

The mystery of Mrs Garstang

This photo [ph1] from the Horner collection at The Museum of North Craven Life portrays a middle-aged lady standing, clutching her gloves, in front of a plain background. There are the usual draping curtains and a writing table upon which is a book to suggest a respectable, educated woman. She is wearing black suggesting she may be in mourning. Her left hand is hidden so we cannot tell whether she has a wedding ring. Obviously, the messy edges of the photo would have been removed before the print was presented to the family. The Horner collection records tell us that this photo is of 'Mrs Garstang', taken in 1867. There is only one family to investigate!



Mrs Garstang, photograph by the Horner Studio.
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In Giggleswick on 8 October 1806 **Isabella (Bella) Dixon** married **Robert Garstang** when they were both aged 25. They married 'by licence' which is usually the privilege of the wealthy as it was the costly option, or by those who needed a quick marriage as the requirement to read banns for three weeks was removed.

It was two years before their first of seven children was born suggesting a speedy marriage may not have been required. Baptism records describe Robert's occupation variously as a warehouseman, manufacturer and innkeeper.

Bella Dixon, baptised in Kirkby Lonsdale, was the only daughter of **Miles Dixon** and his wife **Margaret Green**. Miles and Margaret were unlucky as five sons appeared to have died in infancy, three of them named **James Dixon** — after Miles' father. Just Bella and her younger brother **John Dixon** survived. John, a butcher, married **Rebecca Slater** of Skipton and they had three children. John and Rebecca ran their business on Belle Hill in Giggleswick, living next door to the church sexton, **William Guyer**. If the quality of their memorial stone in Giggleswick churchyard is anything to go by, the business went well. They were not a long-lived family.

In memory of the late John Dixon who died August 11th 1843 aged 56 years. Also of Rebecca his wife who died February 22nd 1850 aged 63 years. Also of Robert their son who died March 26th 1839 aged 25 years. Also of Isabella their daughter who died November 13th 1856 aged 35 years. Also of Mary their daughter, the beloved wife of John Thistlethwaite who died October 7th 1861 aged 45 years.



Robert Garstang was the eldest of five children of **James Garstang** and his wife **Agnes (Aggie) Blacklidge** who lived in Whittle-le-Woods, a few miles north of Chorley. Robert came over to Giggleswick to take over the Hart's Head Hotel. Originally, this 17th century coaching inn was located at the bottom of Belle Hill right on the old Giggleswick Market Square. Famously, in 1764, **George Fox**, the founder of Quakerism, was locked up for the night in the outbuildings of the Hart's Head while he was imprisoned and being transported from Lancaster Castle Gaol to Scarborough. Later, the Hotel was also used as the headquarters of the local Jacobites. Allegedly one of the Jacobites was so tall that one of the floors of the building was lowered for his comfort.

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The Governors and Masters of Giggleswick School and the 'Amicable Friendly Society' used the Harts Head for meetings, recreation and refreshment [A].

The main road through Settle and Giggleswick used to pass alongside the Harts Head, having come from Long Preston over the tops, via Kirkgate in Settle and over the river but the Keighley to Kendal turnpike road took traffic along the current route, first built in the 1750s. In response, at the turn of the 18th century the Hart's Head moved to the new building on the top of the hill, where it is today. As the innkeepers of this prestigious establishment Robert and Isabella Garstang [ph2] were at the centre of village life and had numerous contacts. There were all the usual parties and inquests at the Inn and, in 1842, there was much excitement. 'Two suspicious men' had committed 'a most daring robbery' on an elderly cattle drover called **Thomas Ellison**. They took all his money, 'four shillings and some copper' and the men escaped in a gig towards Settle. One of the men was apprehended through the strenuous exertions of surgeon **Thomas Robinson**. The other decided to have refreshment at the Hart's Head which is where he was caught [1].

R. GARSTANG, The Hart's Head, GIGGLESWICK.	
EATING, &c.....	
Tea and Coffee.....	
Run, Brandy and Gin.....	1
Panel, Wine and Negus.....	1
Ale, Porter and Tobacco.....	1
Cyder and Fruit.....	6
Paper and Postage.....	
Washing.....	
Servants' Eating and Ale.....	
Horses' Hay and Corn.....	
Beds and Chamber Fire.....	
Beasts, Sheep, &c.....	
Waiter and Chambermaid.....	
Ostler and Boots.....	
Blacksmith and Saddler.....	
R. Garstang	
(W. ALKER, SETTLE)	
£ 7/6	

SETTLE. — HIGHWAY ROBBERY. — About six o'clock, on the evening of Thursday, Nov. 12th, a most daring robbery was committed upon the person of an old man, named Thomas Ellison, cattle driver, who, proceeding on his way between Settle and Skipton, his place of residence, was met by two suspicious men, armed with bludgeons,

As well as running the inn, in 1820, Robert converted the old inn at the bottom of Belle Hill into Cravendale houses and gardens and the Garstangs Yard cottages. This will have brought in considerable rental income!

Robert came from a long line of Garstangs from Blackburn, many of whom lived into their nineties [2]. Robert's father, **James Garstang**, did well, living to the 'advanced age of 85. His uprightness and integrity will long be remembered by his surviving relatives and friends'[3]. Unfortunately, Robert hadn't inherited those genes, dying when he was 61 on 10 April 1842. Apparently, it was a sudden death. Local diarist **William Lodge Paley** reported, 'Was shocked to hear Mr Garstang is dead as I did not know he ailed anything'[WLP].

A LONG-LIVED BLACKBURN CLAN—THE GARSTANGS.

On the 4th inst., a fairly sudden, Mr. James Garstang, of Whittle, near Chorley, at the advanced age of 85. His uprightness and integrity will long be remembered by his surviving relations and friends.

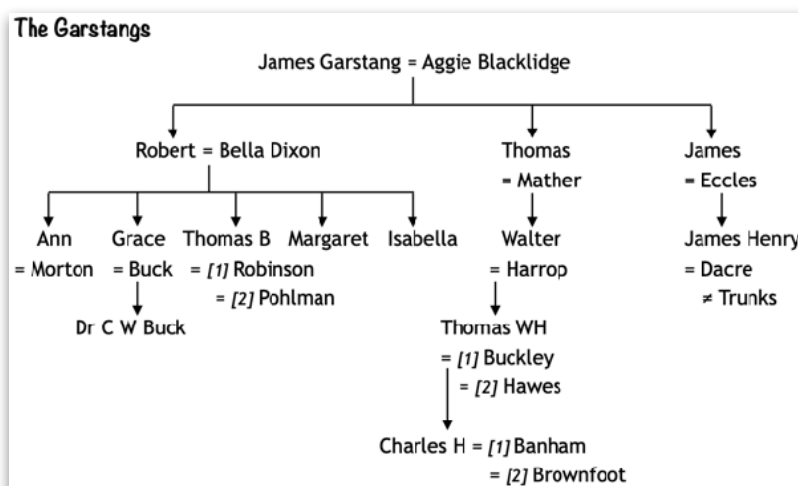
Bella remained in Cravendale Cottages with her eldest and youngest daughters, **Margaret** and **Isabella Garstang** and a few grandchildren, making money as a 'landed proprietor' supplemented by the income of a few lodgers who worked on the railway. Bella outlived Robert by 25 years, dying in March 1867, aged 86. Surprisingly, Robert and Bella were buried in unmarked graves in Giggleswick churchyard.

Two of Robert and Bella's children, **Agnes** and **James Garstang**, appeared to die at an early age, although not in Giggleswick. Their only surviving son, **Thomas Blackledge Garstang**, became a surgeon at Bolton Infirmary, perhaps inspired by an uncle, **James Garstang**. His work covered medical duties at the workhouse and so he was called to give evidence at court for cases such as the 'alleged child murder at the workhouse at Fishpool' [4] in 1862. (The jury decided the death was due to natural causes.) Thomas Blackledge Garstang had five children with two wives. Robert and Bella's daughter, **Ann Garstang**, married a linen merchant, **Edward John Morton**, and they lived in Halifax. They didn't have children. Robert and

ALLEGED CHILD MURDER AT THE WORKHOUSE AT FISHPOOL.—AN UNNATURAL AND CRUEL MOTHER.

In *The Chronicle* of Saturday last we gave some particulars of an occurrence at the Bolton Union Workhouse at Fishpool, Farnworth, in which a young unmarried woman named Susannah Brietley was suspected of having by violent means caused the death of her infant son, of whom she was delivered in that place on the 30th December last. The young

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Bella's most well-known daughter was **Grace Garstang** who had the privilege of becoming the second wife of **Richard Hardacre Buck**, a Settle solicitor. She was to become the mother of two children including **Dr Charles William Buck** the surgeon, musician and naturalist. Dr Buck's life is well documented. Dr Buck retained the family name 'Garstang' for another generation through his daughter, **Monica Garstang Buck**. Richard and Grace were buried with Richard's son from his first marriage, another **Richard Hardacre Buck** [memorial stone above]. Richard and Grace's other child was a daughter, **Margaret Ellen Buck**, who, for some reason was brought up by her Buck grandparents and aunt Ann Morton. Margaret Ellen married a vicar and lived in Lincolnshire.

In loving memory of Richard Hardacre Buck of Settle who died Dec'r 15th 1880 aged 72 years. "My times are in Thy hand." (Psalm 31st.) Also of Grace Buck his widow who died Oct. 20th 1893 in her 80th year. Also R. H. Buck Jr died Dec. 28 1921 aged 81 years. B8/28

Robert and Bella's daughters Margaret and Isabella remained spinsters. Eldest Margaret remained in Cravendale Cottages looking after her mother until she died and then making a living from lodgers. At the time of the 1871 census, while the Settle to Carlisle Railway was being built, she provided board and lodging for **Edgar Oswald Ferguson** who was the resident engineer for the Settle to Carlisle Contract No 2, which was the whole of the line north of Dent to Carlisle. Edgar was just 24! **Robert Edward Wilson**, the resident engineer for Contract No 1, from Settle to Dent, was just 29 and boarded with **Mrs Cowburn**. It's incredible that such an iconic structure was left in the day-to-day hands of two very young men! Meanwhile, Robert and Bella's daughter Isabella spent many years living with her brother Thomas Blacklidge Garstang and family in Bolton. She died just two years after Bella, aged 48. The sisters were buried together in a plot in front of the church.



Isabella Garstang 1869. We sent her out with mourning and weeping, but God will give her to us again with joy and gladness for ever. Also of Margaret Garstang who died May 24th 1880. Then they are glad because they are at rest and so He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be. A1h/3

So, which of these women is in this Horner photo?

Bella Garstang died in March 1867. If we take a closer look at the original Horner photo negative slide, we find the photographer has inscribed 'Mrs Garstang June 1857'. Therefore this lady cannot be Bella herself. She was 86 and so was too old to be our candidate anyway. So, this will be a female relation who was in mourning. The only close relation called Mrs Garstang at that time was the wife of Thomas Blacklidge Garstang, the doctor. However, she was a second wife and much younger than the woman in the photo. Two of Robert and Bella's daughters, Ann and Grace,

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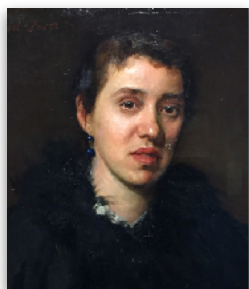
were married by 1867. Horner photo records are known to be affected by human error on more than one occasion so perhaps the most likely candidates were their spinster daughters, the *Miss Garstangs*, rather than 'Mrs' Garstang, Margaret and Isabella. Judging by the age of the woman in the photo, Margaret Garstang would seem to be our woman — probably!

As well as being long-lived, the Garstangs of Blackburn were generally respectable professionals. Robert's brother, **James Garstang** was a successful apothecary and surgeon, working in Clitheroe. He had several apprentices and assistants at the time of census returns. James became involved in Clitheroe politics and, as well as running his surgery, worked his way up to be voted as an Alderman, and then magistrate for the county and Mayor in 1846. Obviously, he could afford servants! When James died in 1883, aged 79, in his retirement town of Lytham, his obituary described that he was '*one of the most respected of its resident inhabitants.*' '*He must be looked upon as one of the finest examples of the provincial medical practitioner, and his genial, kindly manner gained him many friends who will sincerely deplore his death*' [5]. James' health had been failing for some time. The obituary explained he had been apprenticed to **Mr T Dixon** and **Messrs Lodge** and **Walton** of Preston before qualification. Initially he worked in partnership with **Richard Baldwin** as Apothecaries and Surgeons, but they decided to go their separate ways in 1846. James was voted an Honorary Fellow of the College of Surgeons. As well as being a magistrate James was a Local Improvement Commissioner and a Trustee of St James' Church in Clitheroe. He outlived both his wife and only son. This is the downside to a long life.

James married **Ann Eccles** and they had a son called **James Henry Garstang** who became an engineer but didn't quite have the success of his father. In 1872 James Henry Garstang married **Marion Frances Dacre** the youngest daughter of **William Dacre** and his wife **Susan Wyatt**. William died soon after Marion's birth and her mum married stepfather **Hugh Henry Race** who ran '*The Dulcie Arms*' in Manchester. Perhaps because of this, Marion and her three sisters were brought up in a convent school in Salford and then spent time '*on the continent*' working as governesses. Marion's sister, **Susan Isabel Dacre** then studied Art at the Manchester School of Art, winning the Queen's Prize in 1875. She formed a friendship with fellow artist **Annie Swynnerton** and they travelled together to study art, both having

successful careers as artists [ph3]. Annie painted a portrait of Susan [ph4]. Susan and Annie both have Wikipedia pages. They were feminists and suffragettes and formed the Manchester Society of Women Artists.

From 1885-95 Susan was on the executive committee of the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage — perhaps she knew Settle's **Charlotte Robinson** who was an interior designer, feminist and suffragette in Manchester?



Meanwhile, Marion Frances Dacre had married John Henry Garstang in 1872, with his occupation recorded as an engineer. James Henry had previously worked in partnership with **John Shepherd** and **Charles Mulliner** as engineers and millwrights, but this was dissolved in 1868 '*by mutual consent*' with James Henry intending to carry on the business alone [6].

NOTICE is hereby given, that the partnership heretofore subsisting between us, the undersigned, **JOHN SHEPHERD**, **CHARLES MULLINER**, and **JAMES HENRY GARSTANG**, carrying on business under the style or firm of "Shepherd, Mulliner, and Garstang," at Bank Top Foundry, in Blackburn, in the County of Lancaster, as engineers and millwrights, has this day been **DISSOLVED** by mutual consent. All debts due to and owing by the late firm will be received and paid by the said **James Henry Garstang**, by whom the business will in future be carried on, upon his own account.

As witness our hands this fourteenth day of October, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight.

JOHN SHEPHERD.
CHARLES MULLINER.
JAS. H. GARSTANG.

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In 1873, a year after his marriage to Marion, James Henry found himself in court again, charged with fraud by obtaining money under false pretences [7]. Oops! The case was dismissed but this could have been one of the reasons that Marion Frances had moved back in with her mum by the time of the next census return. A year after the court case James Henry was in Bridgwater, Somerset, advertising for Fitters and Smiths [8].

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST BANKRUPTS.—
At the Manchester Police Court, on Tuesday, James Henry Garstang and Gerald Edward Willett, carrying on business as engineers at Blackburn, were charged with fraud under their bankruptcy by obtaining credit and money by false pretences, but the evidence negating any charge of fraud the case was dismissed.

FITTERS and SMITHS.—WANTED, good FITTERS, used to permanent way work. Also, several good SMITHS, accustomed to wagon work. Liberal wages to good workmen.—Apply to JAMES H. GARSTANG, General Manager, Bridgwater Engineering Company, Limited, Bridgwater. [533-10372.]

While Marion was with her mum, at the time of the 1881 census James Henry was living in Middlesex as an *'unemployed civil engineer'* with a much younger *'wife'*, **Martha Trunks** from Bridgwater. James Henry died later that year, aged just 38. After that, Martha married a railway labourer and had a family with him. Marion Frances lived with her mum until she died, aged just 43. What a sad state of affairs.

At the time of the 1841 census, James Garstang, the surgeon, had an assistant, **Walter Garstang**, who was his nephew and son of Robert and James' brother **Thomas Garstang** (who was only 33 when he died!) At the time of each census return Walter made a point of stating that he qualified as a surgeon at St Andrew's University. He married **Hannah Harrop** of Saddleworth, a cotton manufacturer's daughter and that is where he practised. They had a son and a daughter. Walter and Hannah's son **Thomas Walter Harrop Garstang** became another of the Garstang surgeon/general practitioners, this time qualifying in Oxford. In 1875 he married **Sara Margarett Buckley** and they had three children. Unfortunately, in 1902 Thomas took Sara to the divorce court on the grounds of *'frequently committed adultery with Septimus Gillatt (Jnr)'* at 2 Tiverton Mansions, Gray's Inn. Thomas thought the marriage was *'perfectly happy'* until 1897 when he discovered that, as the journalist highlighted in capital letters, *'HER CONDUCT WAS VERY FLIGHTY'* and went to entertainments without him against his wishes [9]. Thomas tracked Sara down to a house in Hampstead and *'ultimately Mr Gillatt was discovered'* [10]. How must Thomas have felt about that discovery? The case was undefended and the final decree was on 10 November 1902. Septimus Gillatt would have had a large bill to pay for Thomas's expenses!

had practised at Knutsford since 1885, lived perfectly happy with his wife down to 1897, when he discovered that

HER CONDUCT WAS VERY FLIGHTY, and she went to entertainments at which he was not invited. In June, 1898, she left him, and intimated to friends that she was not coming back. She invented a story that Dr. Garstang had been unkind to her, but there was no foundation whatever for that allegation. He wrote to her asking her to return to him, but she never did. In July, 1898, he lost sight of her, and it was reported to him that she was living in London, and was visited by the correspondent.

After she left him he heard that she had gone on the London stage.

In April 1903 Thomas married a widow called **Beatrice Frances (Hawes) Chiswell**. Unfortunately, at the time of the 1921 census Thomas and Beatrice were living apart by *'mutual separation'*. Oh dear. What happened to Sara Margarett? In 1911, nine years after the divorce hearing, she married the aforementioned Septimus Gillett (Jnr), an accountant, 20 year her junior. It obviously suited them as they both lived long lives.

On March 15th last, the petitioner went to a house in Acacia-road, Hampstead, London, which the correspondent had been seen to enter. The respondent was found in that house, and at first denied that anybody was there with her, but ultimately Mr. Gillatt was discovered.

Thomas and Sara's son **Charles Harrop Garstang** [ph5] joined the Merchant Navy and worked his way up to become a ship's Master. During the war, on 24 April 1917, his steam ship *Alabama* was sunk by a mine but all hands were saved. Just 36 hours later he was appointed to pilot the merchant steamship *Gartness* but was lost at sea on 19 August when the ship was en route from Greece to Middlesborough with a cargo of manganese ore, lead and arsenic.



Charles Harrop Garstang.

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She was sunk by an Austrian U-boat in the Mediterranean Sea. He was 39. In 1908 Charles had married **Mabel May Banham**, the daughter of a Suffolk agricultural labourer and 20 years his junior. Charles would have spent a considerable amount of time at sea without much time to create children! By 1914 Mabel had found other entertainment in the form of **Ralph Barton** in Regent's Park. Just like his father Charles took his wife to the divorce court on the grounds that she '*habitually committed adultery*' with Mr Barton. It was not defended. Whoever Mr Barton was, he had passed away by 1915 and so his name was officially removed from the public record, although not the newspapers! [11]. In Boulogne in 1916 Charles married **Henrietta Gabrielle Olga Brownfoot** and they had a daughter **Charlotte Olga Marguerite Garstang** who he would have met before he died. What happened to divorced Mabel May? She married **Edgar Ernest Bull**, a salesman, in 1922 but died four years later, perhaps with issues related to childbirth.

That from about the 1st to the 14th of February 1914 at 74 Delancey Street, Regents Park, in the County of London, the said Mabel May Garstang lived and cohabited and habitually committed adultery with the said Ralph Barton, and that they passed there as "Mr. and Mrs. Barton"

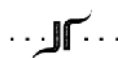
A TRAGIC ELOPEMENT.

As the man concerned had died, Mr. Charles H. Garstang, a chief officer in the Merchant Service, was granted leave to petition for divorce without naming a co-respondent. According to the evidence his wife eloped with the man to the Argentine. Mr. Garstang, who was granted a decree said they were married in 1908 at St. Giles's Registry Office, London.

Going back in time, the Garstangs originally came from Garstang, unsurprisingly, north of Preston. Despite the divorces in this family many of the Garstangs were prominent in the history of Catholicism. One such was another **Rev Robert Garstang**, not closely related to our original Robert Garstang, at least within seven generations going back to the 1620s. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, because of opposition to the Catholic faith, worshippers were reliant upon the private chapels of the local gentry families to worship. Locally the Catholic community used Lawkland Hall as their base. However, by 1788 the owners, the **Ingleby** family, had converted to the Anglican faith but **John Ingleby**, the owner of the Hall at that time and a fair man, ordered that a chapel be built for the Catholic community and this was to be known as St Oswald's RC chapel on the Austwick Road. However, it was tiny, just 20 x 19 feet and a search for a new property became a priority. In 1862 Rev Robert Garstang of Clayton Green, near Chorley is known to have delivered Mass for five families in a room adjoining the Hart's Head Hotel, ironically. Soon afterwards, he purchased a house and land in Upper Settle and **Rev Edward Woodall**, who was to become the first Priest after serving out a curacy, built the chapel, which is now a private residence. While Robert was in this area in the early 1860s he featured in the *Settle Chronicle* newspaper after delivering impromptu performances '*with originality and genial humour*' at the Mechanics' Institute amongst other groups [SC, 11]. In 1860 Rev Robert had bought land upon which to build St Wilfred's RC Chapel in Ripon. On that occasion he had to use an intermediary to avoid anti-Catholic prejudice. At the time of census returns Rev Robert was found in Preston, Leeds and Ripon. He died in 1869, aged 61.

the last entertainment. The Rev. R. Garstang also delivered an extempore address on "Electricity in connection with the nervous system," illustrating his theories with some amusing anecdotes, and at the end reciting some verses of his own composition, amid enthusiastic applause. The musical and vocal pieces were three

conclusion. The Rev R Garstang greatly contributed to the enjoyment of the audience by delivering extempore an original dissertation on 'Electricity in connection with the nervous system.' The reverend gentleman illustrated his theories by several amusing anecdotes; and at the conclusion of his address recited the following original lines:



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.

Settle Graveyard Project

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.

A – *The Ancient Parish of Giggleswick, Thomas Brayshaw and Ralph Robinson*

Newspaper cuttings with the kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Kendal Mercury, 2 – Blackburn Standard, 3,4 – Bolton Chronicle, 5 – The Times, 6,7 – Preston Herald, 8 – Western Gazette, 9,11 – Weekly Dispatch, 10 – Leeds Mercury, 11 – Lancaster Gazette

ph1 – Image 2022.1.68.5 from the Horner Photographic Studio Collection provided courtesy of the Museum of North Craven Life, ph2 – with thanks to Giggleswick Church Archives, ph3 – credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username dianecroft2010, ph4 – Wikipedia public domain, ph5 – credited to family descendants via Ancestry.co.uk, username Charlene Sage

SC – *Settle Chronicle*, WLP – *the diaries of William Lodge Paley* with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust



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Giggleswick memorial stone inscriptions credited to Nigel Mussett's 'An Illustrated Directory of Memorials and Inscriptions'.