

The Bowskills, blacksmiths

Horses dominated passenger and goods transport, farming and other trades until the beginning of the 20th Century and so good blacksmiths were valued members of the community. The Bowskills were Settle's dominant smithing family for decades. **John Bowskill**, born in 1768, the son of another **John Bowskill**, ruled the roost until his death in 1822. As well as his smithy in Duke Street, perhaps at the Square, John ran several related businesses — he was also a butcher and cattle dealer. John's business acumen resulted in the building of the terrace of houses 'Bowskill's Yard' on Castle Hill which also contained a smithy at the Townhead end.

In 1797, John Bowskill, described as a butcher, married **Elen Bentham** in Clapham and they had six sons and three daughters, all born in Settle. There are records of the Bowskills paying taxes on several portions of land. John retired to run the White Horse Inn in the Market Place in Settle, opposite the Royal Oak. John died on 22 May 1822, aged 54 and was buried two days later on a 'very hot' day [WLP]. Widow Ellen and sons **William** and **Thomas** continued to run the inn until the late 1830s, replaced by **James Ellershaw**. Ellen died in January 1835, aged 62. John's mother, **Mary (Hammerton) Bowskill** died in November 1824, aged 94! His father had died in 1813 at the respectable age of 78.

May 24.—Very hot. A second crop mowed in Mr. Wood's Court. J. Bowskill, of White Horse, buried to-day.

Nov. 2.—Mrs. Swale asked if I had any Prayer Books as their servants had 2 gone from pew. Found W. Lodge at Bowskills and got £10 more, so treated him with a glass but judging from my own it was very poor stuff. Mrs. Bowskill age 94 interred to-day.

Sons William and John (Jnr) took over the horse-related business.

They released some equity by selling some land to **William Bolland** of Townhead who made a quick turnaround to sell the land as the preferred site for the new Holy Ascension Church in Settle. William was well connected in the church so perhaps he had an inkling of a quick profit? The minutes of the committee meeting on 3 March 1835 said, *'that in the opinion of this meeting the most desirable site for the proposed church would be the south west part of the land lately purchased by Mr Bolland from the devisees of the late Mr John Bowskill.'*[ph2, 3]

Resolved - That in the opinion of this Meeting the most desirable site for the proposed Church would be the south west part of the Land lately purchased by Mr. Bolland from the devisees of the late John Bowskill - Mr



In January 1834, when he was 35, son John (Jnr), described as a horse-dealer, married **Ann Bowskill**, his first cousin. It's possible John had been married before. John and Ann had two sons, **William** and **Johnny** before John died on 23 December 1836, aged just 37. He was buried with his parents and a grand stone in Giggleswick graveyard. There was plenty of room on the stone for further inscriptions, but they didn't follow for some reason.

In memory of John Bowskill of Settle, died May the 22nd 1822 aged 54 years. Also Elen the wife of John Bowskill who died January 16th 1835 aged 62 years. Also John, second son of the above John & Elen Bowskill who died December 23rd 1836 aged 37 years.



Settle Graveyard Project

Ann was left with the two sons, William and Johnny. First son William died in 1838, aged four and was hopefully buried with his father. Life as a widow could be precarious and financially insecure but Ann lived with her brothers-in-law (and cousins) **William Bowskill**, a master blacksmith and **Richard Bowskill**, a plumber and son Johnny at the Smithy at Bowskills Yard. They also had an apprentice, **Thomas Ralph**.

Richard Bowskill left Settle after a couple of years and so William and Ann lived together for the rest of their lives. If it happened to be more than a friendship they could not marry. It was illegal to marry a dead brother's wife until an Act in 1907, although we have numerous examples where this was ignored. William won prizes for his 'double petunias' in the 1864 Horticultural Society Show! Ann and William were both buried at Giggleswick when they died aged 71, in 1868 and 74, in 1874 respectively, possibly in that family plot.

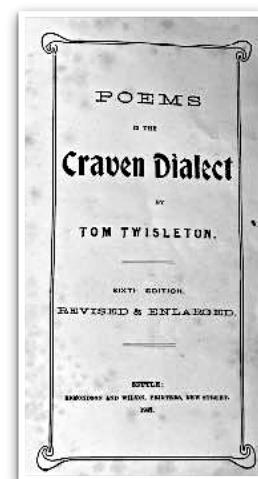
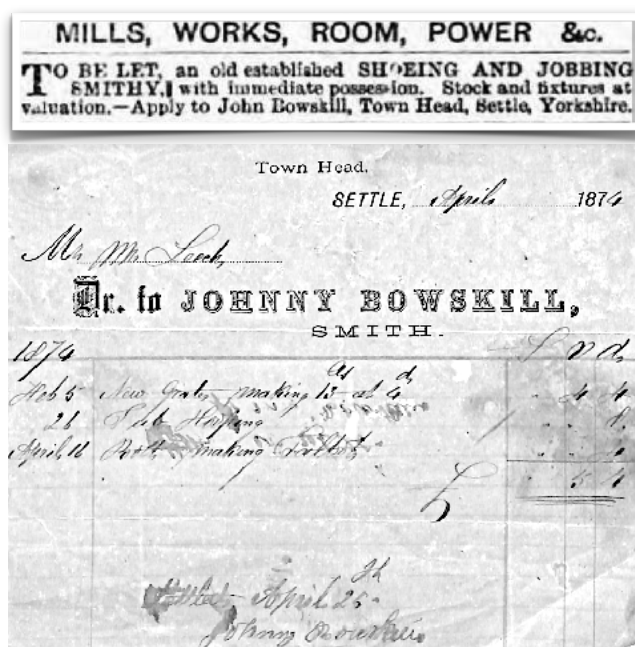
Son Johnny continued the smithing business at Bowskills Yard [ph3]. In 1858 Johnny married **Isabella Earnshaw** of Slaidburn and they had seven children. By 1875 Johnny could have been ill or planning to leave as he advertised the let of the Smithy [1]. Johnny died in August 1876, aged 39 and was buried at Giggleswick. There was a weak gene in there, wasn't there?

Johnny's death could be linked to a love of alcohol, particularly gin and whisky. Local dialect poet **Thomas Twisleton** wrote a poem about the family, under the name *Johnny Bland*. Johnny was portrayed as a 'larger than life' character who enjoyed his spirits and, as a result neglected his family who lived in appalling conditions. However, a Temperance worker knocked on his door and convinced him of the error of his ways and he converted to a temperate lifestyle, the family enjoying much better lives as a result. It was written for the Settle Temperance Festival in 1865 [ph4]. It included:

A blacksmith strang was Johnny Bland, he wrought within a smiddy; Wi' his girt hammer in his hand, he used to bump the stiddy. He was a chap of girt renown, a chap weel knahn to ony; Naa other blacksmith i' the town Could shoe a horse like Johnny.

He was a chap of giant length, he stood up like a steeple; He was a chap of giant strength compared wi' other people. He was tar to rant an' fight, Naan liked we' him to quarrel; An' yet wi' au his power and might, he bow's before a barrel.

She was a clever thrifty wife, hed he but reightly used her; but au through his wedded life, he saarly had abused her . . .



Settle Graveyard Project

An' Johnny hed a lot o' bairns — He used to treat 'em shockin'; they ran about au specks and darns without a shoe or stockin'. Aastead o' learning what was reight, they war an awful sample; They learn'd to swear, an' brawl, an' feight; they'd follow his example.

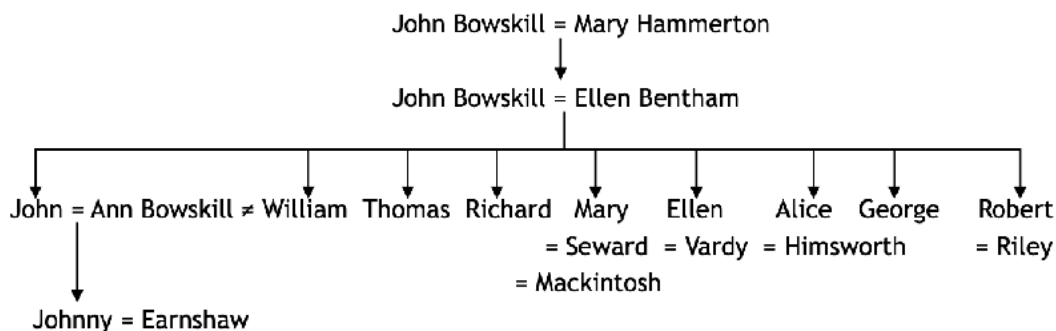
After the visit by the Temperance Society:

Now Johnny's ceased to be a fool, an left off gin an' whisky. His bairns like others gang to school An' man more fair and frisky. An' what a change is wi' his wife, But t'is a change for t'better. I hardly think, upon my life, Ye'd ken if ye met her.

You get the idea — the full poem is below. It may be true! In April 1865 Johnny was on the committee for the Mechanics Institute to coordinate summer amusements for the members. After Johnny died Isabella took the children straight off to Accrington where there was plenty of work for them all in the mills. Most of the children remained unmarried. Isabella was 84 when she died.

Several of John and Ellen's other children found their way to Lancashire too.

Bowskill family



John and Ellen's eldest son, **Thomas Bowskill** was a butcher. After helping to run the White Horse Inn he moved to Liverpool with his wife **Mary Cock** and children. At the time of the 1851 census they lived with Thomas' brother **Richard Bowskill**, the horse-dealer/plumber who had lived in Bowskill's Yard in 1841.

Richard had a good reason to leave Settle. In June 1842 **Tommy Bentley** of Wham, actually aged 73, not 80 [WLP], stole a massive £180 in sovereigns from Mr **Henry Butler** 'a man of eccentric habits' at Winterskill Bank, near Settle. Tommy, not the sharpest thief,

June 3.—Am sorry to say H. Newsholme, T. Bentley and R. Bowskill were sent to Wakefield yesterday for robbing old H. Butler, aged 80.

gave some of the money to a friend, **George Newsholme**. Richard knew that Thomas was a suspect and accosted him. Richard told him he was going to report him unless he told Richard where the money was, which he did. They re-buried the box and went together to Settle. The next day Tommy had second thoughts and wanted to return the money to the owner, Henry Butler. He went back to the place where the box had been buried and found it empty. Tommy immediately went to Mr Butler and confessed all. In the court session Tommy Bentley and was given a sentence of two years for larceny, George Newsholme was given two years for receiving stolen goods but Richard was found not guilty and dismissed. Perhaps he was a bit lucky with that one? [2] As diarist **William Lodge Paley** pointed out, 'men will still form their

June 29.—Newsholme and Bentley sentenced to two years hard labour and Dick Bowskill came off, but men will still form their opinion of him.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND; OR A PRACTICAL REFUTATION OF THE OLD ADAGE, "HONOUR AMONGST THIEVES."—About ten days ago a daring robbery was committed in the dwelling-house of Mr Henry Butler, farmer, of Winterskill Bank, near Settle, who, being a man of eccentric habits, was suspected to have treasure to no small amount in his possession. It appeared that a man named Thos. Bentley, of Wam, had on the afternoon above mentioned, by some means or another, entered the house of Mr Butler, and stole therefrom a box containing £180 in sovereigns, which he consigned to an accomplice named Geo. Newsholme, a neighbouring farmer, who took sixty of the sovereigns, leaving the rest with Bentley. The latter having occasion to visit Settle, met with one **Richard Bowskill**, a horse-dealer, who, knowing that Bentley was suspected of the robbery, accosted him thus—"Well Tom, thou's done it at last; they're going to ha' thee up: they've been at Hartley's office, but they're going to see't wise-man first: but if thou'l't tell me where't money is, I can get some stuff that will set all't wise-men in England at defiance, and nobody can touch it." Seduced by this promise, Bentley took **Bowskill** to the place where the box was secreted, when the latter immediately inquired if he knew what number of sovereigns there was in the box, to which Bentley replied in the

there was in the box, to which Bentley replied in the negative. They then dug a hole in a secluded spot, and placed the box within it, after which Bowskill besmeared it with some kind of drug, muttered some gibberish or other, and covered it up. They then proceeded in company to Settle, where they arrived at a late hour, Bentley retiring to rest, but his companion did not follow his example for some hours after. Early in the morning Bentley, having had some punctuous visitings, began to think that it would be best to return the remainder to its owner, and repaired in pursuance of that intent, to the spot where the treasure was the night before deposited. He found the box, but the metal it contained, in spite of the horse-dealer's nostrum, had evaporated. He immediately went to Butler, the person from whom the gold had been stolen, and made a full disclosure of the whole affair; in consequence of which he was, together with his accomplice, taken into custody. After undergoing an examination before the magistrates, they were committed to the Wakefield House of Correction for trial at the forthcoming Pontefract Sessions.—*Lancaster Guardian*.

opinion of him'. Once in Liverpool Richard worked as a butcher and had ten children with his 'wife' **Jane Gidman**, a watchmaker's daughter, although they didn't marry. Jane was 20 years his junior.

John and Ellen's three daughters also found their way to Lancashire but had most unfortunate lives. Eldest daughter **Mary Bowskill** married **Henry Seward**, a spirit merchant, on 19 May 1830. Henry died in Liverpool in December 1832 and, during the following year, Mary married **William Mackintosh**, a physician. Mary had two daughters, **Elizabeth Mackintosh** and **Margaret Ellen Bowskill Mackintosh**, but she died soon after Margaret's birth, aged 36, presumably with childbirth issues. There are no further records for William or the daughters. Thinking optimistically, perhaps they all moved to Scotland? John and Ellen's second daughter **Ellen Bowskill** married **Edward Vardy**, a bookkeeper in 1841. They had a son, **Edwin Albert Vardy** but Edward died in 1851. Ellen moved to Liverpool, perhaps to be near her brothers. She spent many years running a boarding house, but her last years were in the workhouse which was the only medical provision available if you didn't have money. Their son, Edwin Albert Vardy, became a printer compositor and took his wife and eight children to live in London. He also spent his last years in the workhouse.

John and Ellen's third daughter **Alice Bowskill** had the most tragic story. In 1840 she married **John Himsworth**, a solicitor's clerk from Wakefield who had found employment in Settle with the Hartley firm of solicitors. **Richard Hardacre Buck**, a fellow solicitor's clerk, was a witness. Richard was the father of **Dr Charles William Buck**. Funnily enough, fifty years later, John Himsworth's half-nephews, brothers **Walter Himsworth** and **Whitaker Himsworth** married **Dr Charles William Buck's** cousins, sisters **Grace Buck** and **Mary Ann Buck**.

Alice had nine children but in 1860, two years after the last child was born, John took his own life [SC]. Fortunately, John left a reasonable estate for Alice. Their youngest child, **William Himsworth** died two years later and was buried with his father in an

SUICIDE.—Mr. John Himsworth, who for a period of 24 years has creditably held an important situation as clerk in the office of Messrs G. and W. Hartley of this town, solicitors, was found drowned in the river Ribble on Saturday morning, April 21st. The deceased had left his home as it was thought to take a walk on the preceding afternoon. For a few days before the deceased appeared to be in a rather low state of mind. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Temporary insanity" Deceased, who was 43 years of age, and from his position was well known and respected, has left a widow and nine children.

unmarked grave in Settle graveyard. John and Alice's daughter **Eliza Himsforth**, *'an imbecile'* spent most of her life in the workhouse. Mental health issues featured in both sides of this family as Alice died in an asylum in York in 1879, aged 62, having been a widow for nearly 30 years. Most of John and Alice's children had successful lives, several working in the expanding iron industry on the south coast of Cumbria.

John and Ellen's sons Robert and George stayed local. **Robert Bowskill** married **Jane Riley** of Long Preston in 1831 and that's where they lived to have five children. Robert worked as a glazier. Jane died in 1849 soon after the birth of son **William Bowskill**. Robert managed to work and look after the children for a few years but, by 1852, found himself and, presumably, the younger children, in Giggleswick workhouse. Whilst there Robert with three others was brought to court for *'refusing to conform to the rules and regulations of the house, by refusing to labour at the occupation set apart from them.'* They were all sentenced to 21 days imprisonment with hard labour *'which it is hoped will have a salutary effect on the would-be-gentlemen, and also be taken as a warning by the other inmates.'*

[3] By 1855 Robert was back in Long Preston but found himself in court again. In a most unusual case, the local policeman had entered Robert's house *'without asking leave or producing a warrant'* and searched his room and a *'Kist'* — a storage chest. The policeman found some broken thermometers containing 12 shillings worth of quicksilver (mercury) [SC]. The policeman was told *'he had no power to enter a house without a felony being committed'* and sufficient evidence being given to a Magistrate.... On the other hand, the Judge was not convinced about Robert's character *'but thought a sum (fine) of 5 shillings'* would meet all the case's requirements, presumably charged to Robert.

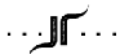
REFRACTORY PAUPERS.—At the Settle Union Workhouse, on Thursday week, John Brown, Robert Bowskill, George Ingham, and Roger Carr, all inmates of the Workhouse, were severally charged before Thomas Birbeck, John Birbeck, and William Robinson, Esquires, with refusing to conform to the rules and regulations of the house, by refusing to labour at the occupation separately set apart for them. They were severally com-

NORTH RIBBLESDALE ADVERTISER.

COUNTY COURT.—A case came before the Judge of the County Court, on Thursday the 25th, respecting the powers of constables entering private houses without due authority. The principal facts of the case were these:—The constable of Long Preston entered the house of Robert Bowskill, and searched through without asking leave or producing a warrant rumaging Kists and Bed Rooms. In the examination of a "Kist," in the house behind the door, the plaintiff alleged that several "Theometer" tubes had been broken, and a bottle containing four pounds of Mercury had been irretrievably squandered. After a patient hearing of the evidence, the learned Judge summed up in a long speech on the duties and powers of Constables, and the freedom and sanctity of the Poor man's Castle. He said the Constable had no power to enter a house without a felony had been committed and sufficient evidence had been given before a Magistrate, who being satisfied, would issue a warrant for search, which in this case had not been done. On the other hand the plaintiff did not appear to him to have been a man of that provident forecast or of that ability to purchase two years beforehand, 12s. worth of Quicksilver for a purpose so seldom required, he therefore to mark his sense of the case would not give malicious damages, but thought a sum of 5s. would meet all its requirements.

By the time of the next, 1861, census Robert and youngest son William had moved to live in Upper Settle. Robert spent his last days in the workhouse, a family tradition by now, before he died in 1878, aged 72 and was buried in Giggleswick churchyard. Robert and Jane's youngest son William married his maternal first cousin, **Elizabeth Walton Dean**, and they had four children. They lived at The Folly at the time of the 1891 census, the last resident farmer resident at The Folly. They moved to Morecambe where William made a living as a cab proprietor, the horse and cart variety of course. One of the family's neighbours at The Folly also moved to Morecambe and lived nearby. Robert and Jane's daughter **Mary Ann Bowskill** married **John Slater**, the son of a respectable wheelwright. However, the marriage didn't work and Mary Ann moved to Long Preston. Their incredible story is provided separately.

John and Ellen's son **George Bowskill** was a master butcher and lived in Upper Settle. When he was 48 he married a younger widow, **Agnes (Allen) Hardacre**, who arrived with her daughter **Agnes Ann** who later married **James Young**. George and Agnes' daughter **Elizabeth Ellen Bowskill** died in 1881, aged 19. Agnes died in 1885, aged 50, in Ingleton and George died in 1889, aged 77, in Giggleswick workhouse. They were all buried in Giggleswick graveyard.



Some 19th century Settle names are still with us today, but others, like the Bowskills, have just disappeared from the town. In Settle the Old graveyard contains four members of the Bowskill family in unmarked graves. In *Old FX40* **Mary Josephine Bowskill** was buried when she died in 1903, aged five. She was the granddaughter of Richard Bowskill via his son **John Bowskill** and wife **Alice Harrison**. In *Old FX44* we find **Elizabeth (Walton Dean) Bowskill**, the wife of Robert's son William who died in 1905, aged 62, their daughter **Annie Bowskill** who died in 1930, aged 56 and their daughter **Eliza (Bowskill) Iredale** who died in 1960, aged 85. These three all died in Lancashire but were brought back to Settle for burial.

Blacksmiths

The blacksmith was one of the essential craftsmen found in all towns, along with carpenters, saddlers, wheelwrights, masons, and shoemakers. The blacksmith-cum-farrier was probably the most important of these as metal and the horse were the basis of community life, for farms and drovers, householders and for tradesmen. This is probably why there are so many families with the surname Smith, originally deriving from the occupation. A farrier is a specialist in hoof care, whereas a blacksmith creates a wider variety of objects from iron and steel. Sons often followed their fathers, despite a 5 year apprenticeship. It was heavy, tiring and dangerous work. It was quite common for the blacksmith to treat animals that fell ill and the blacksmiths shop was a social centre as men waited for horses to be shod.

Throughout the 19th century, Settle smiths had a reputation for manufacturing the metal ornaments, often coloured with enamel, which were used for the decoration of harnesses worn by cart-horses along with brightly coloured ribbons and rosettes. These brightened up the Settle market. In Settle, in 1841, there were seven blacksmiths, located on Castleberg Lane, Chapel Street and Chapel Square. In 1851 there were 8 blacksmiths with 2 apprentices. At the time of the 1871 census the Settle to Carlisle Railway was being built. Unsurprisingly, there were 15 blacksmiths, 2 apprentices, 4 strikers. 11 of these workers had come from out of the area, some as far away as Somerset and Cornwall. Seven of them were lodgers so probably hadn't been here long. Most of these blacksmiths moved on after the building of the railway. The peak of horse use across the country was in 1901 and they were a significant force in WW1. However, new machinery reduced the need for blacksmiths after that.



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

Settle Graveyard Project

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 — Yorkshire Post, 2 — Lancaster Guardian, 3 — Lancaster Gazette

ph1 — photo credited to the Back in Settle Facebook site, — posted by Ben Mackenzie, ph2 — kindly provided by the Church, trustees logbooks, ph3 — kindly provided by John Reid, ph4 — Poems in the Craven Dialect by Thomas Twisleton, thanks to John Reid

SC, WLP — Settle Chronicle and the diaries of William Lodge Paley with the kind permission of the Museum of North Craven Life

JOHNNY BLAND, THE BLACKSMITH.

*Composed for, and recited at Settle Temperance Festival,
Christmas, 1865.*

A BLACKSMITH strang was Johnny Bland

He wrought within a smiddy ;
Wi' his girt hammer in his hand,
He used to bump the stiddy.

He was a chap of girt renown,
A chap weel knahn to ony ;
Naa other blacksmith i' the town
Could shoe a horse like Johnny.

He was a chap of giant length,
He stood up like a steeple ;
He was a chap of giant strength,
Compared wi' other people.
He was a tar to rant an' fight,
Naan liked wi' him to quarrel ;
An' yet wi' au his power and might,
He bow'd befoor a barrel.

When neet drew on her dusky veil,
His hammer ceecas'd to clatter ;
He'd gang an' cau for pints of ale,
Or else for gin an' watter.
An' thaar wi' his grim, sooty faace,
He'd sweear, an' drink an' riot ;
An' naa policeman i' the plaace
Durst try to mak him quiet.

JOHNNY BLAND, THE BLACKSMITH.

27

Or wi' a lot o' worthy mates,
A wondrous taal relatin',
They sagely wag their rusty pates,
Some question fine debatin',
Oft Johnny to his feet wad start,
And brandishin' a bottle,
Cry, "Landlord, fill another quart !
We'll niver be tectotal."

Now Johnny Bland he hed a wife,
Ye seldom see her marra,
Yet she, poor woman, led a life
Like a taad beneath a harra.
She was baath thin an' poorly drest,
Good claas she stood girt need on ;
An' warse be far than au the rest,
She oft hed life to feed on.

She was a clever, thrifty wife,
Hed he but reightly used her ;
But au through this their wedded life,
He saarly hed abused her.
He play'd sa weel a tyrant's part,
A cruel, harden'd sinner !
She pined away ; her varra heart
Was brokken down within her.

An' Johnny hed a lot o' barrs.—
He uscd to treat 'em shockin' ;
They ran about au specks an' darns,
Without a shoe or stockin'.
Asteead o' learnin' what was reight,
They war an awful sample ;
They learn'd to sweear, an' brawl, an' feight ;
They follow'd his example.

There com a chap yan afternoon,
Inquirin' efter Johnny ;
His claas were cloth, an' baath his shoon
Were black'd, an' shaan reight bouny.
Thaar Johnny stood, an' his girt hand
Again his ribs he planted,
An' tell'd him he was Johnny Bland,
An' ext him what he wanted.

The stranger spak him mild an' fair, —
 "I am a temperance man;
 I come to bid ye all beware,
 And try another plan.
 Strong drink it is a deadly curse,
 A foe to joy and gladness;
 It ruins health, it robs the purse,
 And fills your home with sadness."

Then Johnny turn'd his heead away,
 An' said, "I tell ye plain,
 "If that be au ye have to say
 "Ye'd best gang back again.
 "I've hecard sich stuff as that befoor,
 "But hed maar sense than heed it;
 "Saa now ye'd best walk off to t' door!"
 But still the stranger pleaded.

He tell'd him of his evil ways,
 Of wife an' barns neglected,
 An' how they mud see happier days,
 An' au become respected.
 The truth struck haam to Johnny now,
 His ee began to glisten;
 Wi' his rough hand he wiped his brow,
 An' stopt his wark to listen.

The stranger bid him snap the chain,
 Which in its links hed twined him,
 An' niver touch or taast again,
 But cast the cup behind him.
 Then Johnny said, "I hev been wrang,
 "I frankly ahu me blunder;
 "I've been a slave to drink ower lang;
 "I'll brek me bonds asunder."

Now Johnny's ceased to be a fool,
 An' left off gin an' whisky;
 His barns like others gang to school,
 An' naan maar fair and frisky.
 An' what a change is wi' his wife!
 But 'tis a change for t' better;
 I hardly think, upon my life,
 Ye'd ken her if ye met her.

Asteead o' gowns which look'd as though
 They hed bin chew'd be t' rattens,
 She can turn out wi' t' best an' show
 Her muslins an' her satins.
 Her haam is now a tidy plaace,
 An' kept i' ample order;
 She weears a happy, smilin' faace,
 Beneeath a smart cap border.

Ye drinkers, come an' sign yer naam,
 Wi' full determination;
 An' pray for strength when ye git haam,
 To keep ye fra temptation.
 Mak up yer minds to cast away
 Baath pewter pint an' bottle;
 Ye'll find ye'll niver rue the day
 Ye com to sign teetotal.

Ye maybe say drink maks ye strang,
 Ye cannot work without it:
 I beg to say, I think ye're wrang;
 That's t' lang an' short about it.
 There's mony a yan who ne'er drank ale,
 Or rum, or gin an' watter,
 Can stoutly wield a spaad or flail,
 Or mak a stiddy clatter.