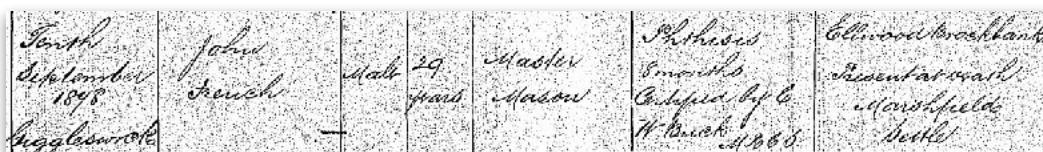
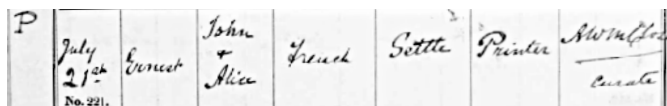


Unlucky Alice French

In April 1872 **John French**, a stonemason, married **Alice Hancock** in Settle. Alice's family were from Clapham and Stainforth. Two years later they had a daughter, **Isabella French**, and then another daughter, **Charlotte French**. Less than three weeks after Charlotte was born, on 10 September 1878, John, aged 27, died of phthisis (tuberculosis) from which he had been suffering for eight months — most of the pregnancy. John and Alice would have known his death was just a matter of time. **Dr Buck** certified the death and **Ellwood Brockbank**, the prominent Quaker businessman, was present at his death. This was appropriate as John was also a Quaker and buried in the Quaker graveyard.



Alice remained in Settle working as a sewing machinist, living in Duke Street. Four years after John's death, in 1882 a son, **Ernest French**, was born. Alice arranged for Ernest to



be baptised in the Anglican church, 'the son of John and Alice French'. It was a private baptism. These were usually for sickly children in danger of death but would also be ideal if the circumstances of the birth were 'complicated'. In 1886 daughter Isabella died, aged 14 and by the time of the next census Alice and her remaining two children moved to Blackburn where they stayed for the rest of their lives. Alice died in 1921, aged 69 and was brought back to Settle for burial with John and Isabella. Daughter Charlotte married **John Thomas Collow**, a driver for Nuttall's brewery and Ernest married **Sophia Holland** and worked as a French Polisher.

John French was the only child of **Henry French**, a shoemaker and his first wife **Charlotte Brookes** who lived in Badgworth near Weston-Super-Mare in Somerset. Charlotte died when John was two and the following year Henry remarried, to **Elizabeth Ann Vowles** and they had another seven children. All of those children remained in Somerset/South Wales and worked in the mines, a dangerous occupation. John's half-brother, **Robert French** demonstrated the basic lifestyle of a collier. He was fined seven shillings for being drunk and disorderly and a shilling for 'letting off fireworks in the street'. More seriously he was fined a total of nine shillings for taking his pipe underground and 20 shillings for taking a match underground, behind his ear [6]. Unfortunately, Robert met a sudden end, aged 43. He was watching the Salvation Army Band play when he suddenly collapsed and fractured his skull when he hit the ground [7].

Robert French, a **Caerphilly** collier, was summoned for having a match in his possession at the Windsor Pit on the 7th inst. The defendant pleaded guilty and a fireman said he made a search and found a match sticking behind the defendant's ear. He thought it was a pure accident.

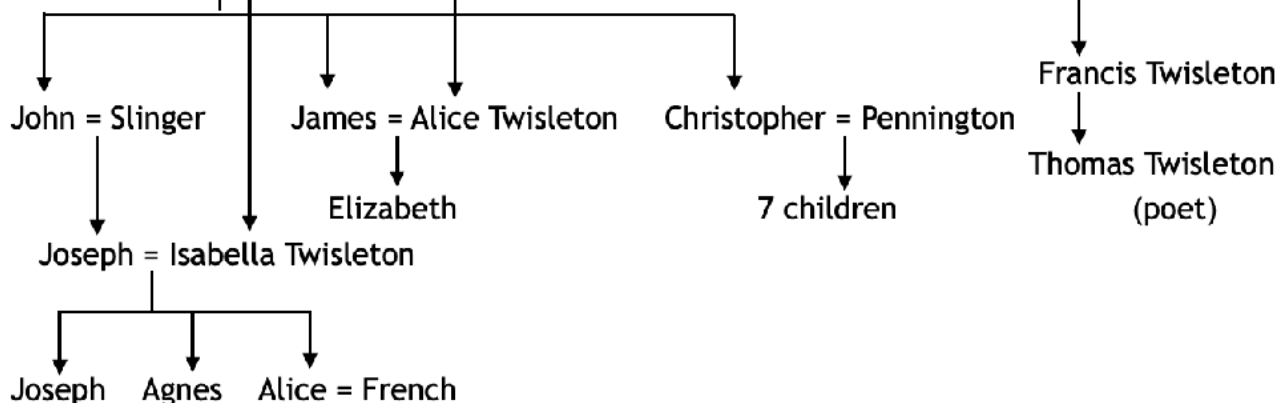
Fatal Fall at Caerphilly.
COLLAPSED IN THE STREET.
Robert French (63), a collier, who lived at 62, Pontygwyndy-road, **Caerphilly**, was standing in the square, **Caerphilly**, listening the the Salvation Army Band, when he was seen to fall backwards. His head came in contact with the ground, and he was found to have sustained a fractured skull. He was attended to by Dr. Tillman (**Caerphilly**), but died the next day.

John French avoided the peril of the mines and became skilled as a stonemason. He found his way to Settle, perhaps for work on the Settle to Carlisle railway, and boarded with **John Bordley**, the Quaker painter on Chapel Street.

Hancock family

John Hancock = Elizabeth Knight

Thomas Twisleton = Nanny Batty



Alice (Hancock) French's parents were **Joseph Hancock**, an agricultural labourer and **Isabella Twisleton** who lived in Stainforth. Recognise the name? Alice was the first cousin of the famous Craven dialect poet, **Thomas Twisleton**. That didn't score any points when mum Isabella died, aged 36, at Alice's birth in 1852. Joseph (Snr) was still in the area in 1855 when three men stole 4lbs mutton from him in the Joiner's Arms [SC].

Unfortunately, Joseph disappeared from records and Alice was brought up by **John and Betty (Green) Moorby** on Belle Hill. John Moorby, another agricultural labourer and Betty were benevolent folk adopting numerous orphans over the years, including siblings **Phineas** and **Mary Ann Butler**.

MAY 21st.—Before Thomas Clapham, Esq.—John Wilkinson, William Taylor, and Stephen Bell, were brought up on a charge of stealing 4 lbs. weight of mutton, the property of Joseph Hancock. The three prisoners and the prosecutor had all been at the Joiner's Arms Inn on the Saturday night; Wilkinson and Taylor left the house together, and the prosecutor, almost immediately after missed his mutton, which he had placed near where he was sitting. The mutton was found at Wilkinson's house. Mr. Cockshott (the Superintendent) had

Joseph and Isabella had at least two other children, **Joseph** and **Agnes Hancock**. An intriguing report from April 1851 suggests that a set of triplets were also born but there is no documentary evidence to support this [1]. Agnes was older than Alice and went straight into domestic service, working for **William Robinson**, solicitor. Son Joseph 'disappeared' from records. It's a common name but, in 1867, a Joseph Hancock of the right age was convicted of assault, in London and imprisoned for 21 days. What happened to him then is an intriguing mystery! One possibility is that Joseph, maybe following the shame of a conviction, changed his surname to **Slinger**, his paternal grandmother's maiden name. There are records for Joseph Slinger of Stainforth living in Kendal from the following 1871 census until his death in 1919. Unfortunately, during each census return he lived in Kendal workhouse, described as an 'imbecile'. An alternative fate is that, the year after the conviction, a Joseph Hancock of the right age was found on board a ship bound for Australia on an assisted emigration scheme. This Joseph, aged 38, 'the son of Joseph Hancock', married 20 year old **Ida Elizabeth Edmeades** in 1885. Unfortunately, Ida died a few months later, possibly with childbirth issues. It would not be surprising if he found himself in Australia because of Uncle **Christopher (Kit) Hancock**.

At Stainforth, near Settle, the lady of Mr. Joseph Hancock, was safely delivered of three children on Wednesday the 2d inst., and all are in a healthy state.

Christopher (Kit) Hancock was the youngest brother who became a butcher. In 1818 he married **Elizabeth Pennington** and they lived in Giggleswick. They had seven children in the next fourteen years, the youngest being a daughter, **Hannah Hancock**. Unfortunately, Christopher had an alternative strategy for obtaining meat to sell which was mentioned in some Giggleswick

Settle Graveyard Project

Reminiscences, telling the stories told to children by schoolteacher **Abigail Tennant**. They remembered sheep stealers shearing sheep on the hills, hiding the wool ready to take to the Kendal Mills. *'Kit King, Pharaoh Wilson and Kit Hancock were tried for it and I believe the last named was sent to Botany Bay, the Australian penal Settlement. They were also accused of robbing with violence Roger Kidd'* [CH]. The details were slightly confused but, indeed, Christopher was transported — this wasn't his first offence . . . !

How we children, sitting round the fire with her before bed time used to enjoy the thrilling story of the sheep stealers, who sheared the animals and hid the wool under the goat where the stream emerges near Catteral Hall Gate until they could meet the Pack Horses in Cave Hall and get it taken to Kendal Mills.

As sheep stealing was then a capital offence, and there being no police except the Parish Constable, great efforts had to be made by the villagers before they were caught.

Kit King, Pharaoh Wilson, and Kit Hancock were tried for it, and I believe the last-named was sent to Botany Bay—the Australian Penal Settlement.

They were also accused of robbing with violence Roger Kidd, a farmer.

In 1834 Kit and two others conspirators were charged with stealing four cotton warps from **Thomas Procter's** cotton mill in Settle and stealing seven heifers from John Procter of Long Preston [2]. **Pharaoh Wilson** *'turned King's evidence'* meaning that, in return for his freedom, he gave evidence on his co-conspirators. **Christopher King** was found with the cows in his possession and both he and **James Milner** were found guilty and transported to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). Christopher King's parents had worked in service for the **Robinsons** in Giggleswick, just as Agnes Hancock did a couple of generations later. The ship that was transporting James Milner was wrecked within a few miles of Tasmanian land with all lives lost. Some people have no luck! Surprisingly, Kit Hancock was acquitted — perhaps the judge didn't believe Pharaoh Wilson! Who was Pharaoh Wilson? He was from Keighley but, after his parents died, lived with his sister **Sarah Wilson** and her husband, **Joseph Taylor**, a postman on Belle Hill in Giggleswick. Pharaoh described himself as a 'pauper labourer' and took odd jobs when he could. In 1861 Pharaoh, aged 60, had an accident while working for the railway — a large stone fell on him and he broke his leg [5]. From then on Pharaoh became a resident of Giggleswick Workhouse and stayed there until he died, aged 80.

Christopher King (29), **James Milner** (23), **Pharaoh Wilson** (30), and **Christopher Hancock** (40), charged with having broken into a cotton-mill, at Settle, in or about the month of April last, and stolen therefrom four cotton warps, the property T. Procter.—The said King, Wilson, and Hancock, are further charged with having, on the night of the 7th May last, stolen seven cows from a field at Long Preston, the property of John Procter.

AN ACCIDENT.—On Thursday, **Pharaoh Wilson**, a man aged 60, in the employ of the Midland Railway Railway Company, at Shipley, was engaged with others in clearing the triangular piece of ground near to the station, for the purpose of making it a store ground, when a large stone fell upon him and broke his leg. He was removed to the Infirmary.

Meanwhile, unsurprisingly, Christopher Hancock and family moved to Bury for a fresh start However, in December 1838 **Mr Robert Lee** of Bury found that thirteen sheep had gone missing. Kit Hancock was suspected and his shop and barn searched. The carcasses of three sheep were found, dressed ready for market and the skins of seven sheep were in a corner [3]. Kit had already sold nine sheep for a guinea and a half each and four for a guinea each. The case went to court in March 1839. It transpired Kit had a previous conviction in 1833, before his lucky escape in 1834. His Lordship found him guilty and pointed out that ten years previously sheep stealing was a capital offence and so Kit would have lost his life. *'The prisoner did not have the excuse which poor persons might have — want of food'*. He was sentenced to 15 years' transportation and was told, in view of his previous record, *'you will not be treated as leniently as*

Mr. Andrews found the carcasses of three sheep, dressed ready for the market, and the skins of seven sheep on the floor in a corner. The skins were identified by **Mr. Lee**, as being taken from the bodies of the animals which had been stolen; and the butcher, whose name is **Christopher Hancock**, was taken into custody. The prisoner was taken

After a brief charge from his lordship, the jury returned a verdict of *guilty*.

Mr. Wilkins begged to observe to the court, that the prisoner had already been twice tried for felony, he was once convicted and suffered imprisonment, on the second trial he was acquitted, but his colleague was found guilty, and was transported.

The learned Judge said, that had the prisoner committed this offence ten years ago, he would have suffered the extreme penalty of the law. The sentence of the court is, that you be transported for fifteen years; and recollect, you will not be treated as leniently as others are, but you will be placed amongst the second class of convicts, who are employed in gangs on the public works.

Settle Graveyard Project

others are, but you will be placed amongst the second class of convicts who are employed in gangs on the public works.'[4]

Kit sailed to New South Wales on 10 October 1839 from Woolwich, London on the ship *Woodbridge* [ph1] which had been built in Calcutta in 1809. What was it like to be a convict transported to Australia? Incredibly records are available of this voyage including fascinating notes from the ship's surgeon, Dr Moxey of the Royal Navy. It transpires that Kit was one of 229 male convicts (with no females) who came from all over the country, and many had already spent over a year on the prison hulk ships in the Thames. The vast majority of convicts had sentences of just seven years or ten years, showing how severely the justice system regarded sheep stealing. There were also 29 convicted soldiers who had been court marshalled in Canada and elsewhere for desertion, striking or threatening an officer or mutiny and these were '*by far the best conducted men on the ship*'. All convicts were dressed in grey clothing and checked over by Dr Moxey. Once out on the seas, shackles were removed and groups of convicts took turns to be on deck. Based on previous experience the convicts ran their community — one of the convicts ran a school for younger convicts and others manufactured ornaments and tools out of the products of seals. Kit's butchery skills would have made him very useful. The journey took 133 days, sailing around the Cape and arriving in Sydney on 29 February 1840. Supplies of food and water were collected in South Africa so that scurvy and other illnesses were minimised. Incredibly, only two convicts died during the journey.



Kit was 47 when the sentence was passed. There is no evidence of how he lived once in New South Wales but at some point Kit resumed business as a butcher. Thirteen years later, in 1852, Kit found himself in court again on a charge of stealing four £1 notes and four half crowns, the property of a publican after buying pigs from his wife [T]. Kit died in 1854, aged 62, just as his fifteen-year sentence was coming to an end.

Christopher Hancock, of Newtown, butcher, was committed to take his trial on a charge of stealing four £1 notes and four half crowns, the property of Clark Hughstone, publican, of Camperdown. It appears that Hancock had bought

Widow Elizabeth and all the children stayed in Bury finding work in the mills. Poor Elizabeth lived with youngest daughter Hannah even after her marriage to **Edwin Worrell**. Elizabeth died in 1869, aged 82.

The Hancocks were an unlucky family. Joseph Hancock (Snr)'s uncle, **James Hancock**, married Isabella Twisleton's much older sister, **Alice Twisleton**. Alice, aged 28, also died in 1829, soon after the birth of her daughter **Elizabeth Hancock**. Elizabeth survived and married **John Emmett**, a mechanic from Preston. So, James and brother John Hancock were both widowed and farmed together in Arncliffe while bringing up their children.



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

Settle Graveyard Project

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'.

With thanks to descendant Jonathan Leyland for interesting background reading for this story

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