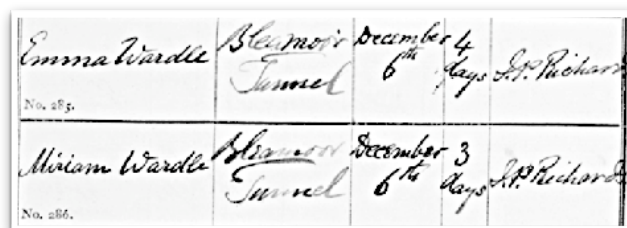


Ribblehead Tales . . . Twins and Triplets

During the construction of the Settle to Carlisle Railway we know that around half the burials at St Leonard's from the Ribblehead shanty towns were children. It's incredible to think that women were giving birth and nursing babies in those appalling conditions, even more so in the case of twins and triplets. Sadly, and unsurprisingly, few survived.

The story of **the Wardle twins** is well documented. **John Wardle** and his wife **Ann Foden** were from Over Peover in Cheshire — it's between Knutsford and Wilmslow near the Colshaw Hall Country Estate. When they married John was 20 and Ann just 17. John took after his father, working as a brickmaker/general labourer. At the time of the 1871 census, John, Ann and four children lived in Radcliffe, north-west of Manchester. They had already lost two sons, **James** and **Ben** as infants. After the census return was taken in April, John was tempted by the high salaries at Ribblehead and they got lodgings at Bleamoor tunnel. At the beginning of December Ann gave birth to twins, **Emma** and **Miriam Wardle**. They died aged just three and four days and were buried together at St Leonard's church on 6 December 1871.



The *Craven Weekly Pioneer* reported 'A Singular Funeral. A funeral of strange character took place in the graveyard of Chapel-le-Dale on 6th inst. Notice of internment of twin children had been given by a working man on the Bleamoor Railway Works to the curate in charge of the parish during the winter absence of Rev E Smith, fixing the time at 2pm on Wednesday 6th. On the day named the cortege arrived at the Chapel at about five minutes before the time mentioned when it was found that the gate was fast and that there was no appearance of either clergyman or sexton. At length the person arrived, when he coolly told the bereaved father that he had quite forgotten that the funeral was to take place, consequently no grave was made, as no notice had been given to the sexton. Under the circumstances, the father had to borrow tools, dig the children's grave, toll the bell, act as clerk and then to complete the sad and melancholy affair, he had to fill up the grave he had made.' The offending minister was **JP Richards** who served from November 1871 to April 1872.

However, a few weeks later, **George Keate**, the 22 year old coachman working for the regular vicar at 'The Vicarage, Chapel-Le-Dale' wrote to correct some facts. It was incorrectly dated 21 December 1861. He said that the church gates and doors were not locked, and it was not the curate's job to 'act the part of the undertaker. The parishioners give the sexton notice if they want a grave. The curate had not forgotten the funeral and invited the father and two girls into the Vicarage to the fire. He would not wait until the sexton came to make the grave, but sought some tools and set to work himself...to save the

locked. That is not true. They are always open in consequence of being in an unfinished state, and no lock can be put upon them; neither was the church door locked—it also is usually left open throughout the day, and on gne days it is thrown wide open. He

The Curate had not forgotten the funeaaal. He had been waiting for it some time not knowing that the grave was not made. He invited the father and his two little girls into the Vicarage to the fire. The man replied he was not cold. He would not wait until the sexton came to make the grave, but sought some tools and set ty work at himself, apparently nothing loth to save the sexton's fees by digging the grave with his own hands.

I am, Sir, your's truly,

GEORGE KEATE,
The Vicarage, Chapel-le-Dale,
December 21st. 1861.

sexton's fees by digging the grave with his own hands.'[1]. Inevitably the truth lies somewhere in-between. The church lych gate had only just been built, at the same time as the completion of the graveyard extension in August 1871.

Incidentally, George Keate was one of several men, including the missionary **James Tiplady** and the contractor's son **Joshua Hirst**, who performed at social entertainments. Mr Keate 'performed a voluntary on the harmonium with his usual ability' and 'read very effectually a sketch of village life called 'Choaking the best Cow, or Watering Milk' which 'caused roars of laughter'[4].

upon Mr. Keate, who performed a voluntary on the harmonium with his usual ability. The next was a reading by Mr. Tiplady entitled "Men who age down." Mr. Joshua Hirst sang "The anchor's weighed," which was much appreciated. Two songs which were sung by Mr. and Mrs. Holden gave great satisfaction, and they were loudly encored. Mr. Hirst recited a piece entitled "A happy Home." As this piece was recited with much humor and drollery it caused much amusement. A recitation was given by Mr. Giffard, entitled "John Scott." This piece, which was recited in good style, was well received. After a song by Mr. Hickling, who was heartily cheered, Mr. Keate read very effectually a sketch of village life called "Choaking the best Cow, or Watering Milk," by Eavesdropper. This piece caused roars of laughter.

Unsurprisingly, John and Ann Wardle left Ribblehead and found work in Habersham Eaves, Burnley. Perhaps Ann didn't recover from the birth and death of the twins, physically and/or emotionally as she died there in the summer of 1873, aged 36. John married again in 1874 and spent the rest of his life in Manchester. He was 71 when he died in 1905.

The life of the **Symon/s twins** was commemorated with a gravestone. **John Symon**, a stonemason from Aberdeen and his much younger wife **Betsy McKenzie**, a crofter's daughter from Ross and Cromarty in the Highlands of Scotland, married in 1870. By the time of the 1871 census they were in Crosby Garrett, near Kirkby Stephen, working on the railway with four Scottish boarders. Betsy would have been seven months pregnant with their eldest son, **John Murdoch Symon**. By 1873 they had moved to live at Sebastopol for the birth of another two sons and twin daughters, **Catherine (Kitty) Ann** and **Mary Jane Symon**. The twins died within days of each other aged 2 years and four months and were buried at St Leonard's. After the railway was built the family moved to number 6 Salt Lake which is where their youngest son **Roderick William Symon** was born on 8 May 1879. Before the cottages were built Salt Lake comprised 'eight very good detached huts'[2]

sewerage, and then I paid a visit to "Salt Lake," where there are eight very good detached huts.

Betsy and John remained at Salt Lake until they died in 1901 and 1902, aged 54 and 72 respectively. The Symon gravestone is badly laminated but includes:

In memory of Mary Jane who died 15th April 1876 and Catherine Ann who died 20th April 1876, aged 2 years and 4 months, twin children of John and Betsy Symon of Ribblehead.



Son John Murdoch Symon began work as a railway porter in Hellifield but, after marrying, became a commercial traveller. Unfortunately he was declared bankrupt in 1925, aged 54 and so died without a penny to his name — his estate was confirmed as £NIL. Son **Alexander Symon** had a career as a railway porter and guard in Staffordshire but died aged just 34. Youngest son **Roderick William Symon**, a mason's labourer, emigrated to Canada where he married and had a family. The story of the three sets of twins belonging to **Charles Steel** is covered in the story about the *Graveyard Extension*.

SYMON John Murdoch of 48 Wymersley Road Kingston-upon-Hull died 16 April 1950 Administration London 15 September to Frank Hearn's landau driver. £Nil.

Settle Graveyard Project

There is one set of triplets in the graveyard. **Emma Louise, Albert and Mary Ann Dicken** were all three days old when they died and they were all buried on 13 July 1873.

Emma Louise Dicken No. 350.	Bleamoor Tunnel	July 13 th	3 days E. Smith Mr. Wear
Albert Dicken No. 351.	Bleamoor Tunnel	July 13 th	3 days E. Smith Mr. Wear
Mary Ann Dicken No. 352.	Bleamoor Tunnel	July 13 th	3 days E. Smith Mr. Wear

Reginald Dicken, a railway labourer and his wife **Maria Boam** were both from Derbyshire and they married in 1855. Over the next 15 years they had seven children and, compared

to many others, were lucky that only one son, **Thomas Dicken**, named after Reginald's father, died in infancy. As a railway labourer the family moved around a lot — son Thomas was born in Sheffield in December 1867, baptised in Manchester in May 1868 and died at Stanage, near Hathersage in Derbyshire in September 1868. Reginald and Maria's next son was named **John Thomas Dicken**, presumably to remember little Thomas.

In 1866 Reginald was taken to court and found guilty of stealing a watch and chain, the property of a fellow miner, **William Truman**, not Freeman as indicated in the report [3]. A more detailed report explained that William had been getting changed after his shift and left his watch on a hook in the process. He forgot to pick it up and went on his way. Reginald went into the cabin later with a mate and they decided to pawn it, but an ex-policeman got to hear about it. Reginald served 21 days imprisonment with hard labour. This may have prompted the family to find work elsewhere, again.

STEALING A WATCH AND CHAIN AT NORTON.
Reginald Dicken, aged 33, collier, was charged with stealing, on the 24th April last, a watch and chain, the property of William Freeman, of Norton.—Mr. Bristowe prosecuted.—Guilty—Twenty-one days' imprisonment, with hard labour.
 This concluded the business in the Second Court.

At the time of the 1871 census the family were living in a navvy hut in Cowgill in Dentdale with the six other children — youngest son **George Henry Dicken** was 1 month old and his birthplace was listed as 'Bleamoor Tunnel, Dent'! At some point during the next year the family moved over to Ribblehead and worked at the other end of Bleamoor Tunnel near Batty Green. Unfortunately Reginald died and was buried on 14 July 1872, aged 38. Reginald was one of the navvies whose death was not registered — it wasn't compulsory until 1875. As there are no newspaper reports about a coroner's inquest it's likely he died of disease.

So, what about those triplets? Almost exactly a year after Reginald's death triplets Emma Louise, Albert and Mary Ann were buried, aged 3 days old. That would be a record breaking length of pregnancy if they were Reginald's children! We know Reginald's widow, Maria, stayed at Ribblehead because another year later, in St Leonard's church on 22 June 1874 she married **Patrick Dempsey**, an Irish miner who had previously worked in Durham. One of their witnesses was the wonderfully named **Absolom Dix**, a railway miner who lived at the Bleamoor Tunnel huts with his

4. Marriage solemnized at Chapel ledale in the new Parish of Chapel ledale of the County of York in the County of York

When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
June 22 nd	Patrick Dempsey	full	Bachelor	Labourer	Bleamoor	James Dempsey	Labourer
	Maria Dicken	full	Widow	—	Bleamoor	James Boam	Farmer

d in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by me, after Banns -
Edwith M. & Maria

arranged & witnessed in us, Patrick Dempsey his X mark in the Presence of us, Arthur Ashworth
Maria Dicken Absolom Dix

Settle Graveyard Project

family and lodgers. Absolom was an illegitimate and orphaned boy from Oxfordshire, brought up by aunts and uncles. Once old enough he had a lifelong career as a railway miner/tunneller, travelling all over England and in later years, Scotland. Unusually, at the time of the 1871 census return, the Dix family had a servant working for them, 16 year old **Fanny Oxenham** from Pimlico who we meet in another story.

So, what happened to Maria and her new husband Peter Dempsey? At the time of the 1881 census they were found in Bingley, Bradford. Peter and Maria's son, Reginald Dicken, were working as railway tunnellers. However, two years later Maria, under the name Dicken, was found on board the ship *Lake Manitoba* in the stowage (most cramped) class with the children, including daughter **Elizabeth** and her husband **William Harris Thornburn** and children. The Thornburn family had also been railway labourers at Sebastopol. The Dicken family settled in Chicago. In 1900, aged 62 Maria married **Andy O'Neal**, a farmer, 23 years her junior who had emigrated from Durham. Maria lived to the age of 83. How often did she think about those triplets?



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.

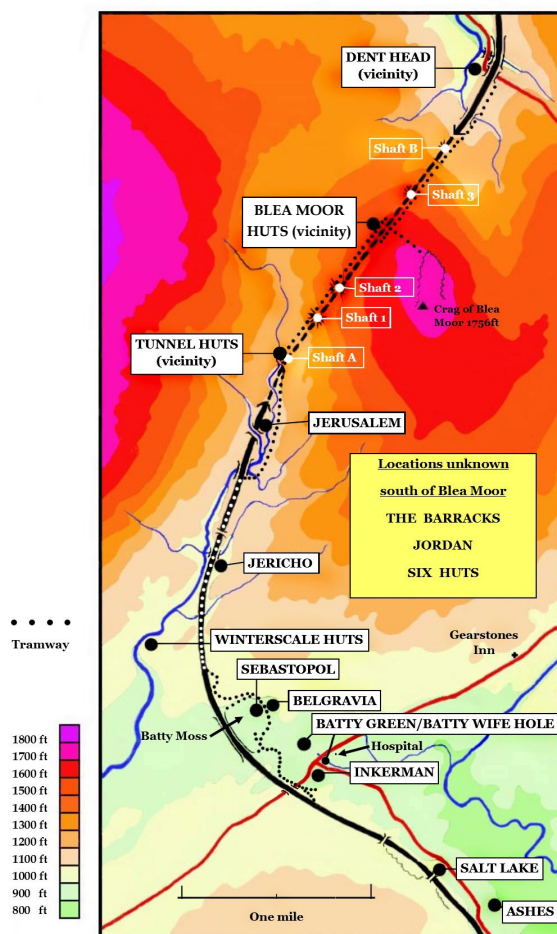
The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project and can be found on dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project. The 'Old Settle' family tree on Ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes 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 — Lancaster Gazette, 2 — Daily News, 3 — Ilkeston Pioneer, 4 — Lancaster Guardian

Navy Settlements diagram with thanks to Nigel Mussett, archivist for FoSCL.

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.



Supposed locations of navy settlements between Ribbleshead and Dent Head.
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