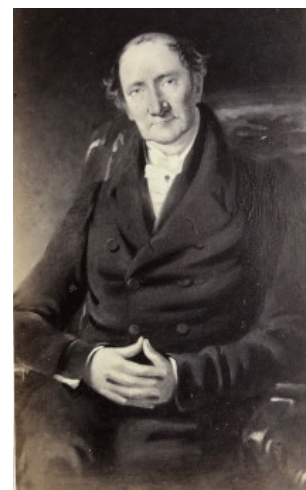


John Slater, wheelwright

The Tithe Survey of 1844 tells us that wheelwright **John Slater**, originally of Long Preston, lived in the corner of Settle Square, which is triangle shaped at property 267, now called Triangle Cottage. It was described as a 'house, shop and yard' and was rented from **Anthony Stackhouse** [ph1] of Taitlands, Stainforth. A different Anthony Stackhouse from Horton lived just round the corner on The Terrace. It's possible John had lived there since 1823 when he married **Ruth Butterfield** of Clapham. John sublet parts of the property at the time of each census return.



At the time of the 1841 census John and Ruth had four sons and a daughter living with them. Their eldest two sons, **William Slater** and **James Slater** had died in infancy and were buried in Giggleswick graveyard. (Settle church was not built until 1838 and so Giggleswick graveyard was the only option.) They also had an apprentice living-in (which was the normal arrangement), **Alexander Carr**, from Burton-in-Lonsdale. After his apprenticeship Alexander moved to Burnley, married **Agnes Waller** and then, during the 1850s, took his expanding family of at least 9 children to New South Wales, Australia.

Meanwhile John and Ruth stayed in the cottage and would probably have stayed there until their deaths, but landlord Anthony Stackhouse died in 1855. That's probably one reason why the family moved to The Green in Upper Settle, living close to the Tannery. John continued to work as a joiner. John died in 1867, aged 68 and Ruth followed in 1874, aged 75. They were both buried in Giggleswick graveyard with their infant sons.

What happened to their children? Eldest surviving son, **Thomas Butterfield Slater**, born in 1828, had a brain in his head. He found employment as an attorney's clerk in Skipton and then in Darlington. However, like ex-apprentice Alexander Carr, Thomas was tempted by the stories of the opportunities of the Australian Gold Rush. In December 1848 **Edward Duckett** was the first of several young men of Settle to sail to the other side of the world. He was the son of **Charles Duckett** who ran his beerhouse next door to The Talbot. Edward set up business as an ironmonger and frequently wrote home sending large amounts of money to his family and describing the opportunities and his success. Thomas Butterfield Slater sailed from Bristol on 11 December 1852 to arrive in Melbourne, Australia. In March 1853 he wrote a very long letter home which was published in a newspaper in July 1853[1]. It's a fascinating account and the only first hand account of the gold diggings found so far in our project. Thomas described that thousands of men from

**LETTER FROM A NATIVE OF SETTLE
AT THE GOLD DIGGINGS.**

A letter has recently been received by Mr John Slater, of Settle, from his son, Mr. T. B. Slater, who emigrated to Australia in September last, and is now at the diggings. Below we give extracts of such portions of the letter as can be at all interesting. The writer was formerly an attorney's clerk for some years at Skipton, and afterwards at Darlington, and was doubtless well known at those places.

“Ovens Diggings, Madman's Feat,
“Australia. March 4. 1853.

Settle Graveyard Project

all over the world camped out in tents with just a blanket. Most hadn't had their luggage delivered from the ship. They had to anchor nine miles away due to the shallow waters of Melbourne and men were taken up the river on small ships with luggage 'to follow!' Thomas said the men were all civil but could not be trusted! Understandably, provisions including bread, butter, coffee, sugar, flour were extremely expensive and milk was not available. The men lived on 'damper'— baked flour and water, which they made themselves, and sometimes fried mutton. They worked six days a week, resting on Sunday. There were no preachers, so they did their washing (every few weeks) instead. Thomas said many men left disappointed — it was frustrating work requiring great resilience as it was just pot luck if any gold was found. He was managing to make about £2 each day. The camp and mining area were surrounded by great wild dogs which were 'a sore nuisance to nightly rambles'. Thomas said of the men, 'we wear our beards and moustaches as uncouth as bears'. On the way to the site men had to drink from polluted, stagnant pools although, once at camp, there was plenty of clean water. Occasionally Thomas enjoyed some stewed cockatoo, parrots and magpies, 'all of them being excellent food.' Thomas commented of the appearance and dress of natives from a typically 19th century perspective which we won't repeat.

In his letter home Thomas mentioned, 'Edward Duckett is doing a splendid business and must be rapidly accumulating a fortune.' Indeed he was! **John Brennand** of Settle was also doing well. He mentioned 'Mr Brakell's shoes are much admired here and I could obtain 50 shillings for them' - **John Brakell** was a cordwainer (shoemaker) who had lived a few doors away from the Slaters with his family in Duke Street and must have supplied Thomas with some good boots for his expedition. Unfortunately, despite the quality of his shoes, John Brakell was declared insolvent in 1855 and then moved to Oldham. At the end of his letter Thomas makes it clear his brother **David Slater** should have come with him, if he were prepared to work hard and refrain from alcohol. As it transpired, brother **Robert** joined him in 1855 and then David sailed out in 1861. We can only assume they all stayed out there as records stop for them.

In 1888 a Thomas Slater of the right age was listed in the *New South Wales Police Gazette*, wanted for fraudulently obtaining £20 from Messrs Wakeford and Wylie. If this is our Thomas, he was described as a carpenter of 5 feet 7 inches tall, medium build, a very white beard, whiskers and moustache. He wore dark clothes and a hard black hat!

“ THOMAS B. SLATER. ”
“ P.S.—If David had come out with me he could easily have obtained £3 per week and rations to drive a pair of horses, or we could have done well together at the diggings, if he had been steady. Drunkenness prevails very much, and blights for ever the bright prospects he has before him. It causes all the wickedness and disturbances here. I shall endeavour to bring to England, when it shall please the Almighty to enable me to return, 1 or 2lbs. of Ovens gold. I was at an enormous expense before I obtained any gold—must now endeavour to repair the breach as speedily as possible.”

Tuena.—A warrant has been issued by the Tuena Bench for the arrest of Thomas Slater, charged with fraudulently obtaining the sum of £20 from Messrs. Wakeford & Wylie, at Mount Costigan, on the 7th instant. Offender is about 60 years of age, 5 feet 7 inches high, medium build, very white beard, whiskers, and moustache; a carpenter; wore dark clothes and hard black hat.

No. 29, 18TH JULY, 1888.—2.

What about John and Ruth's remaining two children? In 1856, only daughter **Ruth Slater** married a chemist/assistant surgeon **Thomas Bentham** from Skipton. They lived in Gisburn and Ruth had at least seven children. Unfortunately, she died in 1871, aged 35, soon after the birth of their youngest daughter **Margaret Annie Bentham** who died aged six. Thomas died in 1873, aged 47. With the help of aunts and uncles and older siblings, all the other children survived.

This left John and Ruth's youngest son, **John Slater**. It's hard being the youngest isn't it? John stayed in Upper Settle and worked as a labourer, butcher greengrocer and cattle drover over the years. In 1863, aged 24 he married **Mary Ann Bowskill**, a daughter of **Robert Bowskill**, a glazier

from Long Preston and they had two daughters and a son. After 20 years of marriage things had reached breaking point. At the end of May 1881 Mary Ann took John to court for assault. She inferred that John was lazy and left all the work to her. To make ends meet, while John was out Mary Ann took some china ornaments (which had belonged to his mother, Ruth) to **Mary Towler** on The Green to sell. John was not happy and told her never to go near Mrs Towler again. He pushed her or assaulted her depending on who you believe. The case was dismissed as six of one and half a dozen of the other [1]. The couple were living separately at the time of the remaining censuses.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.—Mary Ann Slater, of Upper Settle, charged her husband, John Slater, with assaulting her on the 25th ult.—Mr. G. M. Robinson, in opening the case for the complainant, said he should ask for the infliction of a small penalty, and that the defendant might be bound over to keep the peace.—Complainant said her husband struck her on the breast on the 25th May. He did nothing but stay at home, and she went hawking with a horse and cart. She was afraid that he would hit her again.—In cross-examination by Mr. Tilly, who appeared for defendant, witness said she and her husband had been married nearly twenty years. On the 25th ult. she took two pictures, some china ornaments, and other articles to Towler's. She took part when her husband was out.—Re-

Mary Ann took the children to live in Long Preston where she worked as a greengrocer. She died in 1920 aged 80. Daughter **Mary Jane Slater** died, aged 18, just seven months after marrying stone mason **John Harrison**, presumably linked to childbirth. Daughter **Hannah Slater** married a stone-waller, **Richard Metcalfe** who descended from the Kirkby Stephen area and they had a son and a daughter before Richard died aged 30. Their son **William Metcalfe**, a mason's labourer, was known to be a good fell runner. He worked for Carr's of Settle and married **Mabel Wooler** on 27 August 1917. He had signed up to the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment and wore his uniform at his wedding. The day after his wedding William returned to the front [ph3]. He died of wounds on the Western Front just a few months later on 22 November 1917. Mabel married again in 1923. Mary Ann and daughters are buried in Long Preston graveyard.



Son **John Thomas Slater**, a labourer, had a large family with his wife **Emma Marsden** and worked as a labourer. Whilst a marriage breakdown is usually not a good thing, the Long Preston community can celebrate Mary Ann's decision to move there. John Thomas Slater's grandson, **Bob Slater**, became one of the village's best known local historians and archivists. The Long Preston Heritage Group and others are immensely grateful for his passion and contribution.

Meanwhile, back in Settle John Slater had to get on with his life and it wasn't as smooth as it could have been. In 1883 John took 23 year old **William Petty**, a slater and plasterer to court for assault. The comments of the police and magistrates inferred that Mr Petty had given John 'an exorbitant sum' to settle the case and decided not to allow 'out of court settlements' in future in order to prevent this[1].

John Slater, Settle, against William Petty, Giggleswick, for an assault, was by permission of the Bench withdrawn. Supt. Inman remarked that it would be well if in future their worships declined to allow cases to be settled out of Court, as it was open to complainants to extract exorbitant sums for not proceeding with their cases, and occasionally a positive denial of justice occurred. The magistrates acquiesced in the suggestion.

At the time of the 1891 census John lived in Commercial Street, working as a butcher with a 'servant' **Elizabeth Nelson**. Elizabeth was a bit more than just a servant. Elizabeth (Windle) Nelson had separated from her husband, **Anthony Nelson**, a wealthy Ingleton farmer and since then had spent time in a London workhouse. In 1886, two years after moving in with John, Elizabeth took **John Alderson**, a labourer to court for 'criminal assault' after he broke into their house on Commercial Street. Elizabeth was 'in a very drunken state' and **PC Johnson** said, 'she did not bear a

very good character.' Two policemen and several locals including **John Cockshott**, **Maria Penrose**, **Seriah Butler** and **Richard Marsden** gave evidence against her. The case was dismissed on a legal technicality, 'their decision being greeted with applause in a crowded court.'^[1] Coincidentally, Mr Alderson's widowed mother became the wife of **William Hoggarth** who lived and worked at the Old Post Office, a few doors away from Triangle Cottage in Duke Street.

criminally assaulting Elizabeth Nelson. The complainant in cross-examination by Mr G. M. Robinson, who appeared for the defendant, stated that she came to **Settle** from **Ingleton** and had been divorced from her husband. For the last two years she had lived in Upper **Settle** with a man named **John Slater**, who was living apart from his wife. The prosecutrix, **John Cockshott**, **Maria Penrose**, **P.C. Johnson**, **Supt. Inman**, **Sarah Butler**, and **Richard Marsden** gave evidence. The three last witnesses said that prosecutrix was in a very drunken state about the time of the alleged offence. **P.C. Johnson** said she did not bear a very good character. **Mr Robinson**, however, contended that a *prima facie* case upon which a jury would convict had not been made out against the defendant, the magistrates dismissed the case. Their decision being greeted with applause in a crowded court.

Elizabeth died in June 1900, aged 73, living in Craven Terrace and was buried in an unmarked Union pauper's grave in Settle, *Old EX43*. Her fellow burial companions included **Thomas Excell** and an unrelated **Thomas Slater**. John stayed in Upper Settle and eventually died in 1917, aged 78. He was buried in the unmarked *Old DX74*, another Union pauper's grave with three other unfortunate men.



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 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

ph1 — credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username jules1080, ph3 — credited to Craven's Part in the Great War

Thomas Butterfield Slater's letter home 1853:

"My dear Parents,—You will no doubt anxiously expect this letter. I cannot write here as I could at Darlington. You will perceive that I am now at the Gold Diggings. I have been here a fortnight, and am now in my tent amongst hundreds of tents of all descriptions, and men of all nations and character. Every one is civil to me, and I have not had an uncivil word since arriving at the colony; they will give you every information, but here are most of our transports; we cannot tell them, and you know not but whilst they shake hands with you with one hand they may shoot you with the other. Provisions and everything are awfully dear. A 4lbs. loaf 4s., salt 1s. 6d. per lb., coffee 2s. 6d. per lb., a tin bucket 15s., a small pick 10s., a pint tin 1s. 6d. Butter, 3s. 6d. per lb. (I have not tasted any since arriving here.) Milk is 2s. the quart, but it cannot be obtained here at any price. Bacon, 3s. per lb., very bad. Sugar, 10d. per lb. Flour, 10d. per lb., the cheapest; good, 1s. per lb., but we can have it in a sack at a time for £7. The diggers live upon damper, (flour and

water kneaded, and baked amongst hot charcoal ashes), and fried mutton, and tea or coffee; this damper they make themselves. It is dreadful living up here; I lay upon the cold ground in my tent, with nothing but one blanket, which I get betwixt, in my clothes. I have not had my clothes of since leaving the ship, about six weeks ago, but I have now got used to this hard living, though I took very hardly to it at first. I was greatly broken in for it on board ship. We had a hail storm last week, when we had the pleasure of having our blankets well drenched with wet, whilst we were laid in bed. Sundays are here so far respected that all is peaceable on that day, but we have no place of worship, and I hear of no preaching. Almost all diggers have Sunday for washing. We have plenty of water here, and are 220 miles from Melbourne, where we landed. Hundreds of people who come to the

gold diggings, return disappointed men. You may sink fifty holes, and yet not get a speck of gold dust, whilst another man may obtain a few pounds weight from an adjoining hole, and this I have known done, so curiously does it lie. I am now washing a hole that I consider will pay; I have got an ounce a day, which is worth £4 in Melbourne, & £3 11s. 6d. here, but it is the first hole my party has succeeded in, and the day before I found it, all my party, except one man, had left the diggings in disgust with their success, so that what is now obtained will be divided between me and my partner, instead of between five persons. Digging is most laborious work, and success so seldom attends our efforts, (that is good success); of course any hard working man can obtain a livelihood, but no one should leave England, except the man who works hard; others can scarcely get on, because if he can earn a living in England, the comforts he there enjoys by far surmounts the benefits of this place; the hardships are incredible; imagine yourself at work from light of day until dark, in a most hot sun, pouring his uninterrupted rays upon you, and yourself almost bursting with the necessary labor of digging down the hard hole, perhaps 40 feet, (sometimes more, and of course often less, like a drawn well), & when you arrive at your tent, covered with dust and perspiration, your water to wash yourself to fetch, your damper & fire to make, your kettle to boil, & retire to rest, under a solitary blanket as I do, with my clothes on upon the cold ground or at least upon only a few leaves, awaking nightly shivering with cold, to take a stroll to warm yourself, if you dare venture out, as the great dogs are a sore nuisance to nightly rambles and as you may lose your tent in the

dark and stroll till morning. I have known women lost frequently after perhaps going a few yards on an errand; and as for a clean shirt you must wash it yourself, after working hard all day, or stay till Sunday; but shirts are thus washed here: We wear a shirt perhaps six weeks, and without washing, put it away, and after wearing another shirt the same period put it away, and renew your old one in its dirty state, which serves for a change of course. Your feet are almost constantly wet. Compare this place with England, and the poorest there cannot fare worse, here comforts cannot be bought. A newspaper costs 2s. (only two leaves). Here is a chance, same as in every lottery, of getting rich in one day, but where one obtains it one thousand lose the prize. I intend to stay here six months at least, but you need only write me to be left at the Post-office, Melbourne, until called for. When I arrived at Bristol I was taken very unwell, and was confined to bed until the ship sailed,

11th December, 1852. I soon recovered at sea, and am now in perfect health, after a prosperous voyage of 91 days. Thousands flocking to Melbourne know not what to do, for instance, if you want a very small shop you must pay £500 a year for it, and everything is dear in the extreme. Apples are 3s. 6d. the pound, and everything you eat is like eating gold. We diggers wear our beard and moustaches as uncouth as bears. Melbourne is like towns in England with respect to appearance, but is destined for a great city, in consequence of the advantages of its port or harbour, I should say unsurpassed by the whole world. Hundreds of ships were there on our landing, and the prospect was magnificent, almost enchanting. But the great drawback is in the inability of large ships getting nearer than within 9 miles of Melbourne. The passengers and goods were re-shipped on a small one mast craft, which had an engine also, called a lighter, and sent on the river to be delivered at Melbourne. The great drawback to the country is the want of water. I walked from Melbourne to this place, 220 miles, and was obliged to trave

20 miles per day, with a loaded cart and 3 horses, in order to camp at night besides water. The water, too, in the roads, except in a few cases, is wretched stuff,—but you must drink it; and I have seen parties drinking, and filling utensils to drink out of on the way from a stagnant pool, not 6 yards across, and of the colour of puddle, at the same time that a dog was enjoying a shake in it. I can assure you we are not nice here; we are compelled to drink this water in numerous instances. Sometimes water is scarce at the diggings, but here it is plentiful and good.

On coming up from Melbourne I enjoyed some stewed cocatoo from two that I shot. Parrots we repeatedly dine of, and also magpies, all of them being excellent food. I saw several natives; the colonists often make them intoxicated. At a place called the Broken River, I saw a native woman drunk, and her tongue was ringing a merry peal to her male friends around her. The men wear nothing but a quilt (oppossum skins), thrown around them, and, of course, all loose in the front, and the women similarly. The native women that I have seen are very ugly, but the men are far from being so; I consider the account of the latter being ugly a gross fabrication. Their limbs are well proportioned, and their countenance anything but uninteresting. I was much amused with their quaint remarks in my conversation with several of them. I understand they almost all manœuvre to procure fire-arms, and sometimes bloody battles ensue amongst them. John

Brennan is carrying on business at Melbourne in a very extensive way. I called upon him and he behaved very handsomely to me. The like of Edward Duckett, who is doing a splendid business and must be rapidly accumulating a fortune. Carpenters here get easily £1 and £1 6s. per day; carts are very dear and horses too. You must now give for a horse, that you could have got before the diggings for £10, the sum of £50 and sometimes £100, and a bullock which was worth £2 now sells for £11 or £14. Beef 6d. per lb., mutton 6d. per pound, formerly sixpence a leg. I am working besides two Chinese and a great number of them are not far from us. I this evening assisted to dig out a man upon whom the earth had fallen, and he was found quite lifeless. He had foolishly undermined the earth very much without taking the precaution to prop the soil. I make here about £2 per day. Mr. Brakell's shoes are much admired here, and I could obtain fifty shillings for them. You cannot obtain shoes for less than thirty-five shillings, and they are of the very worst description. You must not suppose all obtain £2 daily. Many have been here for many months and have not as yet made their expenses. Many nothing at all. I would strongly dissuade any young man leaving England for this place in hopes of obtaining a speedy independency. I know numbers who have rued the day they left their native land to pursue this life, and would gladly embrace the opportunity of returning, if it were only to step on the shores of Old England, without sixpence in their pockets.

"I am, my dear Parents,

"Your most affectionate Son,

"THOMAS B. SLATER."