people'[2]. That's an appalling statistic by any measure but it would be surprising if the residents were actually being deliberately careless.

Despite these hazards, in 1885 Francis reported on '*the salubrity of the district*' – that's not a word you hear very often these days but it refers to health and well being. Within the Craven district Settle had the lowest rate of infant mortality (aged between 1 and 5 years), just 8 per 100 births, and the highest proportion of residents dying over the age of 60 and the highest percentage (44%) ever reached across Craven [2]. Throughout the 19th century, Settle residents, being generally well off compared to those of cities and other towns had better health statistics with long lives, low infant mortality and a high proportion of doctors [B]

In 1893 an epidemic of scarlet fever struck Settle and Charlotte, the wife of **Rev Richard Craven Garnett** died and their children were amongst those affected. They were sent to the isolation hospital, a wing of Giggleswick workhouse/hospital. This was not ideal as sufferers were not actually isolated from other patients and inmates. In September 1903 Francis reported on research to identify a better site for a new hospital. Despite objections that it was too far away, which is the point, really, the Harden Bridge isolation hospital was soon built about half a mile from Austwick, at a cost of £500 [3].

While Francis Edward was doing all this, Mary Louisa, as the wife of a respected professional, made her own charitable contribution to the life of the town. In 1877 the Settle branch of St John's Ambulance had been established to provide first aid training and attendance at community events. In 1890, the ladies of the town decided more must be done to provide '*intelligent nursing for the poor*' and set up the Giggleswick, Settle and Langcliffe District Nursing Association' paid for by subscription. Mary Louisa became the Treasurer. The Nursing Association had sufficient funds to pay for a dedicated nurse and nurse **Effie (Ellice Anderson)** worked for them from 1892 until her death in 1898. The Nursing Association also provided a bath-chair for the benefit of invalids, and a water bed. They would provide care and nourishment for the sick and weakly for a small fee [LSA].

Francis and Mary had two sons and two daughters, three of whom would pre-decease them. Eldest daughter **Mary Winifred Atkinson** died, aged 13, in 1897, and this could have prompted a move to Bowerley in Langcliffe where the family stayed for the rest of their lives. Gardener **Timothy Tooley Green** and his sons **George** and **Charles Green** worked for the Atkinsons at Bowerley. Charles wrote in his scrapbook, '*Tuesday was my day at Bowerley for Dr and Mrs Atkinson. Bowerley gardens was too large to keep it in order on one day a week,*

#### HOSPITAL PROVISION FOR THE SETTLE DISTRICT.

A special report on sites suitable for infectious diseases hospital purposes for the Settle Union was made to the Settle District Council yesterday afternoon, by Dr. F. E. Atkinson, medical officer of health.

Five sites were reported upon by Dr. Atkinson, these being near Giggleswick Station; High Payley Green; on the Clapham side of Cross-streets; near Clapham Station, on the Keasden side; and on Clapham Common, above the station. The site selected by the medical officers was the one on the Clapham side of Cross-streets, which measures seven acres, and the price of which is £500.

The matter gave rise to considerable discussion, objection being taken by some members to the distance of the site from the bulk of the population. The matter was eventually adjourned for two months to permit of consideration by the Hospital Committee.

#### GIGGLESWICK, SETTLE, AND LANGCLIFFE DISTRICT NURSING ASSOCIATION.

Secretary—Mrs. Crofton. Treasurer—Mrs. Atkinson.

Committee—Mrs. Brown, Miss M. Clayton, Mrs. Crowther, Miss Fell, Miss Garnett, Miss Perfect, Miss Radcliffe, Mrs. Robinson, and Mrs. W. Stackhouse.

This Association was founded in 1890, to meet a want that was felt of intelligent nursing for the sick poor. A Committee was therefore formed subscriptions were asked for, and a Nurse was appointed. The result was most satisfactory, for Nurse Ferguson attended above 100 cases during the first year.

In the second year, the number of cases was largely increased, the visits numbering 1,647, and the subscribers 265, as against 149 in 1890: this increase was steadily maintained, for in 1892, 2,001 visits were paid, in 1893, 2,901; and in 1894, 2803.

The present nurse, Nurse Effie, has been at work since August, 1892, and there is every reason to believe that her services are much appreciated. Nurse Effie lives in Church Street, and would be glad if those who require her services would give notice as early as possible in the morning.

A Bath-chair, for the benefit of invalids, is kept at Whitefriars, and can be had on application to Mrs. Atkinson.

A Water-bed and various other nursing requisites are also in the hands of the Committee, and there is a small fund for providing nourishment, &c., for the sick and weakly.

**LARCENY BY LADS.**—Two boys named Jos. Hilton and George Parr, residing at Langcliffe, were charged with stealing fruit out of the garden of Dr. Atkinson, of Whitefriars. The garden in question has previously been pillaged. The Bench inflicted a fine of 2s. 6d. and 6s. 6d. costs.

consequently it was always somewhat untidy, especially if there happened to be a succession of wet Tuesdays. I always got my tea at Bowerley and in the summer months worked overtime. When I left Bowerley it was untidy as when I started there. Mrs Atkinson was a keen gardener and fond of working in the garden. Bowerley garden always produced splendid vegetables and roses' [A].

Another reason for their move could have been the problem of their splendid fruit. In 1895 two boys were fined for stealing fruit from the Whitefriars' garden [4]. The report, entitled 'Larceny by Lads' mentioned 'the garden in question has previously been pillaged.'

Francis Edward's mother Fanny died in Settle in 1912, aged 84 but was buried elsewhere, presumably with husband Edward. Francis Edward died in 1928 at the age of 76, 'Craven's Oldest Medical Officer' Francis' obituary portrayed a good hardworking man. 'His annual reports were models of efficiency and accuracy and were held in high repute by the officials at Whitehall. He was in every sense a faithful public servant and enjoyed the esteem of the public bodies he served for 48 years.' [2]

#### Craven's Oldest Medical Officer.

Dr. Francis E. Atkinson, who died at Settle, on Sunday, was Craven's oldest medical officer, and was probably the oldest official in that capacity in England. He succeeded, in 1880, Dr. F. W. Barry, who died in 1897, as medical officer to the Craven Combined Sanitary Authorities, extending from Silsden to Sedburgh. His annual reports were models of efficiency and accuracy, and were held in high repute by the officials at Whitehall. He was in every sense a faithful public servant, and enjoyed the esteem of the public bodies he served for 48 years.

Mary Louisa left Bowerley to live in the more manageable 4 Ribble Terrace overlooking the river. She died, aged 82 in 1940. Francis and Mary Louisa were buried with daughter Mary Winifred in a substantial grave plot Old D63/4



*In Most Loving Memory of Mary Winifred elder daughter of Francis Edward and Mary Atkinson of Whitefriars, Settle. Born June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1884 died at Cheltenham October 24<sup>th</sup> 1897 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Francis Edward Atkinson of Bowerley born January 28<sup>th</sup> 1852 died September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1928 Mary Louisa Atkinson born September 21<sup>st</sup> 1858 died May 13<sup>th</sup> 1940, Old D63/4*

Their sons attended Giggleswick School. Eldest son Raymond Hey Atkinson had a promising career, training in medicine at Edinburgh

and then moving to the North Yorks Moors to study Land Surveying to become a land agent, also a lucrative career. This move was also for 'health reasons' – he was known to suffer from epilepsy as a result of a blow to the head. Tragically, history repeated itself. Despite warnings from his friend about the mud and weeds, Raymond, aged 27, decided to go bathing in Lake Gormire near Thirsk. Just like his uncle William Hey Atkinson, Raymond drowned in August 1909 [3].

Francis and Mary's youngest son, 2nd Lieutenant Victor Rupert Atkinson [ph2] was one of the many killed in action during the war, on 23rd November 1917 at Passchendaele on the Western Front, aged just 20. He served with the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment. His life is commemorated on Langcliffe war memorial. It's perhaps surprising that Francis and Mary Louisa didn't include a commemoration to their sons on the family gravestone.

#### DROWNED IN A LAKE.

Lake Gormire, the beautiful sheet of water which lies at the foot of Whitestonecliffe, near Thirsk, was the scene of a drowning accident on Tuesday.

It appears that Mr Raymond Atkinson, aged 27 years, son of Dr. Atkinson, of Settle, who had been staying with Mrs Rayner, of Hambleton, for his health for the past three years, went to bathe in Lake Gormire. He called on Mr Suffield, Gormire Farm, and asked permission to bathe. Leave was granted, and as far as can be ascertained this is the last time the unfortunate young man was seen alive.

As he did not return by eight o'clock his friends became anxious, and inquiries were made and a search commenced. The waters of Lake Gormire are beautifully clear, and the body was recovered without dragging operations.



Their only surviving child was **Dorothy** who married **Charles Wilkinson Iliff**, a navy captain's son in 1914. **Captain Charles Iliff**, the son of a clergyman was an interesting and adventurous chap. He was a master mariner known to command numerous steam ships around the world. He was one of the pioneers who set out on an expedition to establish the first Metereological Observatory on Mount Kosciuszko in 1897, the tallest mountain in Australia [ph3]. Once established Charles became the manager of the site. The observatory closed in 1902 due to lack of funding. Charles, aged 58, died on board his steam-ship SS Tyrian which had been sailing from Sydney to Brisbane in February 1903.



Charles' widowed mother brought him and his siblings to Settle after her husband Captain Charles Iliff had died. Charles had been educated at Giggleswick School and became a manager at John Dickinson's paper and stationer's business in Hertfordshire '*of world-wide repute*'. He had been associated with social work for '*Collyhurst Workers' Union and Recreation Clubs in Manchester.*'

Charles and Dorothy's '*exceedingly pretty wedding*' on 3 May 1914 was a very grand affair at Langcliffe Church. Dorothy wore a white crepe-de-chine brooch, with pears embroidery and wore a Brussels lace veil crowned with orange blossom [CH]. An '*At home*' took place at Bowerley over Whit Monday and Tuesday and the happy couple left for a honeymoon in Scotland. They received '*numerous costly presents*', literally hundreds, all of which were listed in the newspaper reports and '*really handsome floral bouquets and decorations*' from **Joseph Harrison** of Ashfield Nurseries.

### INTERESTING SETTLE WEDDING.

**MR. C. ILIFF—MISS DOROTHY ATKINSON.**

An exceedingly pretty wedding was solemnized at Langcliffe Church, Settle, on Wednesday, between Mr. Charles Iliff, of Hertfordshire, and Miss Dorothy Atkinson, daughter of Dr. F. E. Atkinson, who is well known as the Medical Officer of Health for the combined districts of Craven. The bridegroom is the eldest son of the late Mr. Charles Iliff, of Sunderland, and now resides at Keasden, Boxmoor, Hertfordshire, where he is a member of the managerial staff of Messrs John Dickenson, a paper-making and wholesale stationers' establishment of world-wide repute. Mr. Iliff, who was educated at the Giggleswick Grammar School, and later at Christ's Hospital, has been associated with social work in connection with the Colly-



THE BRIDE.



THE BRIDEGROOM.

Dorothy and Charles lived in Hemel Hempstead. Their son **Neil Atkinson Iliff** served in the Royal Engineers and then became a successful global industrialist. He lived in Texas and was the deputy chairman of Shell Chemicals. In the late 1960s, he wrote with incredible foresight of the issues around plastics, warning industries to consider their environmental impact and suggesting that by the 1980s Britons would throw away more than a million tons of plastic bags which could linger for years if scattered on land or in water [5,6]. How right he was. Neil worked with Peter



Scott, naturalist and wildlife expert (who created the WWT, Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust) to raise awareness of environmental issues.

Mr. Neil Iliff, deputy chairman of Shell Chemicals Ltd., said that industry accounted for probably more than half the pollution load and must satisfy itself about the possible environmental effects of new products before they went on the market.



## MENACE OF THE PLASTIC BAGS

THE problem of disposing of discarded plastic bags may become a serious menace by the 1980's. Dr. Neil Iliff told the meeting. He said that Britons in the 1980's would probably throw away more than 1,000,000 tons of plastic bags—"which could linger for years if scattered on land or in water."

Dorothy and Charles' daughter Beatrice Iliff became a dietitian, and at the time of the 1939 pre-war register lived with the Hyslop family of surgeons at Little House, Church Street. She was a keen member of Settle Amateur Operative society, starring in 'The Secret Tent' in 1956 [ph4]. She married surgeon David Balfour Hyslop in 1940 and they stayed in Settle living at Whitefriars, the Folly and Kirkgate amongst other addresses. After David died in 1991, Beatrice retired to Winchester.



*This account has been compiled by Sarah Lister 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.*

*The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project and 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'.*

*A – Charles Greens scrapbook, LSA - Lambert's Settle Almanac, with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust*

*B – [populationspast.org](http://populationspast.org)*

*Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Shields Daily Gazette, 2 – Lancaster Gazette, 3 – Leeds Mercury, 4 – Lancaster Standard, 5 – Torbay Express, 6 – Birmingham daily Post, 7 – Manchester Evening News*

*CH - with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer, thanks to Mike Howarth*

*Settle Graveyard Project*

*ph1 – obituary credited to descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username eagle1350, ph2 – credited to Craven's Part in the Great War, ph3 – credited to descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username Jonnys, ph4 – kindly provided by John Reid of the Settle Amateur Operatic Society*