

John Jones and son, railway navvies

John Jones from Birkenhead met Sarah from Wigan during the 1850s. With such a common surname it's impossible to find out her maiden name — they may not even have married. John and Sarah started their family of three sons and a daughter in Wigan but at the time of the 1871 census were living in a navy hut at Langcliffe with the three youngest children. John introduces us to the colourful world of the railway navvies. John was one of over 6000 men who helped to build the Settle and Carlisle railway between 1869 and 1876. Navy huts were temporary wooden huts coated with tar for waterproofing and with limewash to attempt to sterilise them.



John and Sarah's 13 year old son **Thomas Jones** also worked as a railway labourer. Teenagers were used to help with 'easier' jobs such as fetching and carrying horses and equipment while they built up the strength to work as a navvy 'proper.' Eldest son, 16 year old **John Jones (Jnr)** was nowhere to be seen, perhaps working a shift somewhere. Being 16 he was old enough to live away from his family or could have taken the workmen's train to another part of the railway works further up the valley. Sarah, as the navy's wife, will have run the navy hut providing board, lodging, washing, cleaning etc for the family and their five unmarried lodgers, who were also railway labourers from all over England, whilst bringing up the children — a very busy woman.

As the railway was over such difficult terrain it was very tough, physical work for the navvies and, as a result, recruitment of navvies was a nightmare. Many labourers turned up, enticed by the high wages — 4 shillings a day for regular navvies (labourers) and 6 shillings for the more dangerous and skilled jobs such as mining [1]. Even for the regular 'pick and shovel' navvies it was better paid than for most regular labouring jobs. Navvies were expected to dig around six tons of material during a ten hour day, six days a week. It took weeks to build up the strength to do this and so many men couldn't hack it and went back home. The weather in the Yorkshire Dales didn't help either. So, John and Sarah's lodgers will have changed frequently, with many more during the summer months.

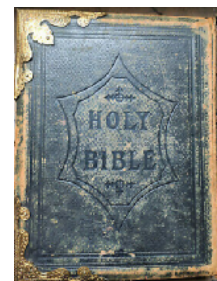
TUNNEL MINERS wanted at Blea Moor Tunnel, Settle and Carlisle Railway, No. 1 Contract. Wages, 6s. per day. Good lodgings immediately adjoining. Station, Ingleton and Leeds. Parties of ten men will be passed down.—Apply Alfred Terry, Midland Railway Office, Settle

A couple of months later, John and Sarah had a lodger called **William Turner**. William had previously been lodging with **James and Sarah Smith** in the Jordan huts at Ribbleshead. On 20 May 1871 William was taken to court for stealing from John's navy hut — he took a slop jacket, a billycock hat, a bible and a pocket handkerchief. William left the lodgings early in the morning and was arrested with the stolen

THEFT BY A LODGER.—William Turner, a railway labourer, who, previous to his apprehension, lodged at the house of John Jones, also a railway labourer, at Langcliffe, was brought up in custody on Saturday last, before the Rev. H. J. Swale, and C. Ingleby, Esqrs, charged with stealing a slop jacket, billycock hat, bible, and a pocket handkerchief, the property of John Jones. The prisoner left his lodgings early on Saturday morning, and shortly afterwards the articles, before enumerated, were missed. Information was given to the police, and the prisoner was apprehended by P.C. Phillipson on the same morning near to "Cleatop Cutting" with the whole of the missing property in his possession. The prisoner pleaded guilty, and was committed to prison for one month with hard labour.

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items near Cleatop Cutting on the other side of Settle later that morning. PC Phillipson must have been on the ball! William pleaded guilty and was imprisoned for a month with hard



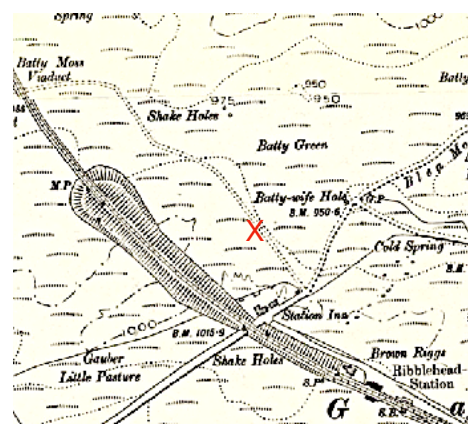
labour[1]. This was a very common offence for navvies. The slop jacket was typical navy wear. Despite having to carry everything they needed around the country, navy families such as the Jones' were sufficiently God-fearing to include a bible in their luggage. The

billycock hat, a bowler hat, was typical of the style worn by the navy team leaders, so perhaps John was a gang-leader? [ph2] The billycock hat was invented by William Coke, the 2nd Earl of Leicester, who resided at Holkham Hall in North Norfolk, as a practical design for his gamekeepers. The Bowler



company were the first to put it into large-scale production, hence the name.

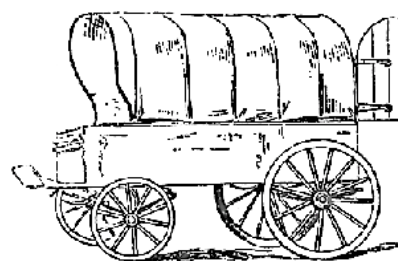
By July 1872, son John (Jnr), aged 17, worked as an engine stoker (fireman) at Batty Green, by the viaduct at Ribblehead. On 27th July 1872 he had a tragic, fatal accident. The inquest by **Thomas Parkinson Brown** was, for some reason, reported twice within the same page of a newspaper [1]. It seems John was adjusting a control when his foot slipped and he fell from the engine. Two wagons then ran over his arm and thighs. The



INQUEST. — An inquest was held on Monday last, at the Commercial Hotel, before Mr. J. P. Brown, Deputy Coroner, respecting the death of John Jones, a young man, aged 17 years, who at the time of the accident was employed as a stoker, at Batty Wife, near Ingleton, on the new Settle and Carlisle Railway. The deceased met with his accident on Saturday last. Whilst in the act of doing something in connection with his engine he fell off, coming in contact with the abutment on the side, causing injuries to his arm and thigh. He was conveyed the same night to the hospital at Settle, but died shortly afterwards. The jury returned a verdict that the deceased was accidentally killed by falling from a railway engine.

FATAL ACCIDENT AT THE RAILWAY WORKS.—On Saturday morning last, as one of the engines was going towards the tunnel from Batty Green and when near to Jericho, John Jones, the fireman, was in the act of turning one of the taps connected with the engine when his foot slipped and he fell from the engine, two waggons passing over his legs and part of his body. He was at once removed to the hospital, at Settle, where he died in a few hours. An inquest was held at the Joiners' Arms Inn, before T. P. Brown, Esq., deputy-coroner, when a verdict of "Accidental death" was returned. The deceased, who was in his 17th year, was highly respected by all who knew him.

'hospital' (another wooden hut) at Ribblehead wasn't equipped for emergencies like this and so 'He was conveyed the same night to the hospital in Settle' which is a bumpy 12 mile trek even today, never mind with unsurfaced roads, broken bones and no pain relief. The 'ambulance' won't have helped either — a covered horse-drawn cart. The journey probably reduced his chances of survival.



Depending upon which article you read, the inquest was held at the Commercial Hotel or the Joiners' Arms Inn in Settle — the Joiners' Arms gradually changed its name to the Commercial

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Twenty Seventh July 1872 Settle	John Jones	Male 17 Years	Struck on a Railway Engine	Accidentally Killed by falling from a Railway Engine	Information received from Thomas Parkinson Browne, Deputy Coroner for Yorkshire Inquest held 29 July 1872
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Hotel over a period of about ten years. A verdict of “accidentally killed by falling from a railway engine” was given. Accidents like this were depressingly common, with around five navvies dying for each mile of railway built on the fiendishly difficult Settle and Carlisle Railway. Accidents were regarded by the government and railway companies as the inevitable consequence of empire leading technology, with profits coming well before any attempt at health and safety. This is why wages were high — there was no sickness pay, nor compensation for accidents at work, fatal or otherwise, although some navvies paid into burial plans to pay for a burial if the worst happened.

John was one of 21 navvies buried in Settle graveyard along with another 30 burials of navvies’ family members, and that’s just Settle. He was one of five in Settle to have a gravestone to commemorate his life. Hundreds more navvies are in the graveyards along the route. John’s mother, Sarah, obviously decided upon his gravestone inscription. It’s made from a really high quality stone and is one of the best preserved to this day:



In memory of John Jones of Ingleton Fells who died on the 27th of July 1872, Aged 17 years. “Affliction seized my dear son and snatched him from my sight, but Jesus took him to his breast and claimed him as his right”, Anc A1

When the railway work dried up and/or considering John (Jnr)’s death, the family had moved to Hull where, in December 1880, John and Sarah took over the tenancy of the Black Swan Inn in Mytongate. A year later, in December 1881, John found himself in court for ‘allowing his house to be the habitual resort of prostitutes’[2]. Two policemen, PCs Butters and Suddaby, noticed prostitutes entering the inn and followed them in. They found that some of the women ‘were more



SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST A HULL PUBLICAN.

At the Police-court on Monday, John Jones, landlord of the Black Swan Inn, Mytongate, was summoned for allowing his house to be the habitual resort of prostitutes. The chief Constable stated that on Wednesday night, 30th ult., about five minutes past ten, P.O. Butters and P.O. Suddaby were on duty in Mytongate, near to defendant’s house, when they saw a number of prostitutes entering the premises. They went down the passage leading to a concert room at the back of the house. Some of the women, in the opinion of the officers, were more or less the worse for drink. About a quarter-past ten the officers entered the house, and visited the concert room, in which they heard bad language used. They found a number of men, and from fifteen to twenty women, all prostitutes. They watched the house from that time to five minutes to eleven, when the house was closed. The two officers then went to the landlord, and Butters said, “Are you aware you have been harbouring prostitutes?” Jones said he was not aware that he had. Butters then

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or less the worse for drink' and they 'heard bad language used.' They 'observed' a number of men and 15-20 woman for 45 minutes — it's not clear why they had to wait that long!

John wasn't prosecuted because PCs Butters and Suddaby could not prove that he was aware of the prostitutes in his house. The same edition of the paper also reported that the licence of the Black Swan was being transferred to James Redshaw. The Jones family returned to Wrightington, near Wigan to earn a much safer living from farming.



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 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'.

Illustrations thanks to Teresa Gordon. Map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 — Lancaster Gazette, 2 — Hull Packet

ph1 — photo credited to Peter W Robinson, with the kind permission of Mark Rand, ph2 — courtesy of the Settle and Carlisle Railway

*The full story of Settle's navvies involved in the building of the Settle and Carlisle Railway are in the project book, **'The Railway Navvies of Settle: the end of the line'**, published by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, available from the project, Settle and Carlisle Railway outlets at Settle and Ribbleshead stations and bookshops in Settle.*

