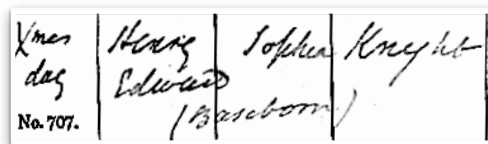


Ribblehead Tales . . . A colourful life!

Ribblehead is known for its rough, chaotic living conditions, sweat and tears. But despite the drunken fights and frequent 'petty crime' there was a real community spirit and families fiercely supported each other in difficult times, especially if one of their own died. Batty Green was a ridiculously hostile environment. The huts were precariously positioned on Batty Moss — a bog, made worse by animal and human trampling and waste. Planks of wood provided walkways and animals roamed free, including rats in the roofs. But the women, often working together, did their best to make the huts homely, sticking newspaper pictures on the walls and cooking copious amounts of homely food. Navvies, their wives and children had an excellent social life. Some incredible families stuck it out at Ribblehead for the duration of the railway construction and organised celebrations in each other's navy huts whenever an opportunity arose. The Hills were one such family.

Charles James Hill was born in Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire in 1825. His parents died when he was still young and he started a career as a railway labourer. At the time of the 1851 census Charles was one of six railway labourers lodging with another railway labourer, **William Harris**, in Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire. William's wife and six step-children lived there too, the eldest of whom was **Ann Sophie Knight**. Ann Sophie already had a son, **Henry Edward Knight**, described as 'base born' on his baptism documentation, on Christmas Day 1850!



Charles James Hill and Ann Sophie Knight married just weeks after the census return on 6 June 1851. As was typical for career navvies, over the next 20 years they had seven children while travelling around the country, born in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Surrey, Derbyshire, Kent and youngest **Emma Hill** was baptised at St Leonard's Church at Chapel-le-Dale on 13 August 1871. At the time of the 1871 census the large family lived in the Jordan navy huts up towards Blea Moor Tunnel with four boarders.

In March 1872 eldest son Henry Edward Knight Hill decided to go out drinking with **James Smith**. James had a good excuse as his wife Sarah had recently died of cirrhosis of the liver, aged just 41(!) leaving him with five children. Sarah became the first person to be buried in the new *Graveyard Extension*. The pair of them were fined 5 shillings for 'being drunk'[2]. They must have been particularly drunk.

Jas. Smith and Hy. Hill, miners engaged at Black Moss Tunnel, were charged with being drunk on the 22nd ult. at Black Moss, and were fined 5s. and costs each.

The family had plenty to celebrate on 26 May 1873 when eldest daughter **Sarah Ann Hill**, aged 22, married **Arthur Rayson Kellam** at St Leonard's Church. The witnesses were Sarah Ann's sister **Alice Hill** and Alfred's father (or brother!) **Albert Kellam**. Sarah Ann may well have been attracted by Alfred's physical prowess! On 9 March 1872, a cold Monday, there was 'a scene of great animation, the people being congested in vast numbers, to witness what was in this wild region, a novelty, viz a foot race between Alfred Kellam and James Barker. The two competitors might be seen approaching the scene of contest about ten a.m., being driven in a wagonette and pair. Kellam's fine proportions and elasticity of sinew produced a very favourable impression on the spectators, and he became the favourite, although the men appeared well matched. At eleven o'clock the signal was given,

INGLETON.
FOOT RACE FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND £10.—On Monday last, **Batty Green** presented a scene of great animation, the people being congregated in vast numbers, arrayed in every variety of dress, to witness what was in this wild region, a novelty, viz, a foot race between Alfred Kellam and James Barker. The two competitors might be seen approaching the scene of contest about ten a.m., being driven in a wagonette and pair. Kellam's fine proportions and elasticity of sinew produced a very favourable impression on the spectators, and he became the favourite, although the men appeared well matched. At eleven o'clock the signal was given,

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seen approaching the scene of the contest at about ten am being driven in a wagonette and pair [of horses]. Kellam's fine proportions and elasticity of sinew produced a very favourable impression on the spectators and he became the favourite.' [1]

The race was 200 yards which Alfred completed in 22 seconds, winning by 3½ yards. For comparison, Usain Bolt has the record for running the 200 metres in 19.19 seconds in an athletics stadium with purpose-built track and designer kit and trainers. So, Alfred was pretty fast! Alfred won a very generous prize of £10. There were several other events on the day with Alfred winning three other races. Another report says that the Umpire was none other than **Job Hirst**, the viaduct sub-contractor (who died later in the year). Alfred also won races and prize money of around 10 shillings at several local fairs. Sarah Ann and Alfred married the following year.



Arthur and his father **Albert Rayson Kellam** were both tailors, originally from Staffordshire and living at hut 39, Batty Wife Hole with Alfred's mother **Ann (Evans) Kellam** and three younger siblings. The Kellams were one of the many trading families at Batty Wife Hole making a good living from the navy community. Other hawkers visited Ribblehead for the market days but some families, including the Kellams, lived there full time.

Alfred's elder brother, 22 year old **Abraham Kellam** was not with the family — unfortunately he was in prison. A year before Abraham and a partner in crime, **James Williams**, both miners and blacksmith strikers, had committed 'A Daring Highway Robbery' at Saddleworth, violently assaulting Irishman **John King** with a knife for the sake of a couple of sixpences as he left an Inn. Abraham and James Williams ran away but Abraham was caught hiding in a barrel [3]. They were both imprisoned for a year.



DARING HIGHWAY ROBBERY AT SADDLEWORTH.

JAMES WILLIAMS (31,) miner and striker, and **ABRAHAM KELLAM** (21,) of the same trade, were charged with feloniously assaulting (together with another person) an Irishman named John King, and robbing him of a small sum of money, at Saddleworth, on the 27th June.

Whilst prostrate, **Kellam** put his hand in his right-hand 'trousers' pocket, and then—probably finding some difficulty in effecting his object—he drew a knife and cut away the pocket altogether, at the same time inflicting a severe wound on one of the prosecutor's thumbs. Whilst engaged in this daring outrage in broad daylight the prisoners were disturbed by two men coming in sight and observing their actions, and they ran away. The strangers gave chase in company with

It seems this was a bit of a habit for Abraham. Six years before, in Kent, Abraham had stolen sixpence from his employer, **Mr Lyon**, an ironmonger — he must have had a thing for sixpences! [4] In that hearing it transpired that Abraham had been to court previously for stealing lead, but Mr Lyon had asked the court to discharge him, which they did. Bearing this in mind, Abraham had his first spell in prison, for a month. After this Abraham disappears

ROBBING AN EMPLOYER.—A boy named **Abraham Kellam**, living in Willow-road, Sydenham, was charged before Mr. Maude, at Greenwich police court on Tuesday, with stealing sixpences from the till in the shop of his master, Mr. Lyon, ironmonger, High-street, Sydenham. It appeared that the lad was left

from records until 1886 by which time he had married and settled down in Nottinghamshire, working as a tunnel miner. The wider Kellam family got up to quite a bit of mischief on the railway. Albert's nephews **Robert Kellam** and **Worrell Kellam** were carpenters and foremen on the railway, running teams of labourers to do specific jobs. In 1877 and 1878, Worrell and Robert were both taken to court for fraud. Worrell was taking on labouring jobs and using men to do the jobs whilst fiddling their time sheets so that their wages were paid by the railway [1,2]. The newspaper reports suggested this had happened before. Robert was accused of stealing wood for his own use. The jury found him 'not guilty but with a doubt' and the Chairman pointed out to him that he had escaped justice by the skin of his teeth [5]!

THE MIDLAND RAILWAY FRAUDS.
At the Leeds Assizes, on Saturday, before Mr. Justice Hawkins, Worrell Kellam (40), joiner, and Frederick Dark

THE ALLEGED FRAUDS ON THE MIDLAND RAILWAY.
At the West Riding Sessions at Wakefield, on Wednesday, a young man named Robert Kellam, a joiner in the
learned counsel.—After a short consultation, the jury found that the prisoner was “Not guilty, with a doubt.”
—The Chairman, in discharging the prisoner, pointed out to him that he had escaped by the skin of his teeth. .

Meanwhile back at Ribbleshead, Alfred and Sarah Ann enjoyed married life for a while but 1874 was one of those awful years. One of Charles Hill's boarders was 20 year old **Charles Henry Studley**, a labourer from Flintshire, North Wales. Charles Studley died of typhoid on 21 February 1874, aged 23 and Charles Hill was present at his death. They had known each other for at least three years. Sarah Ann had become pregnant and on 1 April 1874 little **Alice Priscilla Kellam** was baptised. This was just in time because on 7 May 1874 Sarah Ann's father, Charles James Hill died of emphysema and cardiac disease, aged 49 — his youngest daughter, Emma, was just three. Charles paid the price for a very physical job in appalling conditions. Step-son Henry (Knight) was present at the death. The rest of the family stayed at Ribbleshead.

Unfortunately, little Alice Priscilla Kellam died in January 1875 aged 10 months. Alfred and Sarah Ann didn't have any more children. They spent most of their life in Glamorgan, Alfred still working as a tailor. In 1886 he was declared bankrupt but was still found in Glamorgan working as a tailor after that. They both died in their late seventies.

On 26 October 1874 Ann Sophie's eldest 'base born' son Henry Edward Knight Hill, aged 24, married 19 year old **Fanny Elizabeth Oxenham** who was originally from Pimlico, London. Fanny's parents died when she was a young girl and she was brought up by her grandparents. At the time of the 1871 census she was working as a servant girl for **Absolom Dicks**, a miner and his family at the Bleamoor Huts. This is really unusual — there were only a handful of servants at Ribbleshead. 16 year old Fanny Elizabeth must have had some guts to go from London to Ribbleshead for employment as a servant. Young single girls were not necessarily treated with respect by some of the navies and she probably attracted quite a bit of interest from the men! After the railway was built Henry Edward and Fanny Elizabeth moved to Bingley but Henry died in 1882, aged just 32. Fanny Elizabeth ended up in Glamorgan working as a charwoman with four children, the youngest born a couple of years after Henry died. Clever Fanny Elizabeth!

What about Charles' widow Ann Sophie Hill? In Nottinghamshire in 1875 she married **William Atherton**, a miner who had previously worked as an engineer for the Navy. They lived in Keighley. Ann Sophia died in 1899, aged 71 after which William was found in the workhouse. The rest of Charles and Ann Sophia's children continued to work for railway companies, many in Wales.

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The men of the family may have been involved in a special excursion to celebrate the completion of the railway. The Settle to Carlisle Railway was opened to passenger trains on 1 May 1876. On 30 September 1876 there was a celebratory excursion train to Morecambe for the navvies. What could go wrong?

We know about this excursion because, of course, the navvies couldn't help but get themselves into trouble. **Samuel Matthews** was charged with 'unlawfully and wilfully resisting George Kerry, a railway guard whilst in the execution of his duty.' Incredibly, 'about 1200 men came by an excursion from Batty Green to Morecambe'[1]. 1200 men!! 'About six o'clock in the evening they began to assemble at the station for the purpose of returning home and commenced fighting amongst themselves and making rows which at one time very nearly approached a riot.' The station master locked all the station and waiting room doors and sent for the police. Samuel Matthews pleaded guilty.



The *Lancaster Gazette* said, 'People like the defendant were in receipt of high wages and a small penalty would have little effect on him. The sum of £8 14s 9d in money, together with a gold watch and guard being found on him when he was given into custody.' The *Lancaster Gazette* would probably not have been too happy that Samuel was fined £5. The alternative was two months in Lancaster Castle Gaol.

thought they would consider it one in which they should impose the full penalty on defendant. On Saturday, about 1200 men came by an excursion from Batty Green to Morecambe, at which place prisoner had been employed on the railway. About six o'clock in the evening they began to assemble at the station for the purpose of returning home, and commenced fighting among themselves and making rows which at one time very nearly approached a riot. The

The Chairman said it was a very bad case, because by interfering with the officer and delaying the train, he also interferred with the safety of other trains, and defendant would have to pay a penalty of £5 including costs, or go to the Castle for two months' imprisonment.

The money was paid.



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, 2 — Westmorland Gazette, 3 — Batley Reporter, 4 — Sydenham Times, 5 — Manchester Evening News

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

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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.

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