

Margaret Smith, the oldest woman in the Ancient graveyard

Sarah Ann Tatham, born in 1827, in Gargrave was the daughter of coal merchant Elisha Tatham and his wife Isabella Parkinson. Elisha died, aged just 33, when Sarah was five and Isabella married again. Her second husband was Thomas Hall, another coal merchant who could have been Elisha's business partner. Isabella died during the 1840s.

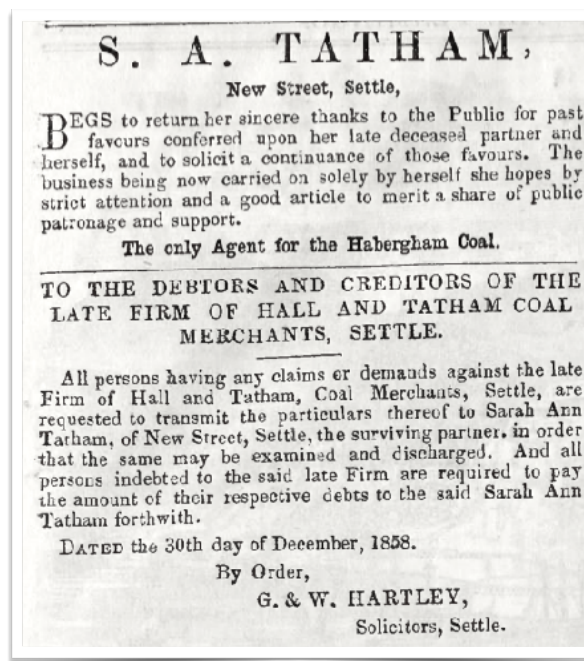
This was a great time to be a coal merchant. Coal was in demand as never before and the railways made it easy to obtain supplies. The Leeds to Lancaster line was built in the late 1840s and the Settle and Carlisle line from 1869-1875.

Thomas Hall went into partnership with his step-son Thomas Edward Tatham but young Thomas died, aged just 29, in 1855. Incredibly Thomas Hall then went into partnership with step-daughter Sarah Ann Tatham. Sarah Ann ran the Settle branch of coal merchants in Duke Street while Thomas worked in Gargrave. Thomas died in 1858, aged 49 and Sarah Ann continued the business with the help of her step-sister Mary Hall. It was exceptionally unusual for unmarried women to run a business and if they did, it was typically dressmaking or confectionery. However the coal trade was thriving, the sisters were skilled in the business and it will have provided a good income.

Meanwhile Abraham Smith, born in 1840, was a cattle dealer and butcher from Bradford. Luck was on his side the day he met Sarah Ann Tatham and they married on 2nd January 1868 in Bradford. Abraham was 28, Sarah Ann was 42. Marriages to older women, especially 13 years older, were poorly regarded by society. As a result, many women in this situation lied about their age, but not Sarah Ann.

By the time of their wedding Sarah Ann was an established business woman and so Abraham gave up the butchery trade and joined her to run the business in Station Road (then New Street). Obviously, despite Sarah Ann's investment and success over the years, the business took on Abraham's name, as the man of the house [LSA].

Sarah Ann died on 9 December 1872, aged 47 after 12 horrendous hours of haematemesis – vomiting blood. Abraham was present at her death and the registrar was John Cowburn. Sarah Ann was probably buried at Gargrave with her parents. Sarah Ann's half sister Mary Hall eventually married a Bradford draper Noah Schofield.



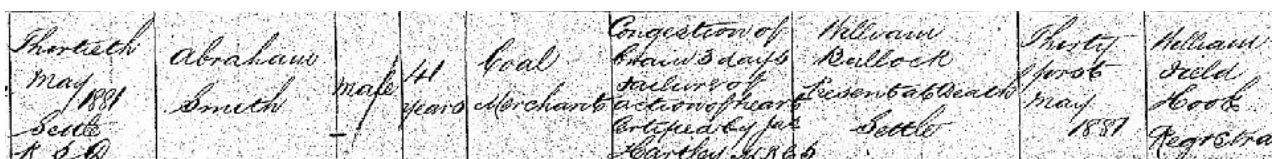
Smith December 1872 S. A. T.	Sarah Ann Smith	Female 47 years	Abraham Smith Coal Merchant	Haematemesis 12 hours - Certified	W. Smith In Attendance Settle	John Cowburn 1872	John Cowburn Registrar
---------------------------------------	--------------------	--------------------	-----------------------------------	--	-------------------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------

Settle Graveyard Project

Abraham continued the business, for a while in partnership with *John Cowburn* [LSA]. In 1875 Abraham married *Ann Wilkinson*, one of 17 children of *William Wilkinson*, another coal dealer in Bradford. They may have been introduced by Sarah Ann Tatham's sister *Dorothea Ellen Tatham* who had married *Henry Wilkinson*, a successful draper who may have been a relation.



In 1881 Abraham suddenly died just after the birth of their third daughter [1]. He died after three days of 'congestion of the brain and failure of the heart'. His death was certified by *James Hartley*, the registrar was *William Field Hook* and *William Bullock* was present at the death. William, the son of *John Bullock* and *Elizabeth Sledding*, was an employee, described as a 'coal merchant's servant'. William died in 1891 and is buried in Old D49.



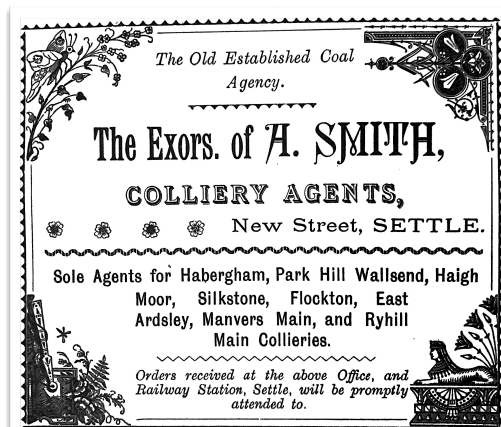
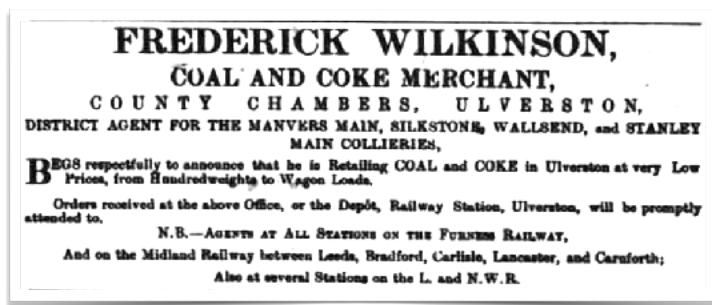
Abraham's death notice said he was 'well known and generally respected' which doesn't sound as good as it could. Abraham's gravestone is in a prime position right next to the church door, an indication of his wealth and position in society.

SETTLE.
SUDDEN DEATH.—On Monday morning last Mr. Abraham Smith, coal merchant, New Road, Settle, died suddenly at his residence. Deceased was well known and generally respected.



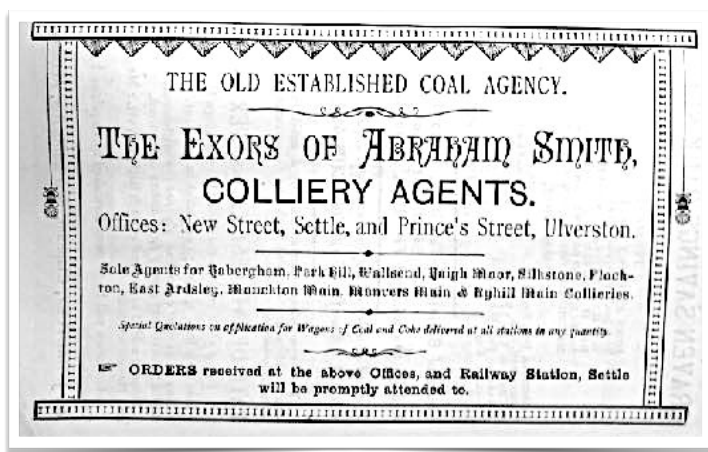
In loving remembrance of Abraham Smith who died May 30th 1881. Also Ann, wife of the above born Jan 21st 1842, died Sep 6th 1931. Also Margaret, eldest daughter of the above died 1st September 1972 in her 96th year, C3

Widow Ann carried on the business with her daughters [LSA] and then lived on 'independent means' which came from Abraham — he left the equivalent of well over £1million at today's value, much of which he should thank Sarah Ann Tatham for. Adverts describe that they were the sole agents for at least ten Collieries and supplied coal to the mills. This was a good business, very well run.



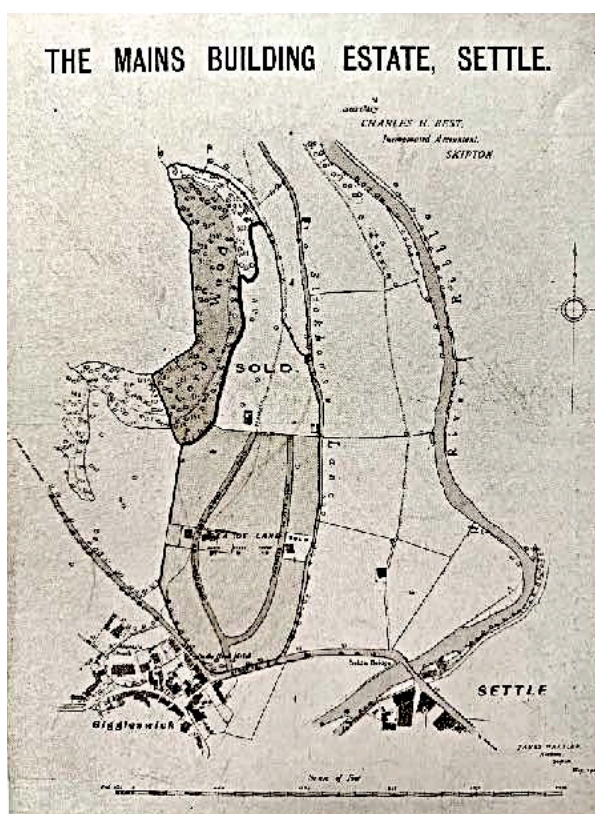
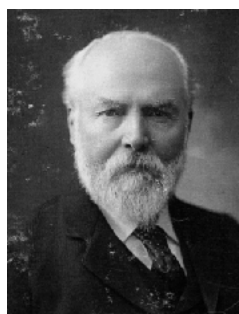
They also had a branch in Ulverston, Lancashire. Ann had a brother, *Frederick Wilkinson* who was a coal agent in Ulverston [2]. He served all stations on the Furness railway. Adverts indicate this partnership had been in place since 1888. Frederick had married *Margaret (Maggie) Dugdale* of Settle [ph3], the daughter of cattle dealer *William Dugdale*.

Settle Graveyard Project



Ann died, aged an impressive 89, in Bradford. Abraham and Ann's daughter **Margaret Smith** was the oldest woman recorded on a gravestone in the Ancient graveyard, aged an even more impressive 95.

On 10th April 1901 at the Methodist Chapel, Abraham and Ann's daughter **Sarah Smith** married an accountant from Bradford, **Charles Henry Best** [ph1 - centre]. Charles was the eldest son of **John Gibson Best** [ph1] whose family had made their fortune in the Bradford woollen mills. Charles may have met Sarah through his work as secretary for the Craven Estates Company of Skipton who had just bought 'a considerable amount of land, comprising what are probably the best and most attractive building sites in this favoured district' [ph2] on The Mains Building Estate in Giggleswick. In a very glossy brochure [ph2]



CRAVEN ESTATES COMPANY, LIMITED

TO SELL OR TO LET.

Detached and semi-detached villas erected upon the Mains Estate, Settle, the finest building land in Craven; due south aspect; magnificent views; subsoil water supply; gas and all modern contrivances.



The houses are most substantially built, conveniently planned and artistically attractive.

Large Gardens. Within easy access of Settle and Giggleswick Stations.



The Craven Estates Co. is prepared to build houses upon the Mains Estate, or elsewhere in the district to suit purchasers. Plans and specifications submitted free of cost. Choice building sites to suit purchasers also for sale.

For further particulars and for illustrated

handbook descriptive of the Company's property and the district generally from a residential point of view apply to the Secretary . . .



Chas. H. Best,
 Mainsfield,
 . . . Settle.

Settle Graveyard Project

the company explained they were building two semi-detached houses and one detached house and *'others will be erected from time to time'*.

Sarah and Charles lived in Mainsfield House, an equally magnificent building, on Stackhouse Lane in Giggleswick. Charles was also a partner in the accountancy firm Best and Turner of Skipton. They were a musical family and insisted that Mainsfield was built with a separate music room for their four children. Charles, a pianist often accompanied Sarah, a soprano in local concerts. They were friends with Dr **Charles William Buck** and his friend Edward Elgar. Charles died in 1918 aged just 43, three years after the birth of their fourth child [ph4]. Like her sister, Sarah lived a long life, to the age of 95 and spent her last years in Kent.

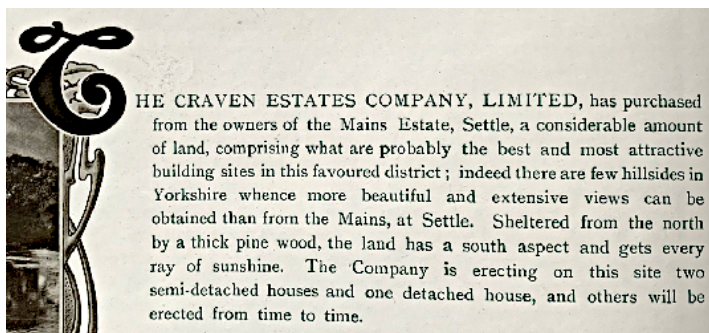
Abraham and Ann's daughter **Amy Smith** married a chemist, **William Edward Metcalfe**, the second son of **George Metcalfe** and his wife **Annie Howson** from Wray near Bentham. George Metcalfe was from Skipton but after his marriage to Annie farmed at Barrel Sykes farm between Settle and Langcliffe. Annie died in 1884, aged 36 and was buried in Giggleswick graveyard with a fine gravestone.

In remembrance of Ann the beloved wife of George Metcalfe, V.S., of Barrel Sykes, Settle, who died Dec'r 18th 1884 aged 36 years. Also the above George Metcalfe M.R.C.V.S. who died at Warwick Nov'r 15th 1933 aged 97 years. B8/62

At the time of the 1891 census, George still lived in Barrel Sykes with his sister-in-law **Ellen Howson** as a housekeeper. George, aged 54, now described himself as a vet and farmer. Traditionally blacksmiths and farriers (shoeing horses) tended to animal health issues, particularly those of horses. George's father had worked as a farrier so he would have had some training. Ann's gravestone indicates George was a 'VS' veterinary surgeon, although the date of stone erection is unknown.

During the rinderpest (cattle plague) in the 1860s and foot and mouth outbreak of 1880 and 1890s there was an increased demand for vets. In 1892 George certified the death of a cow belonging to **William Dugdale** [1], the father-in-law of Frederick Wilkinson (above). The whole of William's livestock would have been slaughtered but there would have been some compensation.

By the time of the 1901 census George lived on Duke Street as a fully fledged veterinary surgeon [LSA] with his 'wife' Ellen and their daughter **Annie Margaret Metcalfe**, although they had not married. It would have been illegal for George to marry Ellen until the



OUTBREAK OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE AT SETTLE.
—On Thursday afternoon Mr. George Metcalfe, veterinary surgeon, Settle, certified that a cow on the farm of Mr. William Dugdale, cattle dealer, Settle, was affected with foot-and-mouth disease, and the usual precautionary measures were at once adopted. The animal had been purchased at Glasgow and subsequently consigned to the Leeds market for sale. Not being sold the beast was, with others, returned to Settle and placed in Mr. Dugdale's low barn, where it is at present. Communications have been opened with the Board of Agriculture.



Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act of 1907 although some clergy ignored this and there are several examples in our graveyard project. (Amidst the joys of historical absurdities, if George had a brother who had died, he would not have been able to marry his brother's widow until the Deceased Brother's Widow's Marriage Act of 1921!). Ellen died in 1907, aged 54 and her probate documentation confirms this confusion. Ellen was buried in Settle in the unmarked *Old FX27*.

METCALFE otherwise **HOWSON** Ellen of Duke-street Settle Yorkshire spinster died 27 June 1907
28 August to George Metcalfe veterinary-surgeon Effects £380 10s.

George moved to Warwickshire with eldest son John Thomas, also a chemist. George was another incredibly long lived man – he was 98 when he died. His obituary [3] suggested he took a degree in Edinburgh which may or may not be the case. It's unlikely a farrier's son would have been able to afford a degree course at Edinburgh and George didn't declare himself a vet until he was in his 50s. When he was 24, George worked as a farm servant to his aunt and uncle near Kirkby Lonsdale. George is more likely to have been one of very many vets who picked up the skills 'on the job'. Formal veterinary qualifications were unusual during the nineteenth century. It wasn't until the Veterinary Surgeons Act of 1948 that veterinary practise was regulated and university degrees courses were recognised as the main route to registration as a vet.

IN HIS 98TH YEAR.
DEATH OF OLD VETERINARY SURGEON.
IN WARWICK.

Probably the oldest veterinary surgeon in Great Britain, and also the oldest resident in Warwick, Mr. George Metcalfe, M.B.C.V.S., of "Nuthurst," Myton- died last week.

In his 98th year, Mr. Metcalfe had lived in four reigns. He was a native of Skipton, Yorkshire, West Riding, and, after taking his degree at Edinburgh, he practised in the Settle (North Ribblesdale) district of the West Riding for over 40 years. About 25 years ago he retired, and had lived with his elder son at Myton for about two years.

In the course of his work he must have ridden many thousands of miles on horseback and in his gig, and he was well-known to farmers and many others in Yorkshire.

He leaves two sons, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

George and Ann's son William Edward Metcalfe married Amy Smith in Settle in 1910 and worked as a chemist in Shipley. The longevity continued. Amy died, aged 72, in 1952 in Shipley and William was 86 when he died.

William Beecroft, the oldest man in the Ancient Graveyard

William was baptised in March 1754 in Ferrybridge, near Pontefract before it was known for its power station and motorway interchange. By 1784 he had worked his way to Settle, and married **Margaret Glover** from Whittington outside Kirkby Lonsdale. They had three daughters although little **Margaret** died aged 4. Wife Margaret died in 1814 at a perfectly respectable age of 64 and was buried in Giggleswick graveyard. Daughter **Agnes** married **James Dodgson** from Skipton but died in 1837, aged 48.

Daughter **Nancy** didn't marry and stayed with William who earned a living as a labourer. In the 1851 census returns they were recorded living in High Street, near the Talbot Inn and William, aged 97, was a 'pauper and retired labourer'.

In July 1851, William and Nancy had

the case was dismissed.—Matthew Hutchinson, a shoemaker's apprentice, and Joseph Harper, a joiner's apprentice, were summoned for having, as it was alleged, thrown down a part of a wall said to be the property of **William Beecroft**. The complainant was old Nancy **Beecroft**, who has the keeping of the keys opening to "Castleberg." These lads were, to Nancy's great astonishment, found comfortably seated in the easy chair which stands at the foot of the great hill, without having applied to her for admittance. It seems they deemed application to her unnecessary, and had got over the wall, and hence arose this complaint before the magistrates. Mr Robinson appeared on behalf of both the defendants: and as the old woman would not swear that the lads had knocked the wall down (although in her information), the magistrates dismissed the case.

Settle Graveyard Project

some trouble with a couple of local lads who knocked down a wall at their property. 'Old Nancy Beecroft', aged just 54, kept the keys to Castleberg Crag. The lads just climbed over the wall and sat 'in an easy chair at the foot of the hill'[4],

William eventually died on 24 February 1852, aged 98, according to his death and burial records. One newspaper credited him the age of 99 [5] and another as 'the oldest inhabitant'[1]. He died on the same day as the well known surgeon *Thomas Robinson*.

On the 24th instant, at Settle, Mr. Thomas Robinson, surgeon, aged 59.
Same day and place, Mr. William Beecroft, at the advanced age of 99.

Settle.—On Wednesday last, Mr. William Beecroft. He was the oldest inhabitant, and died at the advanced age of 98 years.

Daughter Nancy stayed in the same house, working as a seamstress and died in 1862 at the good age of 75. They are buried together in an unmarked grave in plot AX1 of the Ancient Graveyard outside the back wall of the church.



The members of the '90 and overs' club in the Ancient (earliest section) graveyard are:

William Beecroft, aged 98 in 1852, in an unmarked grave (above)

Margaret Smith, aged 95 in 1972, commemorated on a gravestone (above)

Elizabeth Stansfeld, aged 93 in 1931, the spinster daughter of George Stansfeld and Lydia Birkbeck at Ashfield.

Margaret (Foster) Buck, aged 92 in 1852, the widow of Michael Buck who had died in 1803 and mother of ten children, buried in an unmarked grave.

Harriet (Oyston) Anderson, aged 92 in 1904, the mother-in-law of Edwin Septimus Green, the surgeon dragged to death by his horse when he was just 27.

Mary (Holden) Harger, aged 91 in 1878, the widow of William Harger, farmer and mother of seven daughters.

William Bilton, aged 91 in 1871, a saddler who ran his business from the Town Hall

Alphonsine Sarah Jarry, aged 90 in 1912, one of the two wealthy spinster sisters who lived on Constitution Hill and whose father escaped Versailles in the French Revolution.

Thomas Guy, aged 90 in 1867, after a life as an agricultural labourer, in an unmarked grave with no known relations in the graveyard.

Six of our nine eldest residents were women. Six of them are remembered on a gravestone and were not from a working class background. William Beecroft did really well didn't he?

We won't look at the youngest burials like this – far too depressing.



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. Life stories can be found on dalescommunityarchives.org.uk, 'settle graveyard project'. The 'Old Settle' family tree on ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project

Settle Graveyard Project

is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

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

Newspaper cutting with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Lancaster Gazette, 2 – Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser, 3 – Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser, 4 – Kendal Mercury, 5 – Westmorland Gazette

ph1 – credited to descendants on ancestry.co.uk, username Hel6591, ph2 – with the kind permission of John Reid, ph3 – with the kind permission of relation Pam Jordan, including the photo of Maggie by A Horner, ph4 – Bill Mitchell's book Elgar in the Yorkshire Dales