

## John Wilson, if at first you don't succeed . .

**John Wilson** was born in Leeds, the fourth of eight children of **Jonathan Wilson**, an upholsterer and his wife **Elizabeth Killingbeck**. After John's birth the family moved to Halifax. Dad Jonathan died when John was 12. Mum Elizabeth brought up the surviving children and, by the age of 16, John was already a pupil teacher. With such a common surname it's not clear what happened to the rest of the family however, John appears to have moved to Burnley to work as a teacher and gain his certificate of education. There he met and married **Grace Windle**, from a weaving family, and they started on their family of eight children, although three died in infancy.

After the death of their eldest two children, **William Henry Wilson** and **John Wilson**, the family moved to Settle. In November 1862 John had been appointed headmaster of Settle National School which had only recently been built on the hill in Upper Settle. Until 1853 the school was on Kirkgate but was rebuilt in Upper Settle to allow the construction of Victoria Hall. John's salary was £50 plus some payments from pupils. By the time John was appointed, the children of farmers paid 5 shillings a quarter, 3 shillings for children of artisans and tradesmen and 1 shilling and sixpence for labourers' children. There was quite an incentive to recruit pupils! The (unqualified) pupil teachers who supported him were paid £2, for the least experienced, increasing to £15. The Wilsons lived in '*Plantation Cottage*', the headmaster's residence at the left hand end of the school building. Various improvements were made to the school buildings during John's tenure including panelling the classrooms and building a wall around the (outside) lavatories '*to prevent a nuisance being caused by other boys*'. The headmaster's log books for the school are still in the possession of the Primary School and are fascinating. Education had very different priorities in those days!

Unfortunately, it wasn't all plain sailing for John, however there are some positive entries. On May 5th 1876 John gave everyone a half day to mark the opening of the Settle to Carlisle railway!

An inspection report in 1864 said, '*The character of the handwriting needs improvement and the needlework*

A handwritten note on a piece of paper with a white border. The text reads: "May 5 gave holiday on Monday afternoon for opening of the Settle &amp; Carlisle R.R."

*requires very great attention but there is good evidence of hard work conscientiously performed for which Mr Wilson deserves praise. It would be better for the maps to be hung on the walls than be kept rolled up in a case*'. However, aside from maps and needlework there were other, more pressing problems. By 1870 staffing had dropped below what was regarded as sufficient to provide for the average attendance and so the school had £10 deducted from its budget, which won't have helped! By 1874 staffing levels had got worse and the instruction of the infants was also poor. '*The infants are decidedly backwards. Unless the infants are more satisfactorily managed next year the grant will be seriously endangered*'. On another occasion inspectors found nine children absent when they had been marked present. In 1876, following three bad inspection reports, John was warned by the Managers that he would be given notice unless things improved. In anticipation of what must have felt inevitable, John took on other work alongside the school and so, in 1878, the Managers had to tell John that he '*could not take on other employment without their permission but could continue 'for the present' to be the Secretary of the Co-operative Society*'.

In 1879 there was an appalling inspection report. '*There is a serious falling off in the work throughout the school and a marked absence of intelligence and spirit in the children. The paperwork is decidedly bad. The arithmetic speaks for itself. Several papers in this subject were sent*

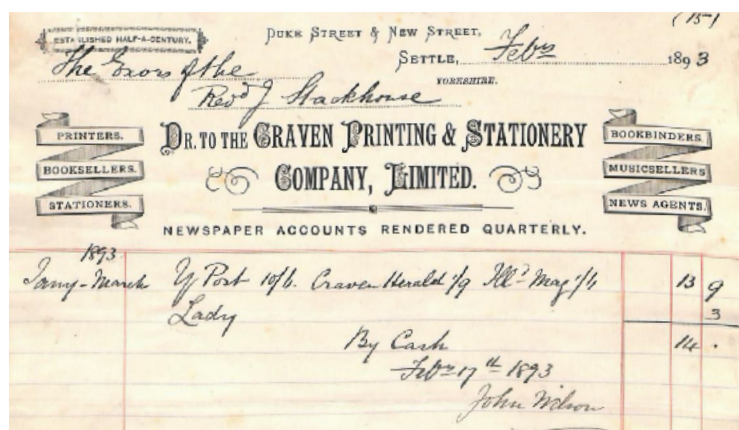


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in blank. Reading is generally poor and the geography was very moderate. Two of the reading books used by the first and second standard were not of sufficient length and difficulty. A deduction of one-tenth has been made from the grant on account of faults of instruction. Much improvement will be required next year if a heavier penalty is to be avoided.'

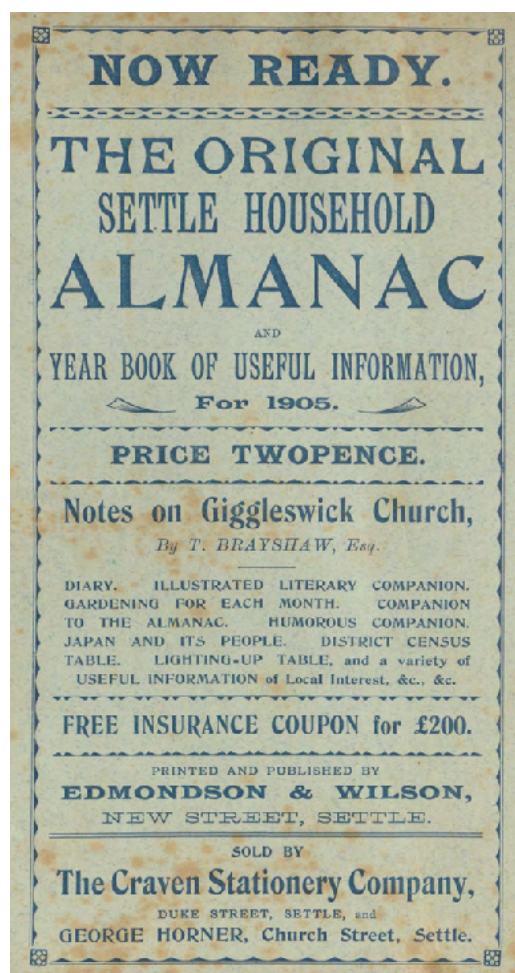
Oh dear. A few days later John obtained leave to be absent from school and then handed in his notice, just as the Managers had drawn up the documentation to terminate his contract. John was 44 and had a large family to feed. He was very soon afterwards replaced by **Frank Charles Stanley** who made immediate, significant improvements across the board. Interestingly the Managers gave Frank a starting salary of £140, considerably more than they had paid John Wilson!

At the time of the next census return the family lived in Kirkgate and John described himself as a 'certificated teacher', implying that he was employed, but may not have been. In the following census return, in 1891, John gave his occupation as the 'manager of a stationery printing company'. He had taken over the management of the Craven Printing and Stationery Company on the corner of New Street (Station Road these days) and Duke Street on the corner nearest town [ph1]. It had previously been managed by **Henry Gore** and the shareholders included the likes of **Hector Christie** and **Thomas Clark**. But John didn't last long there - perhaps he preferred not to



work for other people? However, during the early 1900s John and Grace's youngest son, **William Herbert Wilson**, having learned from that business, went into partnership with **Walter Edmondson** as 'publishers and printers' [ph2] and that business continued until the 1940s. By the early 1900s the Wilsons had moved out of the Station Road property and **Thomas Tomlinson** soon took over the Craven Stationery Company. So, what was John doing while son John was printing? In census returns the family lived at Bishopdale Court and he described his occupation as a general accountant and, later, a tax collector and Secretary to the Coop.

Grace died in 1897, aged 61 but John lived to the age of 88 when he died of a sudden heart attack. His newspaper obituary described him as 'an old and faithful servant' and described that, in the 40 years since his retiring from the school, John had been a collector of taxes, secretary to the Settle Cooperative Society, the Craven Assembly Rooms, the Settle and District Co-operative Club House and was auditor to the Settle Gas Company, the Craven Savings Bank and several other institutions. It seems John had at last found his niche in society. 'Despite his mature age, Mr Wilson retained all his faculties up to the end and saw clearly



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without the aid of spectacles. He was a Tory of the old-fashioned school and, until recently, took an active part locally in every Parliamentary election. His position as tax collector will be difficult to fill as his wonderful grasp of figures enabled him to show quickly any doubter his exact position.' [CH]

Despite his mature age, Mr. Wilson retained all his faculties up to the end, and saw clearly without the aid of spectacles. He was a Tory of the old-fashioned school, and until recently took an active part locally in every Parliamentary election. His position as income-tax collector will be difficult to fill, as his wonderful grasp of figures enabled him to show quickly any doubter his exact position. Mr. Wilson



John, Grace and spinster daughter **Mary Annie Wilson**, who died in 1931 aged 62, are buried in an unmarked grave *Old DX65*. What happened to their other children? As we know the eldest two sons died in infancy in Blackburn. Daughter **Mary Ellen Wilson** also died an infant and was buried in Settle's Ancient graveyard. Of the remaining children **Elizabeth, Mary Annie** and **William Herbert Wilson** lived together in Bishopdale Court until they died. William Herbert died in 1944, aged 70 and was buried in an unmarked grave in the new section of the graveyard, *New GX18*.

Only two children married. Daughter **Margaret Ellen Wilson** married **Thomas Henry Spencer**, a nephew of **Jim Spencer**, aka 'Blackie White'. After their wedding they moved straight to Bishop Auckland in County Durham to have their family. This left son **Arthur Edward Wilson** who worked as an upholsterer, in the footsteps of his grandfather. In 1892 he married **Isabella Davison** who was from York, the sixth child of a millwright, but was brought up in Settle with her maternal aunt **Jane (Holroyd) Batty** and her husband **Joseph Morphet Batty** who were the innkeepers of the Royal Oak and then the Naked Man and didn't have children of their own. The Holroyds were benevolent people. At the time of the 1871 census Jane (Holroyd) Batty's parents had two spinster sisters living with them, John Wilson's younger sisters, **Mary Ann** and **Nancy Wilson**. Isabella Davison's sister **Jane Elizabeth Davison** married **Robert Batty**, a distant relation to her husband Joseph Morphet Batty, and was the innkeeper at the Crown Vaults in Settle, next door to Jane.

Anyway, back to Arthur Edward Wilson and Isabella. Two years after their wedding, in 1894, they had a son, **John Edward Wilson**. Soon afterwards, Isabella's widowed mum, **Sarah Ann (Holroyd) Davison** came to live with them in Settle. This may have been a deal breaker! At the time of the following census return Isabella was still helping aunt Jane Batty in Settle with their son and Arthur Edward Wilson was in Bradford, working as a furniture remover and describing himself as widowed. Naughty Arthur Edward.

Son John Edward was a bright lad, obtaining a scholarship to Giggleswick School. He followed his grandfather into teaching, picking up experience as a pupil teacher back at Giggleswick School. He trained and qualified at St John's College in York, which is not surprising as his maternal grandparents lived there. He obtained a post as assistant schoolmaster at Edlington County School in Doncaster.

As war approached John Edward Wilson [ph3] signed up to the King's Royal Rifles and trained in Essex. Whilst down south he became engaged to **Doris Hilda Hooton**, an accountant's daughter. His attitude was so good that he won promotion to Lance Corporal. However, like so many others John Edward died of wounds in France, on 6 November 1916. Isabella and Dorrie wrote a tribute to him which included:

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He left his home in perfect health,  
 He looked so young and brave;  
 We little thought how soon he would  
 Be laid in a hero's grave.

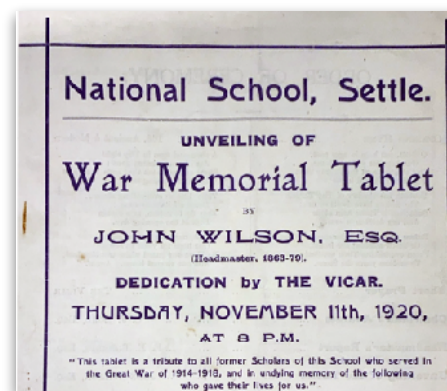


Poor Isabella died in 1937, aged 66, in Harrogate but was brought back for burial with her mother. Their stone commemorated the life of John Edward too, in plot Old D16.

***In Loving Memory of Sarah Ann Davison who died Dec. 16th 1897 aged 63 years also Isabella Wilson daughter of the above who died March 28th 1937 aged 66 years. Also John Edward Wilson dearly beloved son of the above killed in action Nov 6th 1916 aged 21 years. At rest.***

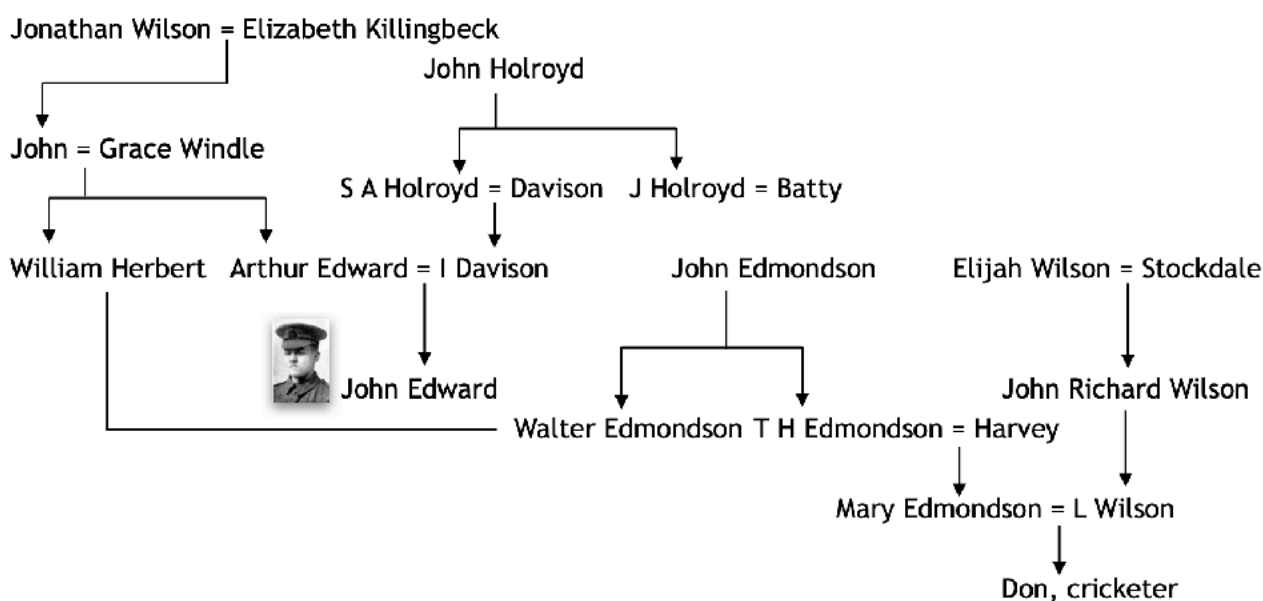


Grandad John Wilson will have been very proud to officially unveil the War Memorial tablet at the National School which is still on display [ph2]. *'This tablet is a tribute to all former Scholars of this School who served in the Great War of 1914 - 1918, and in undying memory of the following who gave their lives for us.'* There was also a dedication by the vicar, **Rev Walter Edward Linney**. A summary of the war heroes is included as part of this project.



Walter Edmondson, who was in partnership with William Herbert Wilson as printers and publishers had a younger brother, **Thomas Henry Edmondson** who was a postman in Langcliffe and Settle. He married **Annie Harvey** and their eldest daughter, **Mary Edmondson**, married **Leonard Wilson** who was no relation to the Wilsons above.

### Wilsons



Leonard's grandparents were **Elijah Wilson**, a stonemason and **Ellen Stockdale** who married in 1869 and lived in the house adjoining the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Upper Settle. Elijah was an unusual character. They had five children in the eight years following their marriage — quite an achievement. However, it seems Elijah was not a family man. In following census returns Ellen

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was bringing up the children alone with no sign of Elijah. Then, in the Giggleswick Parish Magazine for October 1891 [ph2] it was explained that Elijah had died at Manhattan Hospital in New York in June that year. So, he had run away, all the way to the States. Widow Ellen lived to the age of 80 and was buried in Giggleswick graveyard.

Incidentally, on 1 April 1888, Elijah's nephew, another **Elijah Wilson**, the son of **John Wilson**, a gardener at Stackhouse, discovered a corpse in the river Ribble near his home. On 31 March 1888 a man called **Robert Abel**, who had *'taken more stimulants than he ought to have done'* drowned in the Ribble on his way home to Stackhouse [1]. Robert was from Aberdeen but had worked as a gamekeeper for the family of **Joseph St Clare Radcliffe** who seems to have been living at Stackhouse at that time.

Meanwhile Leonard's father, Elijah's son, was **John Richard Wilson**, who began his career working in the lime quarries but then became a mechanic at Ellis' garage. He married **Mary Agnes Irving**. At the time of the 1921 census 14 year old Leonard was working as a *'boy assistant'* for the Settle depot of the Anglo American Oil Company. After marrying Mary Edmondson in 1933 they moved to the Ingfield estate and Leonard started a long career as an ambulance driver in charge of Settle's ambulance service. The ambulance was a Rolls Royce, one of just a handful in the area and was stationed and maintained by Ellis' garage. Fred Ellis was the only local man certified to service Rolls Royce vehicles which included the hearse as well as the ambulance.

On 28 January 1960 at 1.45am, during a blizzard and deep snow, there was a fatal rail accident on the Mains View embankment in which an express passenger train from Glasgow to London collided with a goods train. Five passengers died and nine were injured in *'Craven's worst rail crash'* [ph1]. 61 people survived and escaped injury. *'It was just like a bomb going off'*. Leonard led the response by 11 ambulance crews. The **Bradley sisters**, who lived on Mains View next to the crash *'earned the praise of over 100 passengers, police, firemen and ambulance men for their efforts to provide hot drinks during blizzard conditions. For four hours they made tea for a constant procession of people whom they invited into their home, evidence of which could be seen by the snow-sodden carpets'*... As soon as the sisters heard *'the terrible hissing of steam... we immediately went down and put kettles on, said Miss Florence.'* Settle doctors **David** and **Anthony Hyslop** and Dr Connor attended to the casualties. It appeared that the piston rod on the express train had broken and swung across the other line causing the goods train to derail.

Leonard and Mary's son, **Don Wilson**, born in 1937, became a household name, complete with his own Wikipedia page. Don developed cricket skills at Ingleton school and Settle cricket club. He became famous locally during a pre-season friendly

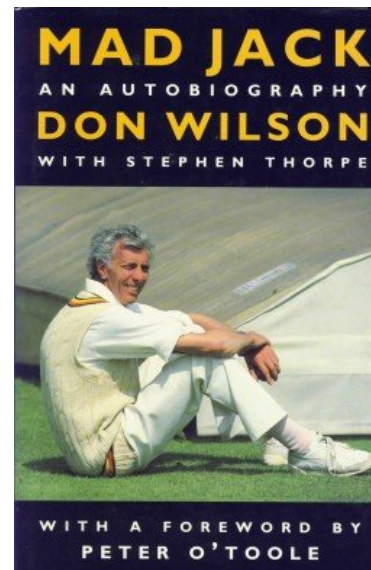
BURIALS.  
October 1st—Elizabeth Metcalf, Giggleswick, aged 29 years.  
" 17th—Frances Margaret Jane Taylor, Rossendale, aged 9 months.  
Elijah Wilson, (a native of Giggleswick, and well known in the Parish), died at the Manhattan Hospital, New York, U.S.A., on the 11th day of June last, aged 53 years.

**A MAN FOUND DROWNED AT SETTLE**  
At a quarter-past six yesterday morning, a person named [Elijah] Wilson noticed the body of a man in the River Ribble, opposite Mr. Hector Christie's cotton doubling shed, [Settle]. It turned out to be the corpse of an aged coachman, named Robert Abel, of Stackhouse, who for the past 40 years has been in the service of the family of Mr. J. R. Saint Clare Radcliffe. The deceased was at [Settle] on Thursday evening, and on his way home, between seven and eight o'clock, he admitted to a friend that he had been "in company," and had taken more stimulants than he ought to have done. Mr. Radcliffe's family being from home, deceased was in charge of the house. The footpath from [Settle] to Stackhouse passes within a short distance of the river, and it is surmised that the deceased accidentally walked into the stream, the night being dark. It is understood that Abel was a bachelor. The body was conveyed to the Hart's Head Inn, Giggleswick, and an inquest will be held.

**TRAINS COLLIDE NEAR  
JAN. 29<sup>TH</sup> SETTLE 1960  
Five dead and nine injured  
in Craven's worst rail crash**  
Five people lost their lives and nine were injured early yesterday (Thursday) when an express passenger train travelling from Glasgow St. Enoch to London St. Pancras was in collision with an express goods train travelling from Hunslet (Leeds) to Carlisle.  
The collision occurred about 1/4 mile north of Settle Station, and it is believed that the engine of the goods train became derailed and collided with several of the coaches of the passenger train, travelling in the opposite direction. Severe damage was caused to the coaches of the passenger train, but it was not derailed.

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against a Yorkshire XI on a Sunday afternoon in 1953 when he bowled **Len Hutton** on his third ball. The following summer he was called to the Headingley nets where he faced **Fred Trueman** limbering up. He became a first class cricketer between 1957 and 1974 and played in six test matches for England between 1964 and 1971. In 1960 he succeeded **Johnny Wardle**, who had been hastily sacked, to play for Yorkshire and was part of the team that won seven County Championship titles between 1959 and 1968. *'He was tall and wiry, relying on bounce more than savage side spin, and took 100 wickets in a season five times. He also secured two hat-tricks in 1966.'* He was 6 foot 3 inches tall! Because of his flailing arms he was known as *'the Settle Windmill'*. Don would have been one of the team celebrated by Giggleswick's **William Harrison**. Wilson retired from Yorkshire in 1974, disillusioned by Geoffrey Boycott's captaincy, and took up the role as the MCC's chief coach at Lord's, a position he held until 1991. He then continued his lifelong involvement in the game by returning to Yorkshire, as coach at Ampleforth College. Don was so well regarded that he became the only cricketer to have **Peter O'Toole** write a foreword in his autobiography [ph4].



When Don was not on tour, he returned to Settle to work with the joinery team at Brassingtons. Colleagues remember he was very good at chatting (about cricket) while others did the work! Don always arrived to work on foot in his suit and fawn suede shoes. His boiler suit was under his arm and he always changed once indoors — he didn't want to be seen walking around in his work clothes!! Don died in 2012, in York, aged 75.



*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](http://Ancestry.co.uk) includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on [settlerearch@gmail.com](mailto:settlerearch@gmail.com). Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.*

*With thanks to Settle Primary School for access to their log books and to John Reid for his help with this account. Thanks to Teresa Gordon for the sketch.*

*Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 — Lancaster Gazette*

*ph1 — with thanks to John Reid, ph2 — with thanks to Giggleswick Church Archives, Brayshaw's red book, ph3 — credited to Craven's Part in the Great War, ph4 — credited to Amazon books.*

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