

## Benjamin Woolerton, navy and his accident prone family

The graveyard contains the bodies of numerous heroes and heroines with impressive gravestones. There are a few characters who made their name in other ways, but there were hundreds of burials of ordinary folk who worked hard throughout their lives and are buried in unmarked graves. The Woolertons were one such family, trying to make a living by taking the opportunities provided by the railway mania of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, they had more than their fair share of bad luck.

**Benjamin Woolerton**, born in 1847 in Morpeth, Northumberland was the eldest son of **George Woolerton**, a sawyer, and his wife **Mary Short**. George and Mary had travelled all around the country to find work – Morpeth, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Bedford, Cambridgeshire, Chorley and Kirkby Lonsdale. By 1871 George, Mary and three sons found themselves in Tams Street, Giggleswick. As skilled tradesmen, sawyers and carpenters were in demand for the building of the Settle to Carlisle railway and would have been paid relatively well. George died in 1872, aged 58 and is buried in the Ancient graveyard. Mary joined her sons **Benjamin**, **John** and **George** who were all working up at Ribbleshead. In 1877, at Chapel-le-Dale, 62 year old Mary married a widowed railway labourer **George Drury** and they moved away.

Whilst passing through Saffron Walden Benjamin had met and married **Betsy Sell**. At the time of the 1871 census, Benjamin, also a sawyer, Betsy and their four children lived next door to George and Mary in Tams Street. For some reason Benjamin became a general railway labourer. Betsy remained industrious giving birth to 12 children, some of them whilst Benjamin was working at Ribbleshead. They settled back in Settle in Church Street and then in Craven Cottages.

Benjamin Woolerton	Head	Mar	34	Railway Labourer	Northumb. Morpeth
Elizabeth	Wife	do	33		Widow Saffron Walden
William	Son		14	(Weaver) Cotton Mill	do do
Benjamin	do		13	(Gardener)	Surrey Cumberwell
Annie	Daughter		11	(Bobbin Carrier)	Widow Drisham
John	Son		9	Scholar	Yorkshire Giggleswick
Emma	Daughter		7	do	do Settle
Elizabeth	do		5	do	do Ribbleshead
Mary J	do		3		do do
George	Son		2		do Settle

Despite such a physical job Benjamin lived to the age of 82 and Betsy to the age of 71. They are buried in the unmarked *Old grave AX15* with two daughters Emma, aged 14, and Mary Anne (Annie), aged 17. Annie had a tragic death in 1887 whilst working as a servant for **Dr William Marshall Watts**, a Professor of Chemistry and Physics, teaching at Giggleswick school, who lived at Prospect Terrace [LSA, 1]. Her dress caught fire on the gas stove and, in her panic, Annie ran from room to room which would have made her dress burn faster. She survived for 40 agonising hours and was attended by **Dr Edgar**.

### A DOMESTIC SERVANT BURN'T TO DEATH AT SETTLE.

About nine o'clock on Friday morning a domestic servant named Annie Woolerton (17), in the service of Dr Watt, at Prospect Terrace, Settle, whilst engaged upon her household duties had her back turned for the moment to a gas stove. Her dress caught fire, and she ran from room to room, the flames being fanned by the rapid progression, the apartments being set on fire. The barking and demonstrations of a dog attracted the attention of the neighbours, who found the girl in the attic dreadfully burnt. Dr Edgar was soon in attendance. The girl died yesterday morning, after enduring great pain for forty hours. The fires in the rooms were extinguished by the neighbours.

18—M. A. Woolerton, a domestic servant, accidentally burnt to death at Settle.—Annual meeting of the Low Bentham Cricket Club.

## Settle Graveyard Project



Benjamin and Betsy's eldest son **William** stayed in Settle, living on Procter's Row and working as a railway platelayer. His wife, **Elizabeth Hedley**, was from Durham and had spent her life in domestic service at Barnard Castle and Tadcaster. When they married [ph2] Elizabeth already had a daughter, **Emily Annie Hedley**, who was brought up in Durham by her grandparents but still had regular contact with her mum in Settle. They married on 9 March 1899 and son Benjamin was born three months later. It's not clear how William and Elizabeth met. Emily Annie married carpenter **Robert Armstrong** and they had a delightful photo [ph2] taken by the Horners when they visited Settle from Darlington.



Descendants remember that William was known to play the tuba and walked across the fields, playing the instrument, to practice with Giggleswick Brass Band. In the 1920s the family moved to live in the Railway Cottages by Cammock Lane until Elizabeth died and then William lived with Benjamin and his family in High Hill Grove Street.

Their son **Benjamin** had a nasty accident when he was eight [LSA] breaking his leg when a stone from a wall fell on him. He was taken to Leeds infirmary and recovered, fortunately. He worked as a grocer and married **Kate Stapleton Edmond**.

2. Sad accident to a boy named Benjamin Woollerton, son of Mr William Woollerton, Procter's Row, Settle, who, whilst playing on the wall of the cricket field, released one of the top-stones, which fell on the top of him, and broke his leg badly; he was removed to Leeds Infirmary.—Harvest Thanksgiving

## Settle Graveyard Project

William and Elizabeth had another son, **John Wilfred**, after Benjamin. Descendants have records describing that son **John Wilfred 'Wilf'** worked for the Midland Railway. Unfortunately he died, aged 18, '*as a result of a shunting accident*' in which his heart muscles were sprained by over lifting two years before.

muscles of heart sprained by overlifting 28.6.8 13/

William and Elizabeth, their son Wilf and Benjamin and Kate and are buried together in the *Old graveyard H25*. That's a full grave.

*Peace, peace, peace. In Loving Memory of John Wilfred, beloved son of William and Elizabeth Woolerton of Settle who died October 29th 1920 Aged 18 years. Also Elizabeth wife of William Woolerton Died Dec 15th 1935 Aged 72 years Also the above William Woolerton Died August 23rd 1952 Aged 84 years, Benjamin Woolerton died November 2nd 1986 Aged 87 years. Kate Stapleton, beloved wife of Benjamin 21.7.1909 - 8.9.1999, remembered with Love, Old H25*



Benjamin and Betsy's daughter **Mary Jane Woolerton** married **Edgar William Brown**, a railway platelayer who became a postman. Edgar's nephew **Alan James Brown** was an extremely successful athlete winning numerous awards [ph3]. He started life as a tailor but became a policeman after a short spell in the army. His records tell us he was 5 foot 9 inches tall. On his left forearm he had tattoos of two women and on his right forearm had a tattoo of Buffalo Bill and Faith Hope and Charity. Unfortunately he died in 1921 aged just 36.



... Two women tattooed left forearm Buffalo Bill & Faith Hope & Charity on right forearm. ... Ligglerwick

Going back a generation, several of Benjamin and Betsy's children populate the graveyard in unmarked graves. Son **George Woolerton**, aged 20, also had a bad accident, breaking his arm and injuring his back at Watershed Mill [LSA] where he worked as an overlooker. George and his wife **Clara Edith Ward** are in *New HX1* and close by in *New FX1* **Frank Woolerton** and his wife **Minnie Howard** are buried. Bachelors **John** and **Harry Woolerton**, both labourers, are in the grave *New KX10*.

9. Accident to a young man named George Woolerton, at the Shed Mill, Settle, who had his arm broken in three places and also sustained severe injuries to his back.

On 13 December 1916 Benjamin and Betsy's daughter **Ellen Woolerton** married **Charles Peachey** [ph1] who had worked in the Bradford woollen mills and also became a sergeant in the 1/6th Duke of Wellington regiment. After serving for two and a half years, at the beginning of November 1917, Charles was awarded a Military medal for gallant conduct on the field. Charles had only been back in the trenches for a week when he was one of three men from the same regiment killed by shellfire on the Western Front on 11 December 1917. Thirty years later Ellen married engineer **Thomas Preston Lord**, the grandson of preacher **John Lord**. Ellen was 86 when she died and is buried with Thomas in *New IX44*.



Benjamin and Betsy's youngest child **Fred Woolerton** served in the war as a gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery, known as the 'technical' branch of the Royal Artillery. After the war Fred

became a policeman. He married the wonderfully named **Lettis Frisby**, a gardener's daughter from Lincolnshire. She had come to the area to work in domestic service, most likely for **William Peverill Turnbull**, a retired inspector of schools, who lived at Holly Bank in Giggleswick with his large family and array of servants. Fred and Lettis moved to live in Darwen, Lancashire with their family.



Going back a further generation, Benjamin's younger brothers **John** and **George** had also moved to Giggleswick and then to Ribbleshead. John married **Jane Elizabeth Goss**, the daughter of **Henry Goss**, another carpenter who found work on the Settle and Carlisle railway. They married at Chapel-le-Dale in 1874. Unfortunately John died, aged just 33, in London. Jane Elizabeth married a labourer **Thomas Webster** who seemed happy to take on John's three children.

Benjamin's brother **George Woolerton** was an elusive man, which is always a bit suspicious. In 1880 he married **Emma Currin** from Crick, Northamptonshire. At the time of the following two censuses Emma lived firstly with George's parents in Giggleswick and then with three daughters in Crick but with no sign of George. George was a bit busy elsewhere it seems. In 1881 George was ordered to pay out 2 shillings a week to **Joanna Pike** as maintenance for her daughter **Kate Ethel Pike** whom George had fathered, just a few weeks before his marriage to Emma. Naughty George. Wife

Joanna Pike, of Crick, obtained an order for 2s, a week against George Woolerton, a married man, a Sawyer on the new line of railway at Crick.

Emma died aged 33 at the birth of a fourth daughter. The girls were brought up by Emma's sister. Within a year George had married **Mary Emily Collinson** but by the next census return described himself as a single man. George died aged 69.

What happened to George's illegitimate daughter? George would have had to pay quite a bit of maintenance as Kate Ethel survived and was brought up by her Pike grandparents. Kate Ethel had an illegitimate son of her own, **Horace John Pike**, and then moved to Willesden, West London and lived with a labourer **Richard Warren**. She had four children with him before they married in 1916, just before Richard served in the war for the Navy. They had another daughter after the war.

Meanwhile Kate Ethel's mother, Joanna Pike, lived most of her life in Chester with her younger sister **Martha** who had married a book keeper **Thomas Hughes**. Incredibly, in 1935, at the age of 72, Joanna became the second wife of 80 year old **Ernest Albert Thwaites**, who had held a 'responsible position' at Lloyds Bank in Chester [3]. A year later Ernest had to go into a nursing home and died two years after that. Perhaps Joanna had been his nurse or housekeeper? Whether she had or not, it's never too late for love.

### Mr. Ernest A. Thwaites.

His many friends in Chester, and particularly former colleagues at Lloyds Bank, heard with regret of the death of Mr. Ernest Albert Thwaites, which occurred at the Fairholme Nursing Home, Woodlands-road, Hough Green, on Thursday last week, in his 84th year. Mr. Thwaites, who had lived at the Nursing Home for the past two years, held, until his retirement some years ago, a responsible position at the Chester branch of Lloyds Bank, Foregate-street. With his wife, he was a regular attendant at St. Peter's Church, Chester. He is survived by a widow, one son—Mr Arthur Thwaites, who is a member of the staff of the Newbury branch of Lloyds Bank—and one daughter



## *Settle Graveyard Project*

*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.*

*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](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'.*

*Thanks to descendant Margaret (Armstrong) Cole for information and photos in this account. Illustrations by Teresa Gordon. The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.*

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

*Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Shields daily news, 2 – Northampton Mercury, 3 – Cheshire Observer*

*ph1 – photo credited to Craven's Part in the Great War, ph2 – kindly provided by descendant Margaret (Armstrong) Cole, ph3 – credited to the Ben Mackenzie Collection*