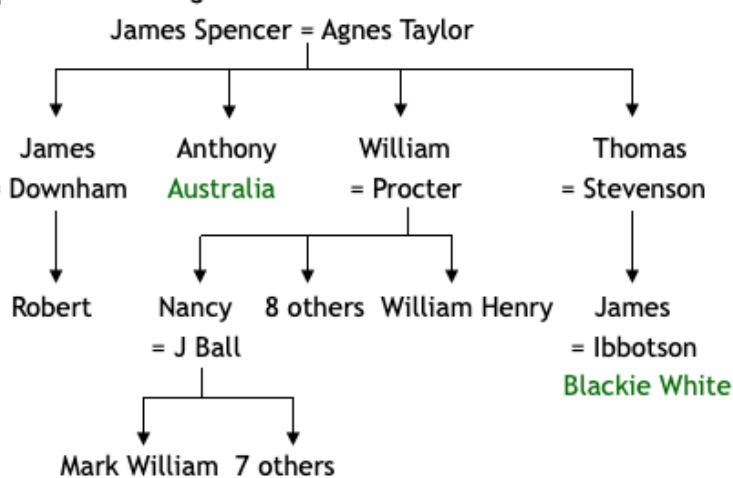


The Spencers, just trying to keep their heads above water?

James Spencer was a slater and plasterer from Skipton. In 1800 he married **Agnes Taylor** in Giggleswick and they had seven sons and two daughters. They seemed to live just above the breadline, occasionally referred to as paupers and living in the cheaper housing in Upper Settle and Castle Hill areas. Most of the sons and several grandsons also worked in plastering and slatering, most staying in Settle or Giggleswick. James and Agnes' son **James Spencer** married

Spencer Ball Family Tree



Isabella Downham and they had several children. Infant **Richard Spencer** was one of the first burials in Settle graveyard, in the infants' corner, *Anc EX29*. Their son **Robert Spencer** got up to a bit of mischief! In 1853, when he was 16, he was found guilty of 'brutal assault', along with **Robert Preston**, of attacking **Ellen Clark**. Ellen worked at Langcliffe Hall for **Ann (Hoggarth) Swale** and had run an errand to **Rev Swale** (her son) at Ingfield, now the Falcon Manor Hotel. On her way back she was 'thrown down and otherwise ill-treated' by the two lads — another young lad gave evidence against his two friends to avoid punishment! Robert Spencer was fined £2 plus costs whereas Robert Preston spent two months in Wakefield House of Correction rather than pay his £4 fine [1]. Robert Spencer moved away to Lancashire where he married, had a family and worked as a labourer. Isabella, her mother and a grandson are buried in an unmarked grave in the Ancient graveyard, *DX14*.

BRUTAL ASSAULT.—On Saturday last, Robert Preston, a weaver, aged 16 or 17 years, and Robert Spencer, a farm servant, of about the same age, both residents of Settle, were apprehended and taken before John Kirkbeck and William Robinson, Esquires, charged with a most brutal assault committed on a young woman named Alice Clark. Miss Clark is a domestic servant in the service of Mrs Swale, of Langcliffe Hall, near Settle. On Thursday last she came on an errand to the Rev. Mr Swales, of Ingfield House (a little way out of Settle), and returned to Langcliffe, at about 9 o'clock in the evening. Whilst crossing North field, on her way home, she was suddenly seized by the two prisoners, who threw her down and otherwise ill-treated her, and were about to proceed to greater violence, when, fortunately, her screams attracted a young man to the spot, whose footsteps being heard,

the scoundrels ran off. Another lad—who, after much trouble and difficulty, was ascertained to be a joiner, of the name of James Duckworth—was in company with the two prisoners when the offence was committed, but took no active part in the proceedings. As it was a dark night, the young woman was unable to swear very positively to the prisoners, and it was therefore thought desirable, in order to fix the charge upon Preston and Spencer, to make Duckworth (who had made a confession) a witness against his two companions, rather than make him a prisoner. The conduct of Preston was shown to have been something worse than that of his fellow-prisoner, and he was fined £4 and costs, and in default of payment was committed to Wakefield House of Correction for two months. Spencer was ordered to pay a fine of £2 and costs, or go to Wakefield for one month. He, however, chose to pay.

James and Agnes' son **Anthony Spencer** decided on a different life — he married **Emma Braithwaite** and they emigrated to Tyabb on the outskirts of Melbourne, Australia. When he died, a plaque was erected in Anthony's memory 'In memory of Anthony Spencer who was appointed in 1865 as one of four foundation trustees of this cemetery born 1805, died Tyabb 1878, installed by Shire of Hastings SOH Historical Society.'

James and Agnes' son **William Spencer** was another slater and plasterer [sc] who lived near his parents, close to the old Primitive Methodists'

settleresearch@gn

WILLIAM SPENCER,
SLATER AND PLASTERER,
SETTLE,
BEGS to announce that he has always in stock at the
RAILWAY STATION,
GREY SLATE AND RIDGE STONES,
Of the best quality, at moderate prices.

Settle Graveyard Project

Chapel in Upper Settle. In 1833 he married **Frances Procter**. William and Frances had the most appalling luck or lacked the skills to raise children. A huge gravestone in Giggleswick graveyard commemorates the lives of James and Agnes on one side, and the lives of William, Frances and eight children who predeceased them. Just one daughter survived.

Sacred to the memory of James Spencer, late of Settle, slater and plasterer, who died on the 5th day of March 1848 aged 78 years. Agnes his wife died 4th April 1859 aged 88 years.

To the memory of the following children of William Spencer of Settle and Frances his wife:

Richard Spencer died 6th Feb'y 1837 aged 6 months

Anthony Spencer died 24th May 1838 aged 3 weeks

Henry Spencer died 19th May 1841 aged 9 years

William Spencer died 25th Sep'r 1841 aged 4 weeks

Agnes Spencer died 26th Dec'r 1847 aged 4 years

Albert Spencer died 16th March 1848 aged 19 weeks

Mary Ann Spencer died 26th Dec'r 1854 aged 15 years

Thou art gone to the grave but we will not deplore thee, Whose God was thy ransom, thy guardian and guide. He gave thee and took thee, and he will restore thee, And death has no sting, for the Saviour hath died.



Frances Spencer mother to the above died 12th Dec'r 1861 aged 50 years. William Henry Spencer died Nov'r 7th 1873 aged 28 years. Also of the above William Spencer of Settle who died July 14th 1884 aged 73 years.

Tragically, seven of those children had died in infancy or childhood. The first of two of them, **Richard** and **Anthony**, died before the graveyard at Settle church was opened and so were buried in Giggleswick. Naturally, William and Nancy, his parents and the remaining children were buried with them. Their gravestone is huge and stands alone behind the altar of the church. It's extremely unlikely that the Spencer family could have afforded this stone so it was probably a community effort under the circumstances.

It's enough to turn a man to drink . . . In June June 1853 William was so drunk that he broke one of his legs [2]. William and Frances' daughter **Mary Ann**, died aged 15, in December 1854. A couple of months before that, William was convicted of being a '*Brutal Husband*'[1], assaulting poor Frances who had gone to fetch him from the alehouse '*which he was in the frequent habit of visiting.*' He was represented by **John Cowburn** who managed to keep his punishment down to four months with hard labour in the House of Correction. Witnesses seemed to have '*a desire, evidently, to screen prisoner as much as*

RESULTS OF DRINK.—Last Thursday week, Mr. William Spencer, slater and plasterer, of this town, being the worse for liquor, fell in the street and broke one of his legs. He is, we are glad to hear, going on quite as favourably as might have been expected.

A BRUTAL HUSBAND.—On Thursday the 10th, William Spencer, plasterer, Upper Settle, was apprehended and taken before the Magistrates, on a charge of assaulting and beating his wife. At his request, he was remanded and liberated on bail until Saturday, to give him an opportunity of procuring professional assistance. Accordingly, on that day he appeared again, and was represented by Mr Cowburn, who pleaded zealously on his behalf, and probably saved him two months more hard labour than he was awarded. As it was, he was committed to the House of Correction for 4 months' hard labour. The assault was proved by witnesses who gave their evidence reluctantly, and with a desire, evidently, to screen prisoner as much as possible. The facts of the case are these:—

The poor woman had gone to fetch her husband from an alehouse, which he was in the frequent habit of visiting, and on their reaching the outside of the house, they got to quarrelling. He knocked her down, and whilst she was attempting to pick up her cap, which he had got beneath his feet, he kicked her upon the corner of the left eye, thereby producing a severe wound; the violence of the blow caused her to fall backwards against a wall, and she thus received another severe cut on the back of the head. For some days she appeared to be in a state of perfect stupor, and her life was for a time considered in danger. She is, however, fortunately for the prisoner, slowly recovering.

Settle Graveyard Project

possible.’ Daughter Mary Ann died at around the same time that William would have been released. Frances and William didn’t live together at the time of the following census which was probably a good idea. Frances died in 1861, aged 50 and William lived to see another son and grandson die under tragic circumstances. before spending his last few years in the workhouse, the only medical provision available for the poor. At least Frances was spared that.

William and Frances’ son **William Henry Spencer**, born in 1845, undertook an apprenticeship in mechanics and, at the time of the 1871 census, was described as a ‘smith and mechanic’ living in Twisleton’s Yard with his wife **Martha Cook**, a rope maker’s daughter from Liverpool, who was nearly ten years his senior. They had married in 1867. William Henry’s skills were of great use during the construction of the Settle and Carlisle Railway from 1869 onwards.

On 7th November 1873, aged 28, William Henry was working in the ‘new station ground’ in Settle when he met his death. He was described as a ‘fireman on a railway engine.’ The inquest at the Commercial Hotel explained that, ‘Whilst engaged in his ordinary occupation he by some means got between the buffers of some waggons and was severely crushed’ [2]. Being crushed between wagons was one of the most common deaths for the navvies killed in Settle. William Henry’s widow, Martha, returned to Liverpool and married widower, **Andrew Clark**, a cotton warehouseman.

FATAL ACCIDENT.—An accident, which terminated fatally, happened on Friday last to a young man, named William Henry Spencer, a resident of Settle, and employed on the new Station ground of the Settle and Carlisle Railway. Whilst engaged in his ordinary occupation he by some means got between the buffers of some of the waggons and was severely crushed. He was conveyed to his home, but only survived few hours. An inquest was held on the following evening at the Commercial Hotel, by Mr. Brown, the coroner, when a verdict of “Accidental death” was returned.

Settle November 1873 Settle	William Henry Spencer	Male	28 years	Fireman on a Railway engine	Accidentally Crushed between two waggons and killed	Information received from Thomas P. Brown Deputy Coroner for Yorkshire Inquest held 8 November 1873	Settle November 1873
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William and Frances’ only surviving child was **Nancy**, who had married **John Ball**, a quarry labourer in 1858. It’s really not a competition but John had his own tragic background. John was one of five children of **Mark William Ball** and **Ann (Procter) Ball** from Halton near Caton, Lancashire. Ann died when John was seven, after which his father and four siblings found themselves in the workhouse. John was the only child to survive the 1840s.

John worked as a limeworks labourer while Nancy brought up six sons and two daughters. During the 1870s they began to supplement their income by running the Greenhead common lodging house, providing accommodation for up to 20 ‘guests’. Common lodging houses or ‘fourpenny hotels’ provided the cheapest accommodation outside the workhouse with very basic cramped sleeping arrangements known as ‘coffin beds.’ Since the Common Lodging House Act in 1851 basic moral and sanitary standards were imposed; the separation of the sexes, the number of beds, designated sleeping areas, chamber pot, privy and ashpit arrangements, daily cleaning expectations and a rule that lodging houses should be vacated between 10am and late afternoon. This was to encourage residents to get out and find work! Anyone with money stayed at the inns. Lodging houses had a bad reputation for crime and prostitution and so were regularly checked by the local ‘Inspector of lodging houses’ who took



lodging house keepers to court for any breach of the rules.

This is where John and Nancy's children were raised. If things hadn't gone well enough, John and Nancy would have found themselves as a guest in a common lodging house, or, even worse, the workhouse. Their eldest son, **Mark William Ball**, named after John's father, was born in 1861. Mark William would have been 12 when uncle William Henry Spencer was killed on the railway. Despite this, the railway was the obvious place for Mark William to find work. By the age of 16, and probably earlier, Mark William worked on the railway at Batty Green at Ribbleshead, taking the workmen's train from Settle to get to each shift. On 24 April 1877, Mark William took his own life whilst running an errand for his foreman. Tragically, his disappearance was not even noticed that day as his father, John, supposed he had missed the train back to Settle and stayed over with someone. Obviously, there were no phones! Mark was discovered in a cabin by workmen early the following morning [CH]. This family had such awful tragedies to cope with.

SUICIDE AT BATTY GREEN.—On Thursday, the 24th ult., a youth named Mark William Ball, who resided with his parents at Settle, and was employed on the railway at Batty Green, committed suicide on the above day. It appears that he was sent on an errand by the foreman of the works to a small cabin a short distance from Batty Green. As the foreman was attending a funeral on the afternoon of that day, the boy's absence was not noticed. About ten minutes past six o'clock on Friday morning two workmen entered the cabin, and there found the boy suspended by the neck with a handkerchief, quite dead. The men left him, and the body was not cut down until the arrival of P. C. Brown, from Ingleton, at a quarter to ten o'clock. The boy's father found him missing on Thursday evening, on the arrival of the workmen's train at Settle, but thought he had stopped all night with some one. An inquest was held at the Railway Tavern, Batty Green, on Monday, before T. P. Brown, Esq., and a verdict returned that he had committed suicide, but there was no evidence to show the state of his mind. Deceased was 16 years of age. The Coroner remarked in his address that it was the duty of the parties who first found him to have cut him down.

When Nancy died in 1896, aged 61, John married again, this time to **Jane Ralph** who continued to look after grandchildren and run the lodging house after John died in 1901, aged 70. Jane was buried in an unmarked grave *Old CX38* when she died in 1915, aged 66.

John, Nancy and son Mark William are buried in an unmarked grave in Giggleswick churchyard. They also had the company of 2 year old **Florence May Ball**, daughter of their son **Charles Ball** who died in 1901. Incredibly Charles also chose to work on the railway. Perhaps the shock losing their daughter prompted Charles' first wife, **Lizzie Day**, who was thought to be of mixed race, to have a photo taken at the Horner studios with their son **George Edward Ball** [ph4]. It would have been incredibly expensive for a working class family. Charles and Lizzie didn't have any more children. They are buried in the unmarked *New KX06* and Charles' second wife **Mary Walton** was buried in *Old JX32* with her parents.

John and Nancy's daughter **Frances Ann Ball** had an illegitimate son who she named **William Henry Ball** after her uncle, before marrying tailor, **John Sharp**,



Mrs Ball and son, photograph by the Horner Studio.
Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

from Langcliffe. Two of their infant children were buried in the unmarked *Old DX12* with their infant half-nephew **Arthur Ball**, son of William Henry Ball and his wife **Agnes Dugdale** from Kendal.

On 28 May 1898 John and Nancy's son **James Henry Ball** married **Mary Jane Taylor** ten years his junior. James Henry worked as a quarryman and Mary Jane took over the running of the common lodging house — Nancy and Mary Jane must have been strong women to deal with the rough and tumble of life in a lodging house. The lodging house business continued until the 1920s. Their eldest son, **John Thomas Ball** died, aged just six, in 1907. James Henry and Mary Jane also had four daughters and an adopted son, **Malcolm Ball Charlesworth** who seems to have been James Henry's illegitimate son with **Myra Charlesworth**, from Staffordshire who had been working as a barmaid in Settle since 1911. Malcolm worked in the local quarries. Myra had previously had another illegitimate son, **Wilfred Reginald Charlesworth** who was fathered by **Robert William Bell** [ph5] just before he went to war. Robert William Bell, a joiner, joined 'Tunstill's Men' in September 1914 and never had any leave before he was killed in action on the Western Front on 5 October 1916 aged 30. Myra moved away to Barnsley by 1916. William Reginald Charlesworth was adopted by **Clarissa (Cox) Bradley** in Settle and became a farm bailiff at Hornby Castle.



Two daughters, **Lucy** and **Monica** also died in infancy and were buried in the unmarked *Old FX22* with their brother John Thomas and another daughter **Dora**, who died aged 28 soon after her marriage to **John George Murray**, a farmer. The grave was filled by their James Henry and Mary Jane's son-in-law **George Samuel Thornton**, the husband of daughter **Paulina**. Paulina (Ball Thornton) Ralph was buried in New IX32. James Henry and Mary Jane were buried in the next plot *Old FX23* with Mary Jane's infant nephew, **Richard Taylor**. Richard was the son of **George Alan Marsden Taylor** who had been named after his uncle **George Alan Marsden**. Uncle George had died of smallpox in August 1871, aged seven [2]. Smallpox outbreaks were rightly feared in the 19th century and little George's death was right in the middle of the main smallpox outbreak at Ribbleshead which killed around 30 navvies and other family members. Understandably **Mr John Lister** and **William Altham** organised for clothing and their home to be disinfected promptly.

SMALL POX — We regret to have to announce the outbreak of small pox here, by which a boy aged 7 years, the son of Mr. William Marsden, fruit dealer, has had to succumb to this direful disease. The deceased, who had only been ill about five days, died on Wednesday last and was interred the same day. Information was immediately given to the local authorities here, who without delay took every precaution to prevent the spread of the disease. The premises, clothing, &c., have been thoroughly disinfected; and it is to be hoped that the prompt measures taken by the advice of Mr. Lister, the Clerk to the Guardians here, aided by Mr. Altham, the medical attendant, will effectively put a stop to any further outbreak.

John and Nancy's daughter **Mary Agnes Ball** married a farm labourer **Albert Heaton** but died upon the birth of her third daughter. She was buried in *Old DX71* with her infant daughter **Nancy Alice**. John and Nancy's son **Albert Ball**, a quarryman was buried with his wife **Annie Cartwright** and a 64 year old son, another **Mark William Ball** in the unmarked *New KX24*.

Going back a couple of generations we meet James and Agnes' last son **Thomas Spencer**, also a slater and plasterer. He married **Eliza Stevenson** and they had five children although youngest, **George Spencer**, died in 1846 aged four, just two years after his mum died. By the time of the 1861 census Thomas had taken the remaining family to live in a cottage on Constitution Hill, now

Settle Graveyard Project

Robin Cottage. Thomas died in 1862, aged just 53 and left the whole of his surprisingly generous estate of £200 to eldest son James. Thomas and Eliza were buried in the Ancient graveyard in unmarked graves, DX20 with infant son George Spencer.

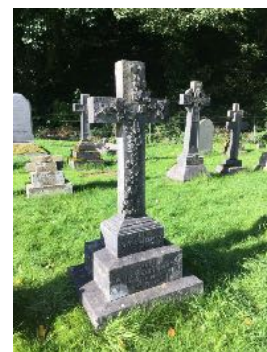
Son James Spencer took over his dad's house and business [SC]. Before this James had left Settle to take on the high seas as a mariner. At the time of the 1861 census, James, a 'mariner' was in Liverpool together with **Jane Ibbotson**, a weaver, also from

JAMES SPENCER,
Slater and Plasterer,
Respectfully announces that he intends carrying on the business of his father, lately deceased, and hopes to receive the patronage which his father received for so many years.
Constitution Hill, Settle, October 1st, 1862.

James Spencer	Widower	Mar 26	Mariner	Yorkshire
Jane Ibbotson	Do	26	Weaver	Do

Settle. A man and an unmarried woman boarding together — scandalous! Jane was one of two illegitimate daughters of **Betty Ibbotson**. Betty died in the middle of July that summer and three weeks later, on 12 August 1861, James and Jane married. They didn't have children and stayed in Constitution Hill for the rest of their lives.

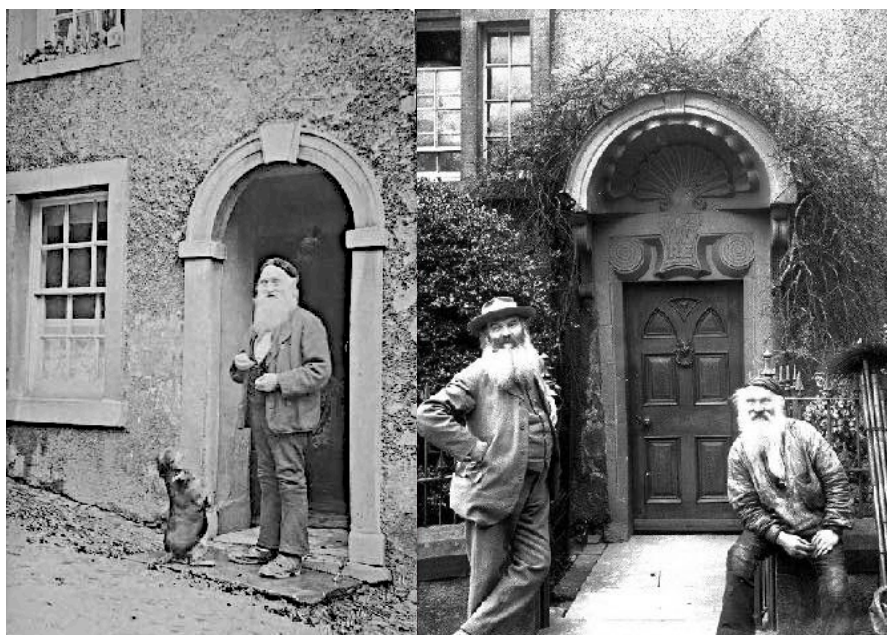
Unlike the rest of the family, James and Jane could afford an exquisitely carved stone when they were buried in *Old E56*. From the inscription it appears to have been erected after Jane's death, but before James'. Where did that money come from? James may have taken great care of his father's inheritance, or was there another reason?



In loving memory of Jane, wife of James Spencer who died September 18th 1905, aged 71 years. Also of the above James Spencer died November 8th 1909 aged 76 years, Old E56

In later census returns James described his occupation as 'slater, plasterer and chimney sweep' and so it seems that James, known as Jim, was one of Settle's best loved characters, regularly photographed outside his cottage and outside 'Hillside' on the opposite side of Constitution Hill. [ph1,2,3]. He was known as 'Blackie White' so called because he swept chimneys in the morning and white-washed in the afternoon. His life merited a chapter in the book 'A Village in Craven' by W Riley, written in 1925 [A]. The author admits 'much of the

Constitution Hill, SETTLE, PA 29 1861
Mr. John Lister
Dr. to JAMES SPENCER,
SLATER AND PLASTERER.
** LICENSED + CHIMNEY + SWEEPER. **



Settle Graveyard Project

portraiture is of a composite nature, imagination filling in gaps'. However, several aspects of the story in the book ring true.

Mr Riley describes *'the greater part of his life had been spent at sea and when he came ashore 'for good — or otherwise' he remained a sailor, to the joy and edification of all us young folk.'* He amused everyone with tales of his travels although many stories seemed to be *'borrowed freely from that inexhaustible treasure-house Arabian Nights'*. *'Every line on the man's face was made to curve into a smile and there was more boyish fun in his eyes, more real twinkle of merriment than any half-dozen mischievous lads could have displayed if they had pooled their resources. With Blackie the sweeping of chimneys was an art, and he himself was an artist, entitled (as he claimed) to the use of the M.A. for was he not a master of two arts — chimney sweeping and whitewashing?'*



BLACKIE WHITE THE SWEEP.

According to Riley, Blackie had a tabby cat and a grey parrot with a red tail which had been captured especially for him in an African forest by his friend and hero, Bimbo the Blackman [A]. Blackie *'had many excellent qualities but the most noticeable was humour, if kindness be taken for granted. His smile was for everybody and it was the language of his kindly heart. I hardly ever saw him when his eyes were not twinkling as if fun were hiding behind them.'* *'I remember well the day of his death, and the shock the unexpected news gave to old and young. When I saw tears in grandmother's eyes I broke down and sobbed. Every child mourned the loss of a friend, and when he was buried children led the way to the churchyard and carpeted the floor of the grave with flowers.'*

Even if just a fraction of the account is true Jim was a remarkable and good character and it's wonderful that this unlucky family also produced this local legend. Perhaps the community contributed to his stone too?



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 — Kendal Mercury, 2 — Lancaster Gazette

A — A Village in Craven' by W Riley and illustrated by Elizabeth Brockbank, thanks to John Reid.

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ph1 – photo kindly provided by John Reid, ph2 – credited to the Back in Settle Facebook site, submitted by Graeme Lawson, ph3 – credited to the Back in Settle Facebook site, from the Ben McKenzie collection, ph4 – Image 2022.1.68.6 from the Horner Photographic Studio Collection provided courtesy of the Museum of North Craven Life, ph5 – credited to Craven's Part in the Great War



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CH - with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer

SC – Settle Chronicle with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust

Blackie White on Castle Hill, credited to the Back in Settle Facebook site, Rachel's photo album

