

Ribblehead Tales . . . **The Hollands**, the heart of Ribblehead

The Settle to Carlisle Railway was constructed between 1869 until the late 1870s. The Hollands were at the heart of life at Ribblehead, on site from the very beginning and there until the end.

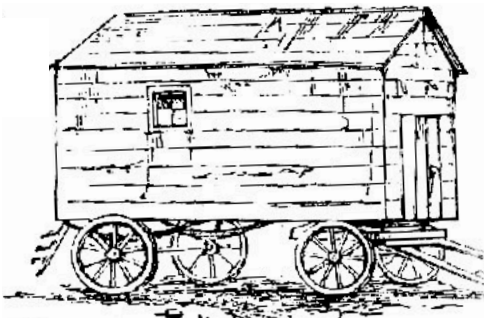
Elizabeth Holliday from Kirton In Lindsey, near Gainsborough in Lincolnshire seems to be have been orphaned from an early age. In 1846, when she was 18, she married **Robert Holland**, an agricultural labourer from Irthlingborough near Wellingborough in Northamptonshire. Elizabeth began on the production of ten children. Helpfully, their birthplaces tell us they lived in Northamptonshire but had a few years in the south of England before arriving in Ribblehead. Soon after their wedding Robert was taken to court on a charge of poaching alongside **Thomas Beech** and **Robert Beech** [2]. Five men were found in a field by **William Hays**, a gamekeeper. The field contained 26 snares, five cudgels and some nets. However, their identity could not be proved and they were let off. It sounds a bit suspicious!

Poaching.

THOMAS BEECH, **ROBERT** BEECH, **ROBERT** HOLLAND, and WILLIAM DRAYTON were charged with having been found poaching in a field in the occupation of Mr. T. F. Gamble, at Hemswell.—**ROBERT** BEECH pleaded guilty.—*William Hays*, head gamekeeper to Sir M. J. Cholmeley, was going his rounds on the 2d of March, when, after hearing a hare squall, he found five men in a field occupied by Mr. Gambles. Hays told them they must go

At the time of the 1851 census Robert worked as a brickmaker. The Ribblehead brickmakers at Sebastopol were the **Rixon family** who also came from Wellingborough so it's possible the families knew each other. The Holland family arrived in Ribblehead at the very beginning of the construction in one of the first caravans [ph1] when experimental borings were taking place. Through the first winter, 1869/70, ten people lived in the caravan, plus some of the surveyors who had nowhere to stay! Other men lived in tents with supplies delivered on the backs of donkeys. At the time of the 1871 census they lived at the Inkerman part of Batty Wife Hole with five daughters, a son-in-law and seven boarders, all from Northamptonshire. There were more

people staying with the Hollands than any other accommodation in Ribblehead — it is thought that Inkerman may have had brick built houses rather than just navy huts. Their neighbours were subcontractors **Job Hirst** and **Francis Moody**, missionary **James Tiplady** and bookkeeper **George Capstick**, surgeon **Frederick Leveson** and three innkeepers, including family friend **James Mathers**. Robert and four more of these men would die before the railway was completed.



Life with the Hollands was wonderfully documented in 1873 by a journalist in the *Chambers Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art* [3]. The journalist referred to them as the 'Pollen' family. Navy work was well paid and, if the temptations of alcohol could be avoided, was potentially lucrative. Robert managed to save sufficient funds to set up a 'Tommy Shop', like a corner shop supplying the hungry navvies with copious supplies of food, 18lb beef a week, clothes and anything else he could sell. This put him at the heart of the community. Elizabeth was described as a selfless, burly navy woman (not surprising after ten pregnancies) '*a robust, powerful, purposeful dame, of immense energy, considerable surface roughness and real genuine kindness of heart.*' She was a generous spirited woman who did her best to

..... While staying in Batty-wife-hole, I became acquainted with a family which I shall call Pollen. The father had been a navy in his earlier days; but having saved a little money, had set up a tommy-shop, and was making money. His wife was a robust, powerful, purposeful dame, of immense energy, considerable surface-roughness, and real genuine kindness of heart. During my stay, I was indebted to this burly navy-woman for several good turns, in connection with

Settle Graveyard Project

decorate the building with paper hangings and pictures from newspapers. She provided navvies with the copious volumes of the statutory 'beef, beer and bread' and welcomed visitors with bacon and buttered toast around the coal fire. The account details the appalling conditions 'As I came up the road...through Inkerman to the mansion of the Pollens [Hollands] the face of the swamp in the watery twilight was alive with navvies...stalking carelessly through the most horrid clinging mire.' The navvies were described as rough diamonds, 'The English navy has his bad points. Very bad points, they are, no doubt, but as a rule they all have a common origin. [Alcohol] But there are many elements of the true pith and ring of the English character; industry like that of a beehive, sturdy toil such as that which was commanded by the builders of the pyramids, firm fellowship and good feeling, above all a sense of the right that man and master alike have to fair-play and honest dealing.' [3]



The article described the respect between the Hollands and their lodgers. Mrs Holland welcomed them to join in vocal and instrumental music (violin, harmonium) with wine, ale, whisky and dancing. However, she didn't put up with any drunkenness or mischief from the navvies. In one encounter she had 'the Wellingborough Pincer by the scruff of his neck and was bounding him towards the door. He struggled a little but Mrs Pollen [Holland] pinioned him with a vice like grip and, with a promptitude and dexterity which won my heartiest admiration, accomplished his ejection...there was a sound as of a heavy body falling; and returning to the bosom of her family, she forbade any of 'her men' from following the 'Pincer' into the darkness whereunto she had relegated him.' You really should not mess with Elizabeth Holland!



with Mrs Pollen is to act. In two strides she had the 'Wellingborough Pincer' by the scruff of the neck, and was bundling him toward the door. He struggled a little, but Mrs Pollen pinioned him with a vice-like grasp, and with a promptitude and dexterity which won my heartiest admiration, accomplished his ejection. I rather think she threw him out; anyhow, there was a sound as of a heavy body falling; and returning to the bosom of her family, she forbade any of 'her men' from following the 'Pincer' into the darkness whereunto she had relegated him. Har-

The Wellingborough Pincer later knocked on the door and apologised and was let back in but, sure enough more trouble ensued and at that point Robert set the dog on him, 'a powerfully built bulldog whose broad chest, strong loins, muscular neck and massive jaw gave evidence of strength and purity of blood, as did the small red eye on unconquerable ferocity'.

settleresearch@

PETTY SESSIONS.—At the Court House, Ingleton, on Friday, June 7, before J. Farrar and J. T. Rice, Esqs, [Thomas] Cryer, of Batty Green, Ingleton Fells, charged Robert Holland, of the same place, with assaulting him. On Whit Tuesday evening, complainant went to Holland's hut, but was put out by Holland's wife, and this occurred twice, Holland at that time being absent. He, however, returned shortly after the above occurrence, when complainant came again to the hut. Holland hearing what had taken place before set his dog at him, which bit the complainant's hands. The evidence was partly corroborated by two witnesses. Holland said he was rather the worse for liquor at the time, so he could not say whether he set the dog on Cryer or not. As it could not be clearly proved whether this was the case, the Bench gave him the benefit of the doubt and dismissed the case on payment of costs. —The same defendant was charged by Supt. Exton with selling beer without a licence. The evidence not being conclusive the case was dismissed. —On Tuesday,

Settle Graveyard Project

Soon after, the 'Wellingborough Pincer' took Robert to court for assault and selling alcohol. The hearing was on 7 June 1872. The newspaper report confirms Robert Holland's identity as 'Mr Pollen' and names the Wellingborough Pincer as **Thomas Cryer** [1]. Both cases were dismissed — Robert was well respected!

Robert had a small brush with the law himself. As a shopkeeper he would frequently make trips to Ingleton for supplies and deliveries and so also worked as a 'carrier' (man with a van, 1870s style). In January 1873 Robert was fined 5 shillings plus costs of 8 shillings 6d for leaving a horse and wagon in Ingleton High Street [1]. In 1874 he was involved in an incident in which **Joseph Beach** stole a woollen scarf and a silk handkerchief valued at 10 shillings. The scarf and handkerchief had been pawned in Leeds six months previously but the owner, now a more wealthy navy, had sent the money to retrieve them and asked for the items to be sent to him at Batty Green. As the carrier, Robert collected the package at Ingleton Station and put them in his top pocket before calling in at the Wheat Sheaf Inn on the way home. Joseph Beach was there and asked for a lift back up to Batty Green. Before leaving Robert popped over to see the landlord and returned to find the package had been removed from his coat and Joseph Beach had disappeared. **PC Goodison** apprehended Joseph and the court sent him to prison for a week, on account of a good character reference [1].

14s.—BREACHES OF THE HIGHWAY ACT: Robert Holland, of Batty Green, was charged with leaving a horse and waggon in the high street of Ingleton, on the 27th ult., without a keeper. The defendant pleaded guilty and was fined 5s. and costs 8s. 6d.—Thomas

address at Batty Green. They were forwarded by rail, as requested, and Robert Holland, a carrier between Ingleton and Batty Green, received them at the station and put them in his top coat pocket with the intention of delivering them at their address. He called at the Wheat Sheaf Hotel, Ingleton, in the way of his business, and found Joseph Beach there, who wanted to ride with him to Batty Green. Holland being called out of

The article [3] also explained that one of Robert's unenviable tasks was to be an unofficial undertaker, transporting the dead down to St Leonard's church for burial. It wasn't unheard of for the coffin bearers to stop off at the Hill Inn for refreshment! Within the three previous years Robert had carted 110 'corps' [bodies] including three of his own children.

church down at Chapel-a-dale, near the head of the valley. Well, in the three years I've toted over a hundred of us down the hill to the little churchyard lying round the church. 'T' other day I had toted one poor fellow down—he were hale and hearty on Thursday, and on Tuesday he were dead o' erinsipalis; and I says to the clerk as how I thought I had toted well nigh on to a hundred down over the beck to Chapel-a-dale. He

'T' other day I had toted one poor fellow down — he were hale and hearty on Thursday and on Tuesday he were dead o' erinsipalis.' This was poor **William Brown**, a stonemason at Bleamoor, aged 37, on 7 November 1871. His death certificate gave the cause of death as *Erysipatous, Inflammation of the Brain*. Erysipelas is a bacterial skin infection, a form of cellulitis. Robert's account explained that some of the dead were sent back to their home towns in a coffin by train. It's not surprising that Robert was the informant for the deaths of several navvies: **Thomas Swanton**, the first navvy to die on 15 August 1870 of epilepsy, **William Davies** who died of smallpox on 7 August 1871, **William Whellake** who died of smallpox on 25 February 1872, and Robert's neighbour **Job Hirst** who died of heart disease on 7 December 1872.

Back with the family, Robert and Elizabeth's ninth child, **Job Holland** made the record books twice. On 18 August 1870 he was baptised, the very first baptism for a child of a Ribbleshead 'navvy'. Perhaps son Job

Aug 1870
No. 434
Job Holland
Elizabeth
Batty Green
Navy
E. Smith
Vicar

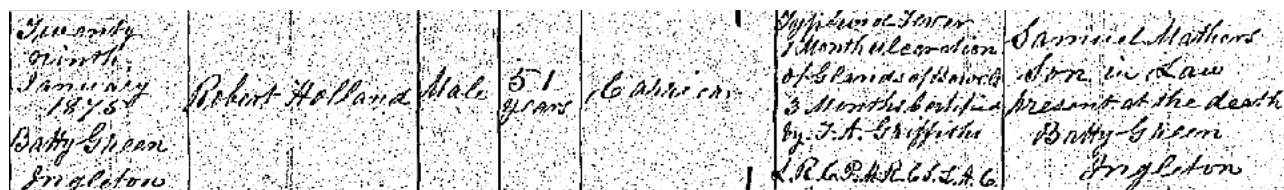
Settle Graveyard Project

was named after their neighbour, Job Hirst, a very popular man? Unfortunately, little infant Job was also one of the first 'navvy'

Ingleton.—On the 20th inst., at Batty Wife Hole, Job, son of Mr. Robert Holland, railway laborer, aged 6 weeks.

burials, dying less than a week later on 20 August, aged 6 weeks [1]. Eighth child **Bob Holland** was buried on 22 Jan 1871 at Inkerman aged two and tenth child **Arthur Ned Holland** was buried 20 Jul 1872, aged 8 months — they never got round to baptising him.

Robert died on 24 January 1875, aged 51, a victim of typhoid from which he had been suffering for one month on top of three month's ulceration of the bowels. Ouch! His occupation was listed as a 'carrier'. The informant was son-in-law Samuel Mathers.



After Robert died, Elizabeth continued the business with the help of some of her daughters. Her three young sons had all died as infants and the only other son, **Thomas Holliday Holland** had stayed in Lincolnshire working as an agricultural labourer. Eldest daughter **Catherine Holland** had also married and stayed in Lincolnshire.

Second daughter **Mary Holland** was married in the third 'navvy' wedding at St Leonard's, just after that of **Archie Cameron**, the policeman. On 6 March 1871 Mary married **Robert James**, another railway labourer. Their addresses were given as 'Inkerman' so it's possible Robert was a lodger at the Holland's hut. They were still there at the time of the 1871 census, a few weeks later. The journalist [3] wrote that in 1873 they lived in a caravan at the gable of the parental hut. They had a daughter, **Elizabeth James**, who was baptised at St Leonard's six months after their wedding. Unfortunately, she was buried in April 1872. Aside from little Elizabeth, Robert and Mary James had a family of eight other children, who all survived living mainly in Lincolnshire with Robert working as a railway platelayer.

According to the report two unmarried daughters were still living with Robert and Elizabeth, 'one an extremely pretty girl of about twenty', who was **Annie Holland**, 'the other considerably younger', **Susan Ann Holland**.

There was a married daughter who lived in a caravan at the gable of the parental hut, and there were two unmarried daughters, one an extremely pretty girl of about twenty, the other considerably younger.

Annie, the 'extremely pretty' third daughter was a witness to sister Mary's wedding to Robert James. In February 1873, when she was 17, Annie gained the unwanted attention of **William Overman** who assaulted her 'with intent'. William, from Norfolk, was a greengrocer who had lived at 85 Sebastopol with his parents. 'On Saturday evening, about seven o'clock, Overman forcibly carried the girl into a stable, shut the door and attempted to commit the offence complained of.' [1] He was found guilty of indecent assault and imprisoned for one month with hard labour, which doesn't seem too harsh. In 1872



On Saturday evening, about seven o'clock, Overman forcibly carried the girl into the stable, shut the door, and attempted to commit the offence complained of.

William had married

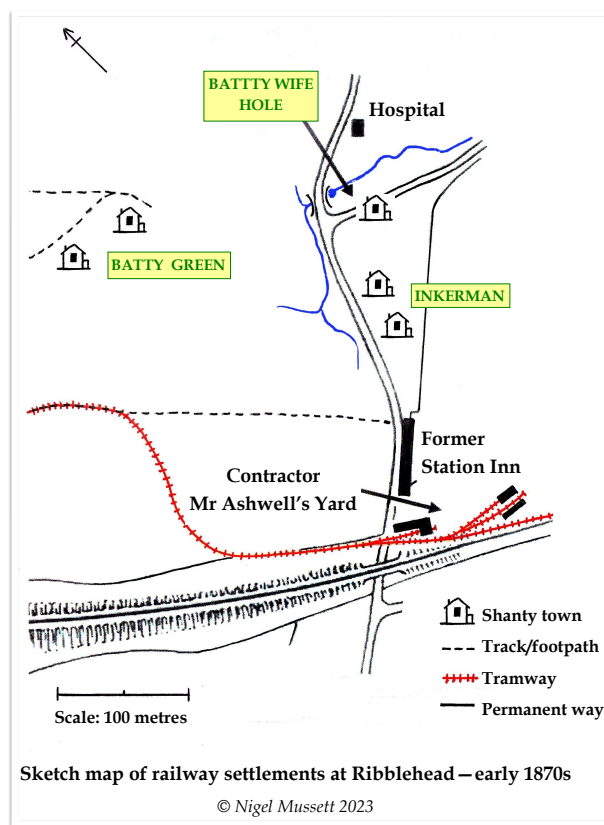
Settle Graveyard Project

Ann Peacock of Giggleswick and they had two daughters at Ribbleshead. Naughty William! It seems he was also a fast runner over 200 yards.

A 200 YARDS FOOT RACE was run by Brown, of Giggleswick, and W. Overman, of Batty Green, which was very exciting, Brown being victorious.

On 5 August 1874 Annie Holland married **Samuel Mathers**, the eldest son of **John Mathers**, the proprietor of the Welcome Home Inn who lived nearby. Annie's sister **Susan Ann Holland** was a witness. Annie and Samuel had their first four out of six children at Ribbleshead before moving to Yorkshire.

Meanwhile sister Susan Ann Holland, the fourth daughter, attracted **Peter Market** of Liverpool who had a lifelong career as a marine engineer, except at the time of the wedding he was a labourer at Batty Green! After marrying they lived around Cleethorpes and Grimsby and had nine children, obviously conceived when Peter was on leave. Their wedding was on 12 July 1875 just weeks before the wedding of widowed mum Elizabeth to **Shaw Askew** on 16 August. Shaw was ten years younger than Elizabeth. After marrying they moved to Derbyshire and they worked as grocers. Elizabeth had 25 years of marriage before she died, aged 72 in 1900.



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

Settle Graveyard Project

and information on settleresearch@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 — Lancaster Gazette, 2 — Lincolnshire Chronicle 3 — Chambers Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art, thanks to Mark Harvey and Nigel Mussett of FoSCL archives

ph1 — credited to Shanty Life on the Settle-Carlisle railway by W R Mitchell

Navy Settlements diagram with thanks to Nigel Mussett, archivist for FoSCL, Sketches kindly provided by Teresa Gordon.

Other sources: The Railway Years in Chapel-Le-Dale 1870 - 1877 and The Chapel of the Fells both by Gerald Tyler, The New Railway To Scotland by David Occomore, Shanty Life on the Settle-Carlisle railway and How they built the Settle-Carlisle Railway both by W R Mitchell, The Railway Navvies of Settle: the end of the line by Sarah Lister.

Birth, Marriage and Death certificates provided by the General Records Office, covered by Crown Copyright. Census returns and baptism, marriage and burial records via ancestry.co.uk, originally from The National Archives.