

The unlucky Delves family

It is not unusual to find 'unlucky' families in this project as the understanding of 19th century twists of fate is fascinating to the social historian. However, this family must win some awards for their misfortune, but also for some fantastic achievements.

George Delves was born in Ilkley, and lived and farmed in Otley and in Draughton, east of Skipton. He had at least 14 children (!) with his wife **Patience Lund**. Their wealth is reflected in the enormous memorial stone in Ilkley cemetery [ph2] where they are buried with three of their children. George was incredibly unlucky when he died in 1857, aged 78 from a *'puncture of the ring finger of the right hand by a thorn followed by abscess and irritative fever'*. Ouch. This was the first of numerous cases of fatal misfortune.



George and Patiences' sons, **Thomas Delves** and **Moses Delves**, went into partnership as 'tailors and woollen drapers'. In March 1862 this partnership was dissolved[1] and, 18 months later, Moses died which could have been related to the partnership breakdown. Moses was just 36, leaving a wife (who died three years later) and three young children. Moses and Mary's youngest son, **Henry Delves**, was brought up by Moses' sister **Mary (Delves) Peel** and her husband **Edward Peel** who had no children of their own. Poor Henry took his own life in 1895, aged 35 after having *'received a letter from an unknown young lady which seemed to have a very depressing effect on him'*. [2] Meanwhile Moses's 70 year old brother **Thomas Delves** had a most unfortunate death being found in a ditch after being *'the worse for drink'* on the way home from Skipton to Draughton [1].

SAD SUICIDE.—On Saturday night a man named **Henry Delves**, (35), mechanic, a single man, living with his aunt at West Morton, near Bingley, committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. It is said that **Delves** had received a letter from an unknown young woman at Ilkley, which seemed to have a very depressing effect upon him. He destroyed the letter—On Monday, Mr. T. P. Brown, district coroner, held an inquest on the body, and the jury's verdict was "Suicide whilst of unsound mind."

A FARMER FOUND DEAD IN A DITCH.—On Friday morning, at an early hour, the dead body of **Thomas Delves**, farmer, of Draughton, near Skipton, was found in a ditch on the highway between Skipton and Draughton, by a young man named **Thomas Harragan**, who was coming from Ilkley. It appears that the deceased was the worse for drink at Skipton on Thursday night, and was seen drunk afterwards on the road home to Draughton. **Delves** was 69 years of age.

George and Patience's son, **Eli Delves**, a cattle dealer, also had bad luck. In 1842 and 1843 he was attacked by three robbers on his way home from Leeds calf market, stealing cash to the value of £35 and then £32. People react in different ways to bad luck. Eli's wife, **Mary Nicholls**, died in 1849, aged 46 and Eli decided the best choice of action was to abandon his ten children (who then lived with grandparents and elder siblings). In 1854 he remarried and became an innkeeper. This occupation led to several assaults and assault charges — he seemed to have a particular problem with men from the militia. He may have had a bit of an issue with his son, **George Delves**, who, aged 21, signed up to serve with the Army. In a letter to his uncle, dated 1859, George wrote, *"I am at present a soldier in the 75th Regiment of Foot at Chatham and enlisted on the 6th day of April in York. I did not mean to enlist but I was very drunk for which I am very sorry, but I cannot be helped now. I do not like soldiering very well but I must make myself as comfortable as I can."* Oh dear. He served with the regiment in India, helping to keep the peace after the Siege of Delhi and

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Capture of Lucknow. During this service George contracted a disease requiring nine months' convalescence — cholera was rife in the Regiment. Despite enlisting for a full term for 22 years George had left the regiment by 1869. Descendants suspect he may have been dismissed for some reason and was sent to work in Cornish copper mines. In 1867 he was thought to have married **Ann Fazakerley** and moved to Keighley, working in an iron foundry. The marriage was not a success and, just like his father, George deserted his wife and family of eight children. His last days were in Keighley workhouse suffering from diseases of the heart and lung, aged 60. How sad.

George and Patience's son **George Delves** [ph1], brings our interest to our local area. He didn't marry until 1853 when he was 35. His lucky wife was **Agnes Chippendale** [ph1] who had been running the George Inn in Skipton with her brother and sister. They had inherited the tenancy from their parents, **John Chippendale** and **Elizabeth Hirst**. The George Inn [ph3] was on the High Street, replaced by Rackhams/House of Fraser, and now unused.



Once married George and Agnes came to Long Preston where George worked as a corn and cattle dealer. They had five children including twins **Frederick** and **Edward Delves**. Sadly, Fredrick and another son, **William Delves**, died as infants. George was well respected, winning awards for his cattle and securing lucrative contracts to supply the workhouse with oatmeal.

This George also had an unfortunate death in 1886, aged 69, having previously suffered from paralysis. He died of '*concussion of the brain*' after falling down his cellar steps [3]. Agnes had died five years previously. George and Agnes are buried next to their infant sons in a quiet corner of Long Preston graveyard.

FATAL ACCIDENT AT LONG PRESTON.—Mr George Delves, of Long Preston, corn dealer, who was widely known in Yorkshire, has died under melancholy circumstances. The other evening the deceased fell down the cellar steps of his house and did not long survive the accident. Deceased had previously been subject to paralysis.



In Memoriam. Agnes wife of George Delves of Long Preston died 13th November 1883 aged 60 years. Also of the above George Delves who died June 1st 1886 aged 68 years.

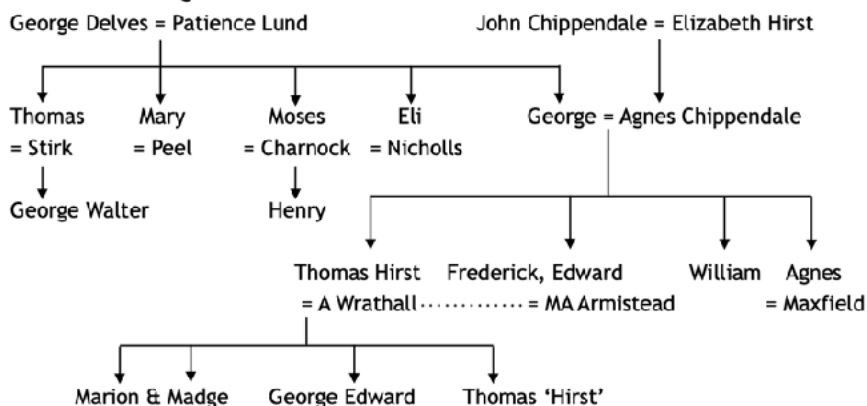
In memory of Frederick, son of George and Agnes Delves, died Oct 18th 1857, aged 3 weeks. Also William their son died May 18th, 1859, aged 10 weeks.



What about the children? How did they fare?

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The Delves family

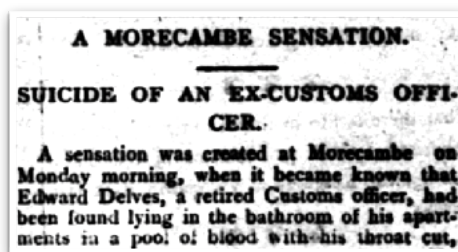


George and Agnes' only daughter, another **Agnes Delves** [ph1], died in 1901, aged 43, from eclampsia during pregnancy, just a couple of years after becoming the second wife of grocer and tobacconist **Robert Maxfield** from Boston Spa. He soon picked up a third wife.

In 1891, surviving twin Edward Delves [ph1], aged 33, married **Mary Ann Armistead** whose background is provided in the account of the **Elsworth** family.

Edward worked for the civil service in the customs division and so they travelled the country with their daughter and son.

Tragically, Edward took his own life in 1905, aged 47, ten years after his cousin, Henry Delves. Edward's son, **Frederick William Delves**, was just nine. Edward had lived apart from Mary Ann in Morecambe for the previous 13 months while she lived in Bingley with the children. Edward had been *'rather depressed of late,'* and *'on Sunday appeared strange in his manner'*[4]. Unsurprisingly, this made national newspapers. As we know, there was no support for mental health difficulties in those days. Mary Ann came back to Long Preston and brought up the children, living in Pendle View. As well as her life being commemorated on her parents' stone at the Baptist chapel graveyard, when Mary Ann died, aged 90, 44 years after Edward, she was buried in a separate grave with a stone which has now fallen down, sadly. To bring some joy to this family, this cracking photo was taken at the wedding of their son



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Frederick William Delves to **Dorothy Ellis** in Keighley in 1932. It shows Dorothy with Frederick's best man, his cousin, Jim Armistead [ph1]. Isn't it glorious? In 1934 Dorothy gave birth to triplets. Sadly one of them was stillborn but the other two, **Robin Ellis Delves** and **Richard Delves**, contributed to another wonderful photo [ph1]. Richard later became known as Elsworth Richard Delves. Edward and Edward's daughter, **Mary Delves**, married an accountant, **Allison Wyndham Heselton** but they divorced a few years later.

In 1883 George and Agnes' eldest son, **Thomas Hirst Delves**, with a middle name from his maternal grandmother, married **Annie Wrathall**, the cousin of Mary Ann Armistead who had married his brother Edward Delves. The family photo [ph1] shows, L-R, Annie and Thomas Hirst Delves, younger sister, Agnes Delves and then Edward and Mary Ann Delves. Thomas helped his father run the corn business but it wasn't all plain sailing as Thomas had a temper. In May 1885



Thomas was charged with assaulting **Mr Lumb**, a farmer who rented Armistead House from them. Apparently, their fathers had been arguing about a calf when Thomas Hirst Delves came in and *'without any warning dealt him three severe blows on the face with the result of which leeches had to be applied to his eyes'* [5]. Lovely. Henry Morphet testified that Mr Lumb called Thomas' father, George Delves *'a dishonest thief and rogue'*. In the end Thomas was fined just one shilling due to provocation.

the defendant came in, and without any warning whatever dealt him three severe blows on the face, as the result of which leeches had to be applied to one of his eyes. In cross-examination by Mr Tilly,

A year later, Thomas took over the corn and cattle business after his father's passing. The business flourished for many years and, in the 14 years after their marriage, Thomas Hirst Delves and Annie had five daughters and three sons and could afford a servant to help. The family lived on the Main Road of Long Preston just at the junction of Church Street. They had it rebuilt as *'Lochinvar'* during the 1880s, possibly using George Delves's generous inheritance. Descendants were not too impressed! A granddaughter wrote, *"Thomas knocked down a cottage beside the road into Long Preston to build a new house, in those days it was only a small country road but it soon became much busier and really the house is not at all well situated. Certainly the house would have benefited from being further back, as it is right on top of the road and really rather ugly and they certainly had a field behind the house which the children played in. It got its name because Annie,*

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who was very fond of Walter Scott novels, opened Ivanhoe at random saw the sentence "Now young Lochinvar rides out of the West" and so she chose the name!



Inside it is much nicer than you would imagine. When I went back later (after it was converted to flats) I saw the kitchen and the sitting room of the original house and also a room that Grandfather had used as his office. Annie had the staircase walls painted with a strong leaf green gloss paint in order to mitigate against children's dirty hands. The lady in the flat said that she had had a nightmare trying to get rid of this paint and in fact it was still there in the office now about 100 years old! I suppose with the attics there may have been 21 rooms but though I never heard anything about Arabian horses they certainly had horses to ride and a pony for the trap."

Most of Thomas and Annie's children had good, fulfilling lives which is especially remarkable considering the bad fortune this family had experienced. Eldest child, Ethel Catherine Delves, died an infant however, second and third daughters **Marion** and **Madge** (Annie Margaret) [ph1] were extraordinary women who both had careers as military matrons, serving in both wars. They were both in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) based in Malta and supervising nursing work in a range of military hospitals. They were decorated with the Royal Red Cross Medal and included in the victory parade in London at the end of the war. They served in Delhi, Tehran, China, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Egypt. Madge [left, standing] was sent to Belgium to



set up Field Hospitals in WW2 because she was 'old and unstoppable'! A relation remembers that whilst serving in a military camp in Gibraltar, Marion slapped a Colonel on his back while telling a bit of a story, causing his false teeth to fall into his soup! Being in the military, Marion and Madge had little idea about food rationing and so, when they visited the family back in Long Preston, they are remembered as eating all the rations in one sitting! In retirement these formidable sisters lived together at Moorgate at the top end of Long Preston, which they had inherited from their spinster aunt, Jane Wrathall. Marion lived to the age of 86 and Madge until 94 and they were buried with their parents. In her old age, Madge had to be moved from one nursing home to another because she complained the nursing standards were not up to scratch!

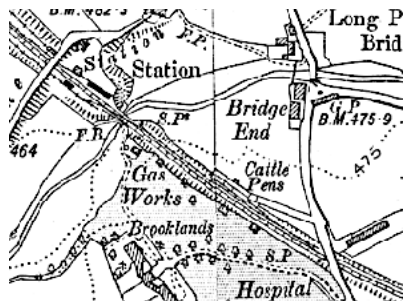
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According to descendants, Thomas and Annie's eldest son **George Edward Delves** [ph1] escaped to America after causing one of his father's Arabian horses to be shot after it fell and broke a leg. Thomas was away on business and George Edward had tried to get the horse to jump over some walls when it fell. When Thomas came home he saw that his prized horse had gone and went into an *'extreme state of rage,'* worse than Annie had ever seen before. Thomas went upstairs to where the guns were kept and so Annie found a stash of cash downstairs, gave it to George Edward and told him to go as far away as he could.



He went to Liverpool and, upon the toss of a coin, sailed to the USA, settling in Montana, just over the border with Canada. He had a successful marriage and career breaking horses and sold many of them to the Canadian Cavalry with whom he served in WWI. Thomas and Annie's son, **John Victor Delves**, had a military career in India. Their daughters **Catherine Monica Delves** and **Eveline May Louise Delves** had successful lives after marrying a doctor and a businessman, respectively.

Unfortunately, there was more tragedy to come for this family. Second son, Thomas Hirst Delves (Jnr), known as *'Hirst'*, died aged 20 *'by misadventure, struck by a passenger train receiving injuries causing immediate death'* in September 1912. Descendants tell the story that he was courting a girl in Skipton but missed the train. Station staff said if he walked along the line to Hellifield he may catch a connection there. It would be quicker than the road. He was hit by the passenger train by the cattle docks just before the almshouses [ph4]. Oh dear.



Like his brother and cousin, Thomas Hirst Delves (Snr), aged 64, decided enough was enough, in 1920. A granddaughter described, *"My grandfather Delves, who was a Corn and Cattle Merchant, was actually found dead in a barn by my mother, having shot himself (I think they tried to claim it was an accident) however this was at the time of the great depression and his finances were not too healthy. Indeed the family, including my father, his son-in-law, all contributed to keep Grandma Delves in Lochinvar until her death"*. The Coroner J E Newall gave a verdict of *'suicide by shooting whilst temporarily insane.'* Daughter Eveline, who found his body, was 23.

In Loving Memory of Thomas Hirst Delves who died March 10th 1920. Also of Annie, his beloved wife, who died May 17th 1930. "Where evening shadows never fall". Marion Delves R.R.C, late Principal Matron QAIMNS, 1886 - 1972. Annie Margaret Delves R.R.C, QAIMNS, 1887 - 1981. In Loving Memory of Hirst, beloved son of Thomas Hirst & Annie Delves, who died September 7th 1912 in his 21st year. "He cometh up as a flower and is cut down". Also Ethel Catherine, their daughter, died in infancy 1885.



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Poor Annie, having lost her husband, son and brother-in-law in appalling circumstances, died in 1930, aged 70, after a seizure. *'By her death, a familiar figure has been removed from a village in which she was born and lived all her life. Of a genial, quiet disposition, she was very highly respected. She took an interest in the concerns of the village and was always ready and willing to take her share in promoting any worthy object. She was a devoted mother. Whenever possible, she was among the worshippers at the Parish Church. She was a member of the Mothers' Union and she also belonged to the Women's Unionist Association.'*

In this case, money certainly didn't guarantee happiness and the resilience of this family is extraordinary.



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 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'.

Many thanks to descendants Nick Delves, Ann Bankart and Mark Penfold for their contribution to this summary. Far more information is available on the website https://nickdelves.co.uk/family_tree.htm and the Ancestry family tree, username Penfold-Delves Family Tree

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 — Leeds Mercury, 2 — Bingley Chronicle, 3 — Yorkshire Post, 4 — Millom Gazette, 5 — Lancaster Gazette,

ph1 — photo credited descendant Nick Delves ph2 — credited to Find a grave.com, ph3 — with thanks to Skipton Library from the Rowley Collection. ph4 — with thanks to the Long Preston Heritage Group

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Some of the material in this account has been published by YDMT in the book 'Meandering down the Ribble, Born and Bred in the Long Preston Floodplain' who have given permission for it to be included in this account