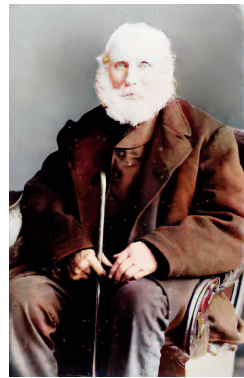


## Alice (Osborn) Southam

**Alice Osborn**, born in 1836, was one of eight children of **George Osborn** and his wife **Ann Stock** [ph1] who were agricultural labourers in Bedfordshire. Most of the children stayed in agricultural labouring and had families of their own in Bedfordshire. If Alice looked anything like her sister **Mary Ann Osborn** we have a clue as to her appearance. Mary Ann married **John Windsor Dunham**, a carpenter's son, in 1849 and they immediately emigrated to Australia to have their family and several photos taken. [ph1,2]



Incredibly Alice's father, George Osborn and her brother-in-law's father, **John Dunham** both found themselves in Bedfordshire Gaol in 1822 for '*failing to pay sureties for bastardy*'. It seems they had both fathered illegitimate children before they married and weren't happy about paying for this deed. Bedfordshire Gaol records give us a detailed description of them both. George was a single 21 year old 'well looking' labourer, 5 feet 9 inches with light brown hair and light hazel eyes. He was only in prison for one day before paying up. John Dunham was in prison for two days. He was a single 20 year old labourer with a scar on his forehead. He was 5 feet 4 inches with brown hair and grey eyes. John was made to work in the prison mill during his short stay. Both of them were reported to have '*good conduct*'. We have no more information about their alleged misdemeanours. What a coincidence their children should marry some 28 years later!

What were these sureties all about?

Illegitimacy has been a thorny issue throughout history and the strategies used to 'deal' with it tell us much about society's values at the time. In the medieval feudal system, if the father of a child was not known mothers and their illegitimate children would be supported by '*poor relief*' raised from taxes in the local community. Obviously, this wasn't very popular with the tax payers but there were very few cases in those days.

- In 1576 the '*Act for setting the poor on work and avoiding idleness*' encouraged parishes to name and shame the woman. This idea was to encourage the community to insist on a marriage or give the child to family members who could support them.
- By 1609 mothers of illegitimate children could be sent to a '*House of Correction*' for a year as a deterrent, however it had the effect of increasing infanticide. So, in 1624 an '*Act to prevent the destroying and murdering of Bastard children*' was introduced with a punishment of death if a

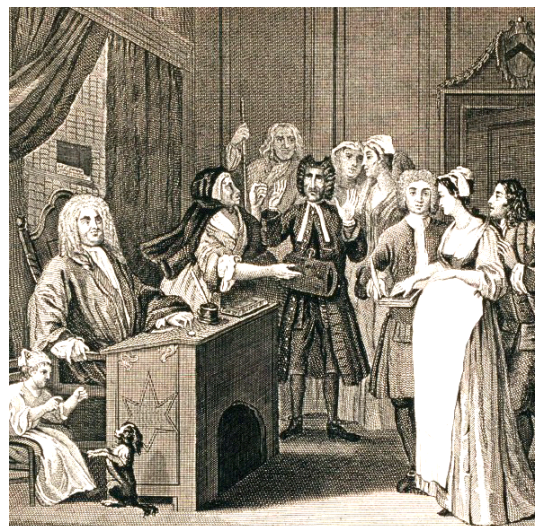
baby was found dead. One witness was required to 'prove' a still birth. It was a bit of a postcode lottery and in some places women were whipped and beaten.

We have already met **Joseph Wright Greenwood** (see **Nelson**), the illegitimate son of **Joseph Wright** and **Esther Greenwood** — back in the 1750s Joseph and Esther were 'caught fornicating' and, as a result, Esther was brought to the church wrapped in a white sheet on three consecutive Sundays and chastised in front of the congregation. However, Esther was already pregnant with the first Joseph Wright Greenwood (and numerous descendants named Joseph Wright Greenwood followed). Joseph's 'punishment' was to be sent into the army and he probably took part in the North American seven year war with the French. When he returned in 1764 Joseph and Esther married and had several other children [A]. Their 2x great granddaughter, **Elizabeth Greenwood** married **James Nelson**, the son of Settle shoemaker **Titus Nelson**.

The population increased dramatically through the 18th century and so did the poor law costs. Attendance and the moral influence of the church had decreased, the number of ale houses rocketed and Royal behaviour didn't help. Drinking, smoking and womanising were all fashionable. The 15 children (mainly sons) of King George III had 56 illegitimate children between them, with just a handful of legitimate ones. Inevitably the number of illegitimate children across the country rose [ph4]. Between 1600-1650 numbers were estimated at 0.69% of all births but between 1750-1800 it was up to 10% of all births, the highest in Europe by far. In the 18th century half of all conceptions were out of wedlock and even after many hasty marriages, a fifth of all actual births were recorded as illegitimate.



- To try and stop poor relief payments getting out of control, the 1732 the 'Bastard Child Act' targeted the alleged father, especially if they were rich! An unmarried woman who found herself pregnant was obliged to inform authorities at least 40 days before the birth. Authorities would hold a 'bastardy examination' during which the woman had to tell them who the father was [ph3,4]. The circumstances of the woman and the conception were irrelevant as this was a financial arrangement. The authorities would then approach the father to put pressure on him to marry or to pay weekly maintenance, the amount depending on his income, detailed in a 'bastardy bond'. To cover themselves, in case the man didn't pay up, the authorities could insist on a surety, a returnable financial guarantee, from the father that he would pay for the support of the child until apprenticeship age of 14. If the man failed to pay the mother for the child's maintenance he had to pay the authorities the surety or face a prison sentence.



*The Examination of Mary Brown of Houston  
Single Woman taken upon oath before me Jacob  
A Hay Esq one of his Majesty's Justices of the  
Peace for this County this 11 day of March 1783*

We therefore upon the Examination of the Cause and Circumstance of the Premises, as well upon the Oath of the said *Elizabeth Andrew* as otherwise, do hereby adjudge him the said *Stephen Turner* to be the reputed Father of the said Bastard Child. -

AND thereupon We do Order as well for the better Relief of the said Parish of *Wretton* as for the Sustainment and Relief of the said Bastard Child, that the said *Stephen Turner* shall and do forthwith upon Notice of this our Order, Pay or cause to be Paid to the said Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the said Parish of *Wretton* or to some or one of them the Sum of *Three Pounds and three shillings* for and towards the Lying-in of the said *Elizabeth Andrew* and the Maintenance of the said Bastard Child up to the time of making this our Order.

This is how George Osborn and John Dunham found themselves in Bedford Gaol. The amounts involved were so high, typically £50, that few men could afford this from their own resources, and friends and relatives were often called in to sign the bond as well.

As local authorities continued to struggle to afford poor relief, the 1834 Poor Law insisted all illegitimate children were the responsibility of their mothers and they just had to go to the workhouse if they couldn't cope. Any paternal obligation was removed and this resulted in a new trade in 'baby farming' — accepting custody of a child in exchange for payment. An amendment to the Act allowed a mother to take the father to court for bastardy payments through local petty sessions which, helpfully for us, were often recorded in local newspapers.

Meanwhile, in 1875, aged 39, Alice Osborn became the second wife of **Levi Southam**, a labourer 13 years her elder and an interesting choice of husband. Working class women had few options without the support and income from a husband. Levi appeared in court on several occasions, often for being drunk, on this occasion in 1872 being 'so drunk that he fell down and could not rise'[1]. He also had several appearances for allowing cattle to stray. Levi had at least six children with his first wife, **Sarah Disborough**.

Levi's son, another **Levi Southam**, a cab driver (with a horse and cart) stole some hay and straw from his former employer and sold it to three other cab drivers. He was caught and received three months' imprisonment with hard labour. The Chairman said they had all 'deservedly lost their characters and fully merited the punishments awarded.' [2]. Funnily enough, after this Levi and his family adopted the surname Ross.

**EINSTOW: ANOTHER DRUNKARD.**  
**Levi Southam**, a labourer of middle-age, was charged in his absence with being drunk at Einstow on 28 July. Police-constable Haddow: On Sunday morning, at about one a.m., I found defendant so drunk that he fell down and could not rise.  
The Chairman: He is fined 5s. and 7s. costs; in default, seven days.  
Defendant here entered the court and essayed to speak, but  
Col. Higgins said: We cannot hear you now, as we have already adjudicated. You should have been here at the proper time.

**THE WHOLESALE HAY AND STRAW THEFTS.—**  
**Levi Southam**, 36, coachman, was charged with stealing, and **Joseph Bradford**, 27, **James Bell**, 47, and **James Stillman**, 40, all cab drivers, of Southend, were charged with receiving a quantity of hay and straw, the property of Mr. Henry Brown, Southam's former employer, and Mr. W. J. Keyes, hay and straw merchant. **Southam** pleaded guilty to three separate indictments and was sentenced upon each to one month's hard labour.

Meanwhile, two years after Levi and Alice's wedding, she gave birth to a son, **Harry Edward Osborn Southam**. Levi died in 1898, aged 75. Son Harry started his career as a policeman in Hertfordshire, perhaps making up for his father's misdemeanours. He married **Elizabeth Price** and they had two children, both of whom died in infancy. It was after daughter Dora died in 1907 that Harry, Elizabeth and Alice moved to The Lodge outside Settle where Harry worked as a gamekeeper for the **Birkbeck** family. Alice died in 1914, aged 78. She was buried in *Old G16*

## Settle Graveyard Project

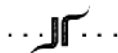


### **Alice Southam died April 14 1914 aged 78 years**

After Alice's death Harry and Elizabeth moved back down south. Harry served as a gamekeeper at the Heatherden Hall estate, a Victorian Country House in Buckinghamshire. At that stage it was owned by a Canadian-born financier, **Walter Grant Morden**, who was the Conservative MP for Brentford and Chiswick from 1918-1931. Due to its secluded location, although only 18 miles west of Central London, Walter used Heatherden Hall [ph5] as a retreat and private meeting place for politicians and diplomats. Walter was declared bankrupt in 1931 (and died in 1932) and Heatherden Hall was purchased by **Charles Boot**, an international contractor who had taken over the running of his father's immensely successful housebuilding business, **Henry Boot & Son**. They built more houses than any other company in the inter-war period. Charles used Heatherden Hall as a Country Retreat for a while. However, he was also the creator of Pinewood Studios and the transformed Heatherden Hall was at the heart of the site — the many trees surrounding the manor served as the inspiration for the name. The house and gardens have been used in numerous productions including *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Bugsy Malone*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *From Russia with Love* (as the *SPECTRE* headquarters) and the *Carry On* films. It has appeared in such television series as *One Foot in the Grave* and *Midsomer Murders*. You can get married there these days, should you want to!



It's not clear what happened to Harry and Elizabeth when Charles Boot arrived but by the 1939 pre-war register they were no longer on the estate and Harry worked as a gardener.



*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 [settlerearch@gmail.com](mailto: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 — Bedfordshire Times and Independent, 2 — Chelmsford Chronicle*

*ph1 — photo credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username Bridget Steuer, ph2 — credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username Carol Goddard, ph3 — pressreader.com, ph4 — the genealogist.com, ph4 — thegenealogycorner.com, ph5 — credited to Wikipedia*

*A — History of the Greenwoods of Howarth, Vol IV*