

George Thorpe, a most respectable school inspector

Following a query from a descendant we discovered this is a tale of respectable families, free from any scandal, well almost. **John Thorpe**, a grocer from Derbyshire and his wife **Mary Ann Gregory** had 11 children. Blimey! Soon after marrying, in 1846, John and Mary Ann moved to Disley, Cheshire. Soon John, a thoroughly good man, moved into more prestigious circles and became very busy. He was a churchwarden, the local Postmaster and also the Assistant Overseer of the Poor for the area. This involved making decisions about welfare provision and included the role of Sanitary Inspector for Disley, a 19th century version of health and safety.

In 1874, as part of his work, John took a local preacher, **Thomas Young**, to court for failing to adhere to guidelines to prevent the spread of smallpox 'exposing himself while having the disease on him.' This was nothing rude, just a 19th century version of breaking isolation rules. Thomas Young got off with just a 20 shilling fine as the instructions were not as clear as they could have been — we remember that don't we?! [1]

HOW SMALL-POX IS SPREAD.—A DISLEY CASE.— Thomas Young, of Disley, a local preacher, who was suffering from small-pox on the 30th of August, was charged by the assistant overseer of Disley, **John Thorpe**, with exposing himself while having the disease upon him. The defendant preached on the occasion in question at the Local Preaching Room at Disley, and visited the house of Mr James Broome, a builder, where he communicated the disease to Mrs Broome, who broke out full in the disorder in a few days. Upon the evidence of Dr. Hibbert, of Marple, it was shown that his instructions to the defendant about going out were not so decided as they might have been; consequently defendant was only fined 20s and costs.

In 1875 John was involved in a new enterprise — the building of a new school. He was the clerk for the school board at Disley and Whaley Bridge and the attendance officer once it was built. [2]

TWO BUILDERS & CONTRACTORS.— PARTIES desirous of offering TENDERS for the ERECTION of a SCHOOL at Furness, for the (U.D.) Disley-Stanley School Board, may see the plans and specifications, and obtain bill of quantities at my Office, Disley, on or after Monday, the 21st inst. Sealed tenders to be sent to me on or before Tuesday, the 6th day of July next. The Board do not pledge themselves to accept the lowest or any tender. **JOHN THORPE**, Clerk. Disley, 18th June, 1875.

SAD END OF A PLUMBER AT DISLEY.
An inquest was held on Tuesday at noon, at the house of Mr. W. Latham, the Ram's Head Hotel, before Mr. C. E. Lake, deputy coroner, and a jury over whom Mr. **John Thorpe** was foreman, touching the death of **Joseph Wain**, aged 30 years, a plumber engaged at Lyme Hall, whose body was taken out of the Coppice Wood Reservoir in Lyme Park, belonging to the Stockport Corporation Waterworks. There were various rumours afloat as to what he had been doing on the Friday night previous, but

Quite aside from his work John was selected as the foreman of a jury examining the death of plumber **Joseph Wain** who was 'Found Drowned' after (possibly) slipping through some ice [2]. 'There were various rumours afloat as to what he had been doing on the Friday night previous' . . .

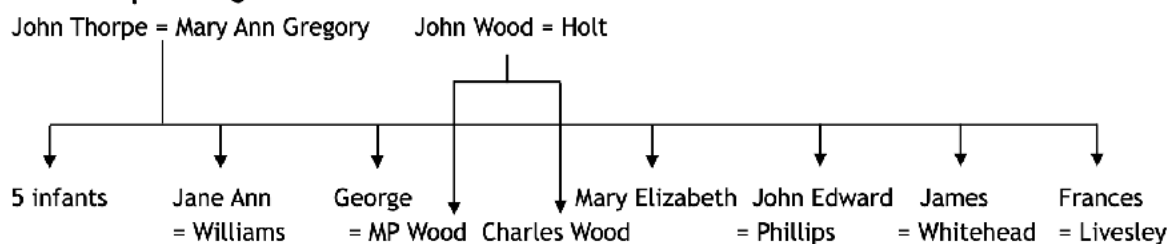
Despite these excellent credentials the fortunes of John and Mary Ann's children demonstrated that however respected you were, life still provided cruel twists of fate. Five of their eleven children, **Maria Ann, Maria Eleanor, William, Joseph** and **Thomas William** died as infants. Those that survived had respectable careers but only three had offspring. Eldest daughter **Jane Ann Thorpe** married a medical practitioner from Ashton under Lyne, **Ralph Worthington Williams** but died in February 1875, aged 28, upon the birth of their third child, **Thomas Gifford Williams**, who also died. Having been born in the February, little Thomas' baptism records show that he had a private baptism after he died in August 1875, to ensure he was received into the church in the

Feb 5 th 1875	August 11 th	Thomas Gifford	Ralph Worthington Williams Jane Ann	Ashton	Surgeon	W. Ogden Vicar	Private Dead
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afterlife. Ralph married again and had another four children, one of whom was named **Worthington Williams**, wonderfully!

John and Mary Ann's second daughter **Mary Elizabeth Thorpe** was a housekeeper to her youngest surviving brother, **James Thorpe**, who was a surveyor and sanitary inspector in Cheshire, not unlike his father. At the age of 38 James married and had two daughters. His wife was **Mary Whitehead** — her parents were the master and matron of Chapel-en-le-Frith workhouse for 40 years, providing for over 70 long term inmates plus many vagrants who just stayed for one night or so.

The Thorpe family



John and Mary Ann's youngest daughter **Frances Thorpe** married her second paternal cousin, **Samuel Livesley** who was an engraver when they married but then became a 'steam laundry proprietor'. They didn't have children. John and Ann's second son **John Edward Thorpe** slightly let the side down from the gold medal standards of respectability! John Edward started life as a schoolmaster but then decided on a military career. By 1887, aged 31 he was a staff sergeant at the Royal Engineer Officer Custom House in Gravesend Kent. In the last quarter of 1887 he married **Hilda Minnie Burnett Phillips**, the daughter of a Captain of the Royal Engineers. A good marriage? The problem was that Hilda was just 17 and by 2 December, just weeks later, had given birth to a daughter, **Jessie Maude Thorpe**. Unfortunately young Hilda died in the process and little Jessie was brought up by her aunt Mary Elizabeth Thorpe. Widowed John Edward Thorpe worked abroad until returning to the UK to work as a quantity surveyor.

John and Mary Ann's eldest son **George Thorpe** was a schoolmaster and was 20 when he married **Mary Priscilla Wood**, aged 24 in Holcombe, near Rawtenstall, Lancashire in 1869. Mary Priscilla was the youngest of three children of **John Wood** and his wife **Mary Holt** of Bury. John Wood was an engraver and engineer employing 80 men, a substantial business in partnership with **Duncan McRae** from Inverness. Unfortunately, John died in 1855, aged just 45.

John and Mary Woods' son **Charles Wood** was 15 when his father died and so was just about old enough to take over the reins, albeit on a smaller scale. Charles was certainly in business by 1858 as he had a number of items stolen, to the value of £3 10s by **William Taylor**, who took the items when he left Charles' employment [3].

STEALING BRACE AND BITS.—William Taylor was charged with having stolen a brace and a set of bits, glue kettle, and other articles of the value of £3 10s. the property of Mr. Charles Wood, carver and gilder, Fleet-street. It appeared that the prisoner had been in the employment of Mr. Wood but had left, taking the articles with him. He was remanded till Monday.

It seems local politics affected Charles' trade because he was a supporter of Mr Peel. Several local worthy folk wrote to the papers to say they would no longer be using Charles' services [3]. However, soon afterwards he advertised that he was about to undertake an engraving of Sir William Peel and asked for subscribers. Sir William

TO THE ADMIRERS OF THE LATE SIR WILLIAM PEEL.
Will be published early in January next,
A FULL-LENGTH PORTRAIT of the late lamented Sir WM. PEEL, B.N., Leading on his Naval Brigade, to be Engraved in the finest style by Mr. Chant from a picture painted by John Lucas, Esq.
CHARLES WOOD, Carver and Gilder, 22, Fleet-street, Bury, having made arrangements with the Publisher to Supply the Engravings as they are published, would be glad to receive the names of Subscribers. An Etching now on view.
An APPRENTICE WANTED.
Fleet-street, December 24th, 1859.

Peel [ph1] was the third son of the Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry during the Crimean War. He died of smallpox in India in 1858.



So far, so good for Charles. Unfortunately, in January 1860 Charles appealed against a decision of the Bury magistrates in which he had been found guilty of bastardy and so was ordered to make bastardy payments [3]. Oops! The newspaper report of the original case would have avoided naming him to protect their reputation. So, going ahead with the appeal, which named him, may not have been the best plan but he was determined to protect his honour. Despite bringing 'a great many witnesses' including a soldier from the Dragoon Guards in Aldershott, the decision stood and Charles' reputation was now severely in tatters.

AN APPEAL CASE.—At the late Salford sessions an appeal was heard against the decision of the Bury magistrates, relative to an order in bastardy which had been obtained against Mr. Charles Wood, son of Mr. John Wood, engraver, Nuttall Lane. A great many witnesses were examined, including a soldier in the 5th Dragoon Guards, who had been brought from Aldershott to give evidence. The decision of the Bury magistrates was confirmed.

So, what does a self-respecting man of integrity do in this situation? In May 1860 Charles had decided to sell up. The auction details give an indication of the scale of the engraving works, with 9 engraving machines and a huge amount of other equipment[3]. With money in his pocket Charles set off to the States, finding himself in the midst of the civil war. Once that played itself out Charles once again became an engraver and had three wives and two daughters living in and around New Hampshire.

MR. S. JACKSON has received instructions from the Assignees of Messrs. John Wood and Duncan M'Bea, to **SELL BY AUCTION**, at the Works, Nuttall Lane, near Ramsbottom, on Monday, May 14th, 1860: the Whole of the **ENGRAVING MACHINERY, TOOLS, PLANT, and EFFECTS**, comprising nine engraving machines, two punching machines, coating machines; numerous turning-up, setting-out, and turning-off lathes, six polishing lathes, four pair of clams, punch press, sixteen engravers' blocks, copper rollers and copper turnings, working tools, mills, dies, Bengals, bundles of new mill iron and bar steel, carboys of London and other acids, etching troughs, hardening cases; about 12lbs. of quicksilver, old brass and iron; also one excellent horizontal steam engine, twelve-horse power, nearly new, by Gadd, of Manchester; steam boiler and fittings, mill gearing, steam piping, gas plant and piping; one draught mare, about 16 hands high; two narrow wheeled carts, one drag, shaft gears, harness, hay chopper, and other effects. Sale to commence at ten o'clock in the forenoon.

Mary Priscilla Wood was just 15 when her brother Charles' difficulties became apparent and so she could be perceived as 'lucky' to marry such a respectable husband. George and Mary Priscilla settled in Sandal Magna near Wakefield but didn't have children. When George retired, they moved to Settle to live at 8 Halsteads — why? We can only speculate but it is not outside the realms of possibility that George had inspected a Settle school and discovered this wonderful town. We can understand that!

Burial records tell us that George and Mary Priscilla were buried in a walled grave, usually purchased for extra protection against the elements and creepy crawlies — they could afford it!

In Loving Memory of Mary Priscilla Thorpe the Beloved wife of George Thorpe of Halsteads, Settle Who died January 16th 1920. Also her beloved husband George Thorpe died April 18th 1925, Old H34



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.

Settle Graveyard Project

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 – Alderney and Wilmslow Advertiser, 2 – North Cheshire Herald, Hyde and Glossop Weekly News, 3 – Bury Times

ph1 – By John Lucas (1807-1874), credited to Wikipedia, public domain

Baptism documentation via ancestry.co.uk, originally from The National Archives.