

The Horner family of photographers

Way back in 1826 in Burgundy, France, **Joseph Nicéphore Niepce** used a process called heliography to take what is acknowledged to be the first, very crude, permanent photographic image, taken at Le Gras, France. In doing so, Joseph became the '*father of photography*' [ph1]. This was the result of a lifetime's work and Joseph died soon afterwards.



However, in 1839 fellow Frenchman **Louis Jacques M. N. P. O. Daguerre** [ph1, left], announced the '*Daguerreotype*', the first publicly available photographic process. They were small, highly detailed pictures on polished silver and were an expensive luxury, but not nearly as costly as having a portrait painted. For this achievement Daguerre's name was inscribed on Eiffel Tower. He died in 1851.



Meanwhile, in England, **William Henry Fox Talbot**, developed a different process, known as the calotype which used thin metal, glass or paper rather than silver. These became the basis of almost all Victorian and Edwardian photography and continued until the invention of the digital camera. Ironically William's image was captured, in 1844, on a Daguerrotype by Antoine Claudet [ph2, right]

As Victorian photography developed, so did its role in society and culture, despite initial concerns that it was a form of spiritualism. Family photographs quickly became an important part of Victorian life, for those who could afford it. It was a tool for creating memories, legacies and identities. Inevitably, hundreds of budding photographers attempted to take commercial advantage of this new technology. At the time of the 1851 census there were 51 photographers in England but by the 1861 census there were over 2000! Settle was no exception and the Horner family soon established one of the town's most successful businesses, thriving for over a century.

Michael Horner [ph3] was born in 1813 in Feizor, but he and several siblings moved to Settle. He became a tinsmith, gun and musical instrument maker, based at the Town Hall



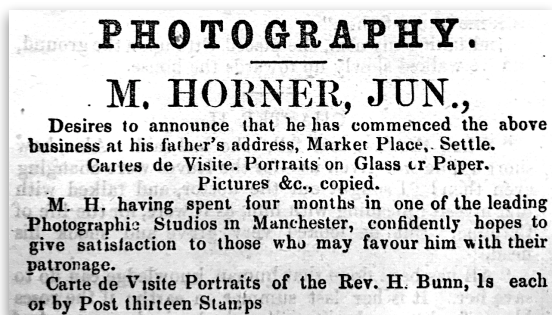
after it was built in 1832. His claim to fame, in 1837, was explained by a grandson, **Tanny Jerome** years later, '*I have often heard my aunt tell the story of how her father went rabbiting above Langcliffe one morning. They went to the Fox Holes and had a dog*

that went in one hole and out the other. Michael squeezed himself through the hole which was only the size of a horse collar; he found a cave. For the next few weeks after, he explored the cave and found, with other things, a bone brooch. He gave them to Joseph Jackson for whom he worked.' Joseph Jackson [ph3], a plumber and one of Settle's budding photographers, took the first photographs of the cave in order to obtain permission to explore them. Joseph realised the archaeological significance of the cave and its exploration became a life's work for him, alongside his plumbing.



Portrait Gent, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

Michael's brother **Thomas Horner**, a decorator, had a small shop in the Market Place behind the Shambles. Two of Thomas' sons, **Michael** and **Anthony Horner**, were early adopters of photography, perhaps inspired by Uncle Michael's friend and employer, Joseph Jackson? By 1864 Michael [ph4], the elder brother, then aged 21, advertised his business in the local paper, explaining he had spent four months in one of the leading studios in Manchester [SC]. The Horner photograph of him is simply entitled, 'Photographer'!



Photographer, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)



Michael advertised 'cartes de visite' which were small, affordable portraits, a calling card. They were extremely fashionable after 1860 when **John Mayall** published a carte de visite album of the Royal Family. People collected Cartes de Visites of celebrities and their own families and friends, so sitters generally had multiple copies made from the same negative. Michael's ability to make multiple copies was one of the main selling points of his business – for example, there is no evidence of him producing tintypes, which could only create a single image. This explains why so many originals were kept by the Horner business, providing this fantastic resource for us today.

In 1866, aged 23, Michael married **Betsy Mary Brown** [ph5] from Lincolnshire and they had two daughters. Sadly, little **Selina Horner** died in infancy but **Mabel Horner** survived. However, in 1868 Michael died of phthisis (tuberculosis). Some believe that the chemicals involved in photography may have exacerbated his condition. He was buried in the Ancient graveyard with his infant daughter Selina and a memorial stone with Mabel pictured next to it. [ph6]



In memoriam Michael Horner, died December 23rd 1869, aged 26 years. Selina, daughter of the above, died April 24th 1868, aged 6 months, Anc B23.

Today, just the footstone remains. The headstone was replaced by a new stone in the Old graveyard when Betsy died in 1900. The Ancient graveyard was full and so had closed by the time of Betsy's death and she could not be added to Michael's grave.



In Memoriam Michael Horner died December 23rd 1869 aged 26 years. Selina daughter of the above died April 24th 1868 aged 6 months. Betsy Mary, wife of the above born Feby 23rd 1846, died Jany 17th 1900. Old D15

Michael and Betsy's other daughter, Mabel, [ph6] was born just four months before Michael died. She married **Edward Charles Thompson** [ph7] who had come to Settle from Bedfordshire to work as a gardener for Miss



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Ellen Tristram at Undercliffe on Duke Street. Edward also happened to be an excellent violinist. Edward and Mabel were good friends with **Charles Green**, who wrote in his scrapbook that Edward *'my musical idol . . . was to me the best violinist I had ever heard, perhaps. His playing, to me, was thrilling, his piano accompanist was Miss Mabel Horner who he later married. The two of them used to give some very fine music.'* [CG]. What a talented family! They later moved to London where Mabel worked as a journalist.

Back in Settle, widow Betsy continued the photography business with her brother-in-law, **Anthony Horner** [ph8] who was just 16 when Michael died. Despite Anthony's youth it's likely that Anthony had been working with Michael and Betsy for some time, so was probably sufficiently experienced to consider taking on the business. They succeeded, using a hand cart to transport the heavy equipment and making glass plates up to 10 x 8 inches in size. They established a shop in the Market Place, next to Dr Buck's House and now inhabited by Field and Home. Later they moved to a premises in New Road, now Station Road, with a studio on the top floor. It's now the site of a hairdresser. Anthony also had an outlet in Bentham. It was said, *'Mr Horner was the Peter Pan of our little world: his youthful face and modest smile, revealing rather prominent front teeth, never changed with the passing years.'*



Anthony Horner c1885, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

Elizabeth Ann Horner, nee Holmes 1907, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)



Anthony married **Elizabeth Ann Holmes** [ph9] from Bentham and they had five sons and two daughters. Their sons continued the business until 1960, with eldest son **Edward (Eddie) Holmes Horner** playing the key role in it. Anthony and Elizabeth Ann were buried in the Quaker graveyard.

The Horner collection comprises over two thousand original glass plates which were recently acquired by the Museum of North Craven Life at The Folly, in Settle. This is nowhere near all of the studio's originals, many of which were lost or destroyed. The surviving glass pallets and, later, film negatives have been digitised with both negative and positive images available online. The earliest photos in the collection date back to 1865, taken by Michael. Typically, these early portraits were posed studio portraits, with clients standing, holding a book or prized possession with a variety of studio props. A book deliberately



Cyclist Mr Wm Maudsley, Settle 1881 photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

suggests refinement and education and may or may not have been the property of the client. Other clients brought items related to their work, such as a milliner's hat, carpenters' tools of the trade etc. **William Richard Maudsley** was one (of several) who brought their Penny Farthing! William was a carpenter who married and had nine children including a pair of twins. They moved to Oswaldtwistle for work in the mills.

In the early days, photographs were still relatively expensive and so were a luxury for the wealthy. They were often taken to mark a specific occasion; for example, an in imminent wedding. **Mary (Slinger) Shepherd** [ph10] had a photo taken in 1872 with her youngest son, two year old, **Ernest Shepherd**, sitting astride a rocking horse. Youngest daughter **Lilian Shepherd** is in the curtains at the side. Obviously, the borders around the photo were removed before the final print. Mary is wearing mourning clothes because her husband, **William Shepherd**, a chemist, had died the year before, aged just 46. Mary had ten children, but was able to bring them up with the help of servants thanks to William's generous estate. An apprentice, **William Walker**, and their elder sons took over the business as soon as they were old enough.



Mrs Shepherd and son, 1872, Settle
1881 photograph by the Horner
Studio. Horner Collection©NCBPT
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Miss Dawson, photograph by the
Horner Studio. Horner
Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

The photo of **Elizabeth Hutton Dawson** [ph11] is an exception in that it is not a studio portrait. Elizabeth, a very wealthy landowner and spinster lived at Marshfield House on Kirkgate, but died in 1866, aged 86, which was the year this photo was taken. The photo is presumably taken at home and she is propped up by several cushions. It has been observed that she doesn't look well, which is very possible at that age, possibly following a stroke. It's even been suggested that this photograph was taken post mortem. The photo is actually dated one month before her death but it raises the issue of 'Memento Mori', literally meaning 'remember you must die', which had become particularly fashionable in wealthy families in those days. As well as photos, families cut locks of hair, worn in jewellery and death masks made of wax. From 1861 the bereaved Queen Victoria made mourning fashionable.

Photographic fashions evolved. The majority of photos have a plain backdrop but one of the earliest photos, of **Samuel Hodgson**, [ph12] a joiner, has a far more classical backdrop reminiscent of Greek/Roman art. Samuel and his wife were both deaf and dumb but, despite this, ran a successful business and raised four children, who could all hear and

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Mr Samuel Hodgson, Joiner, Settle, June 1865, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

Master Sydney Smith, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)



speak. Son **Harold Hodgson** died of the Spanish flu after serving in WW1. **Sydney Smith's** photo [ph13], taken in the mid 1880s has any hint of austerity removed, replacing it with idyllic luxury. Sydney, whose father had recently died, is sitting on luxurious furs with painted backdrop of English countryside. He is wearing velvet with trimmings and has an interesting haircut, no doubt fashionable at the time. This lavish style did not continue — Sydney became a poultry farmer in Nottinghamshire.

Although photographs were a privilege of the upper classes the occasional working class family saved up enough money to have a photograph taken. Such was the case for **Lizzie (Day) Ball**, [ph14] the wife of **Charles Ball**, a quarryman, pictured with their son, **George Edward Ball**. They lived in a small (and cheap) cottage in Upper Settle. Lizzie was one of 12 children of Alfred Day and the family moved to Settle for work — Alfred worked as an ostler, looking after horses. He is one of the few residents of 19th century Settle who we know to have been of mixed heritage. Lizzie is wearing mourning clothes as her father, Alfred, had died the previous year. Charles and Elizabeth's only other child, daughter **Florence May Ball**, had died in 1901 aged two. No wonder Lizzie wanted a photograph of George Edward. George Edward followed his father into work at the local quarries.



Mrs Chas Ball and son, 1905, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection@NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

As time went by the Horners expanded into photographs of events, buildings and scenery which are now a wonderful source for historians. For example, in 1875 [ph15] Anthony Horner positioned himself in an upstairs room of the Naked Man (not yet the 'Old' Naked Man) to take a photo of the christening of the '*Ellen and Margaret*' lifeboat, one of seven paid for by the fundraising activity of the Settle Branch of the RNLI. It was 32 feet long with 12 pairs of oars and cost the equivalent of £28,000 today. The boat was transported from London by train and then taken from the station on a huge trailer pulled by horses with a

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procession of local rifle corps and bands playing music. This boat was then taken to Hornsea and was thought to save 37 lives between 1875 and 1887. At this time photographs of crowds were a rarity. Still rarer were photographs of crowds simultaneously looking towards the camera and so Anthony clearly had an influence in the community!

Settle Market Square (Lifeboat week) 1875, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)



In 1886 the Horners took a photograph of the Upper Settle snow castle [ph16] during a proper harsh winter. Two feet of snow covered the country for 16 weeks. The snow castle had a circumference 120ft, a height of 15 foot high complete with turrets and flags. Over 2000 people bought tickets to go inside for an afternoon tea, costing 6 pence, equivalent to £2 today. 60 were catered for at a time. What an achievement. The photographic equipment weighed several kilos and had to be taken up that hill! A long exposure of half a second or more was required which explains why the flags appear a little blurred.



Snow Castle, The Green, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

The 1889 photograph of the Sheep Sale [ph17] in the Market Place shows hundreds of men in their bowler hats and only two women, mid-right. Most livestock sales took place in the market places of towns with farmers bartering individually with others, so they needed to be astute business men! Famously, there were 20,000 sheep in the Settle sheep markets of the 1850s. Livestock were brought to market by foot or, after the 1870s, on the new Settle to Carlisle railway. These markets were usually held near railway stations, with a dedicated area for sheep/cattle docks. During the 1890s these markets were replaced by auction marts with a proportion of proceeds given to the auctioneer to do the haggling.



Sheep Market, Market Square, August 19, 1889, photograph by the Horner Studio. Horner Collection©NCBPT (CC-BY 4.0)

These photos represent just a tiny proportion of the photos in the Horner Collection. This summary focusses primarily on portraits as they have been of most interest to this project. However, there are numerous other interpretations and stories behind this wonderful collection. The full collection is now available to view on <https://hub.catalogit.app/13427> With thanks to the Museum of North Craven Life for the permission to share these photos.



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This account has been compiled 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.

Life stories 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'. The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project.

With thanks to Heather Lane, Hon Curator at the Museum of North Craven Life for her help with this account

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ph5 – credited to the back in Settle facebook site, from the Ben Mackenzie collection, ph6 – credited to a family descendant via Ancestry.co.uk, ph7 – with thanks to the Museum of North Craven Life, from the Charles Green scrapbook

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