

The Halpins, fighting for a good life

John Halpin and his wife **Mary Kelly** were from County Clare in Ireland. Halpin and Kelly are both common Irish names so it's difficult to find out much more about their background. John was a labourer and Mary found employment in mills whilst having children. In 1866 they lived in Clifford, between Leeds and York for the birth of daughter **Ellen Halpin**. They were back in Ireland for the births of the next three children and then returned to the Ripon area for the last three. By the time of the 1891 census the family were in Ellwood cottages in Langcliffe with John and some sons working at the limeworks and others at the paper mill.

Their move to this area could have been prompted by an incident in 1885. John took **Louis Ascough** to court for assaulting him and his wife. They were all drunk and it's not obvious why the fight took place apart from the fact that the Halpins were Irish and Ascough didn't like that. Even one of the judges, Colonel Compton, told Mary, *'the Irish were always getting drunk on a Saturday night'*[4]. As it appeared to be six of one and half a dozen of the other, both Ascough and Halpin were fined £2 10s.

The eldest three children settled in Barrow-in-Furness. The Barrow peninsula iron ore and steel industries had really taken off in the late 19th century so there was plenty of work. It seems the first to leave was eldest daughter **Ellen Halpin** who married **Edward McVeigh** in 1886. He had come over from Ireland with his widowed mother to Bentham. Once married, Edward found work in Barrow as an iron cooper while Ellen gave birth to 12 children, although four died in infancy. A wonderful family photo shows four generations of this family — Edward and Ellen with their daughter Ellen, Ellen's daughter Clara and Clara's baby Edward [ph1]. The original Edward died in December 1902, aged 41 and youngest daughter, Winifred, was born in April 1903. Who knows how many more Ellen would have had if Edward had lived longer? After Edward died Ellen moved to Rochdale where her children brought in money from the mills and laundry work.

CHARGE OF ASSAULT.
Louis Ascough, of Mickley, labourer, was charged with assaulting Mary, the wife of John Halpin, of Mickley, labourer, on the 28th August. Mr. Coppin he (Colonel Compton) told her she had better go home, remarking that the Irish were always getting drunk on Saturday night. She replied, his face. Cross-examined, her niece panned him and told him to go home. She did not hear defendant say "you Irish are all in a band," nor did her husband knock defendant down and say he would give him Irish. Her husband did not touch him until he struck her and her niece did not throw stones at defendant when he was down on the ground insensible, nor did her husband kick him when he was down. She would not say how many times her husband struck him before he fell—it was quite dark. Her husband was out about 5 or 10 minutes.



John and Mary's eldest son, **John Halpin**, went to Barrow and lived with Edward and Ellen, despite the number of small children living with them and found employment as a steelworks labourer. Second daughter **Bridget Halpin** must have visited her siblings too. In 1898 she married **Arthur Boylen**, another steelworks labourer who worked on the Bessemer blast furnace, the first automated steel production system. He was from Dungannon, County Tyrone in Northern Ireland and had been in Barrow since 1891. Arthur and Bridget had six children. Brother John had moved in with them by the time of the 1901 census so perhaps he really did like small children? In October 1901 John, aged 31, married **Ellen Swift** and they had six children of their own over the next ten years. In 1906 John had a serious accident at work when demolishing an old shed with

other men. He fell about 34 feet and had a 'severe fracture to his left thigh and injuries to his shoulders, face and head'. Fortunately, he recovered [3].

John and Mary's next son **Patrick Halpin** stayed closer to home. He married **Mary Jane Sheldrick** who was one of 12 children of **Thomas Sheldrick/Sheldrake**, a fish dealer and his wife **Elizabeth Ellison Capenhurst**. Elizabeth was the result of a liaison between **Louisa Matilda Capenhurst** from Leicester and a Settle butcher, **Thomas Ellison**, who were unmarried. Unusually, little Elizabeth was brought up by her dad, Thomas Ellison who married someone else when she was five. Louisa Matilda? She married a railway labourer, **Joseph Hague**, when Elizabeth was three and went on to have another ten children in Derbyshire. Perhaps Joseph would not have anything to do with another man's child? There are a lot of fertile families in this account, however, Patrick and Mary Jane had just three children and lived in Barnoldswick, making a living from the mills.

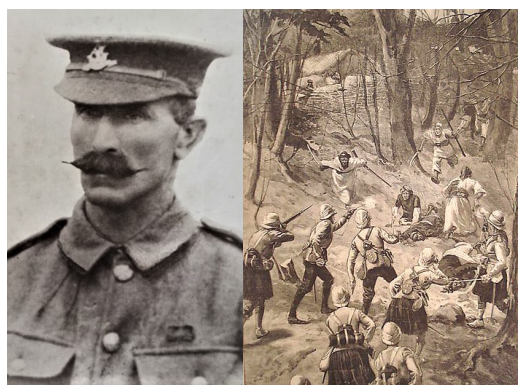
John and Mary's youngest daughter **Margaret Halpin** married the boy next door, sort of. We know Margaret was brought up at Ellwood cottages in Langcliffe and, in 1891, the Ormrod/Ormerod family with parents **John Ormrod**, a labourer from Clapham and his wife **Elizabeth Green** from Wigan lived further along the row. Incredibly John and Elizabeth had 11 daughters and five sons! It was eldest son, **John Ormrod** who caught Margaret's eye. When they married, John was 36 and Margaret was 31 and before marrying John had quite an adventurous life.

Aged 18/19, John got into so many scrapes that he was placed on the 'Habitual Criminals Register'. Helpfully this tells us that he had brown hair and blue eyes, was 5 foot 6 inches tall with a long face, a birthmark near his left armpit, scars on his third left finger, a mole on the back of his neck and left shoulder blade. His offences had been in 1888 and 1889 whilst working as a farm servant near Slaidburn. He pleaded guilty to embezzling money from his employer and stealing five hens and was imprisoned for six calendar months with hard labour followed by two years police supervision [1]. Oh dear.

NEWTON—EMBEZZLEMENT BY A FARM SERVANT.—At the Bolton-by-Bowland Petty Sessions yesterday—before Messrs Ralph Assheton and C. B. E. Wright—**John Ormerod**, a farm servant, was charged with having, on the night of the 22d inst., entered the dwelling-house of his late master, Mr **John Booth**, farmer, Meanley Farm, Newton, and abstracted from a drawer in the kitchen the sum of 2s. 8d. Prisoner was further charged

Once out of prison John worked in the Ingleton quarries. On 30 March 1893 widow **Ellen (Hardacre) Brocklehurst** gave birth to a baby daughter, **Florence Beatrice Brocklehurst**. Her husband, **Westby Brocklehurst** had died in 1890, just a few months after their marriage. On the church baptism records Ellen named John Ormrod as Florence Beatrice's father. This might have something to do with the fact that, on 6th August 1892, aged 21, John signed up to join the East Lancashire Regiment and served for 12 years and 92 days [ph2]. This was possibly the making of John.

John served in the UK, Gibraltar, India and Burma. John was one of 15,000 British men involved in the Chitral Expedition of 1895 during which the British relieved the Chitral Fort from a siege [ph3]. Chitral is in the northern Khyber region of Pakistan and was of strategic significance as a possible route for Russian invasion of India. It was regarded as a huge victory. The Viceroy of India said, 'The military skill displayed in the conducting of the defence, the cheerful endurance of all the hardship of the siege, the gallant demeanour of the troops and the conspicuous example of heroism and intrepidity recorded, will ever be remembered as forming



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a glorious episode in the history of the Indian Empire and its army. John received the India medal with a clasp for the Relief of Chitral.

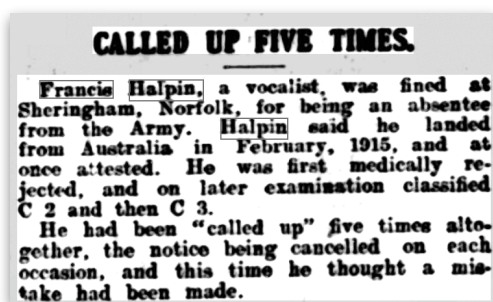
John left the army in 1904, returned home and married Margaret in 1907. John worked in the Horton-in-Ribblesdale lime kilns while Margaret gave birth to five children and then the family moved to Burnley to run a dairy farm. Margaret was only 45 when she died in 1921. John and Margaret's son **Francis Ormrod** [ph2] married his cousin **Florence Emmeline Ormrod** who was the daughter of John's brother **Miles Ormrod**. One of our readers remembers some of the Ormrod family living at 2 Middle Fold, Langcliffe. They remember their ancestors with some friends, built the steps down to Catrigg Force outside Stainforth.



At the time of the 1911 census John and Margaret had a visitor, **Francis Halpin**, Margaret's brother, born in 1880 near Ripon. Francis chose a completely different career being a professional '*stage vocalist and actor*' with a fine baritone voice. As well as being a real bonus for Settle Amateur Operatic Society [ph4] he toured the country with the Moody Manners and Carl Rosa Opera Company (which still performs to this day). Incidentally, the Carl Rosa Opera Company was on the first train from Sheffield to Scotland on the newly opened Settle to Carlisle Railway on 1 May 1876. *The Era* gave excellent accounts of his performances in Goole, Great Yarmouth and Dudley amongst others. He toured South Africa and Australia with the Sidney James Company.



In December 1916 Francis married **Lucy Elsie Green**, a farm bailiff's daughter from Skirlaugh, north-east of Hull — He must have met her on tour. When war was declared Francis attempted to sign up but had been rejected by the medical boards on several occasions, being '*a man of about 16 stones*' weight. After returning from a tour of Australia just months later, Francis was performing in Sheringham, Norfolk, with the '*Maids and Middies Concert Company*'. He had delighted large audiences in the district '*because it was a real pleasure to sit and hear his beautiful rendering of his well-chosen songs*'. Unfortunately, whilst performing, he was arrested '*for being an absentee from the army*' [2] — Francis thought it was a mistake as he had been called up five times previously but then had his notice cancelled. He was fined 40 shillings and immediately handed over to a military escort. He officially signed up on 10 March 1917.



Francis [ph5] was eventually passed medically fit in the C3 category — the lowest category, usually for sedentary or non-fighting roles. He was enrolled into the Labour Corps which was formed in 1917, initially for men with limited fitness to do manual and skilled labour on the docks and railways. Later they dug trenches



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and cooked, cleaned, carried and cared for the soldiers on the front line and behind the lines. They built roads and railways, carried the wounded and buried the dead. By the end of the war, the Labour Corps had a strength of about 380,000 men.

A report in the Craven Herald [CH] described 'Before he had worn khaki for less than a fortnight he was shipped from Skipton Camp to France, arriving there on March 26th.' By July 10th he was so ill he was sent to Netley Hospital, Southampton and then to Paisley, Glasgow. His records describe had 'a history of loss of memory, restlessness' and blood in his urine. 'On admission he was found to be suffering from well marked general paralysis of the insane. The following day he developed bronchial pneumonia, gradually sank and died at 8.15pm on 17 July 1917. His illness was aggravated by active service.'

On admission he was found to be suffering from well marked general paralysis of the insane. The following day he developed bronchial pneumonia, gradually sank and died at 8-15 p.m. on 17/7/17. His illness was aggravated by Active Service.

Poor Francis was obviously not cut out for military service. His body was returned to Settle for a Catholic service by Rev Father Tillman before burial in Holy Ascension graveyard in Old H18. What a waste of a life. His parents joined him there later.

Sacred to the Memory of Francis, the Beloved Husband of Elsie Halpin who died July 17th 1917 Aged 38. Also Mary, mother of the above who died July 2nd 1924, aged 89, also John, father of the above, died Feb 19th, 1927, aged 89



John and Mary's youngest son **William Halpin** was a limestone quarryman when he married **Mary Hogan**, also from County Clare, in 1910. In 1923 they took their four sons and emigrated to New York and claimed naturalisation in 1924, settling in New York. William worked as a hotel porter and Mary had several children.

Several other John Halpins have made the headlines, unfortunately for bad reasons and some of these may have been related to our John Halpin. One held the record for cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats in the early 1900s but then had numerous court appearances for stealing bicycles. Another was a stage manager and agent in London who faced several counts of obtaining money from his clients under false pretences. Another John Halpin, in Rochdale, was accused but found not guilty of murdering his wife Mary. Oh dear.



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 settlerearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Yorkshire Post, 2 – Bicester Chronicle, 3 – Millom Gazette, 4 – Knaresborough Post

ph1 – photo credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username Christine Tucker, ph2 – credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username Georgina Ormrod, ph3 – 'A skirmish at

settlerearch@gmail.com

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Chitral' credited to Wikipedia, author A D Gardyne, ph4 – kindly provided by the Settle Amateur Operatic Society, thanks to John Reid, ph5 – credited to Craven's Part in the Great War

CH - with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer