

The Sowden family of Thornhill Briggs and then Hove Edge

Following the BBC's series *Gentleman Jack* which featured a Shibden Hall tenant Samuel Sowden we were contacted by a Sowden descendant from Canada. Oral family folklore had it that their 3 x great grandmother, Hannah Sowden, was brought up by Samuel Sowden and his wife Martha nee Sutcliffe. But how could this be as all the children of Samuel and Martha Sowden had already been accounted for; and there was no Hannah. Read: -

The Sutcliffes and the Sowdens

The research for that article had already established that Samuel Sowden was the son of John Sowden of Thornhill Briggs as confirmed in this newspaper report from the Brighthouse News 9th September 1904 following the death of one of Samuel Sowden's grandsons, George Sutcliffe Sowden

Thornhill Briggs. John Sowden, of Thornhill Briggs, was a leading Methodist at Brighthouse. He died March 21st, 1829, aged 91 years, leaving six out of ten children then living, 45 grandchildren, and 53 great grandchildren, of which 23 were married. He died in the house in which he was born, and never lived a month in any other. One of his sons was Samuel Sowden, of Wood-bottom, who lived to a great age, and was blind for some years. He married Martha, daughter of Mr. Wm. Sutcliffe,

Ninety-one-year-old John Sowden was the son of Joshua Sowden and Hannah Wood. They had married on 28th November 1734 as recorded below in the GENUKI Northowram registers. It would appear from this entry that it was Hannah Wood who was from Thornhill Briggs. There was a William Wood of Thornhill Briggs also baptising children at Northowram Chapel at about the same time between 1729 to 1739. Hannah's brother? He had married a maid Mary Ingham in 1725 – but whose maid, was she?!

Wm. Wood near Thornhill Briggs and Mary Ingham formerly our
maid mar. Jan. 13 1725

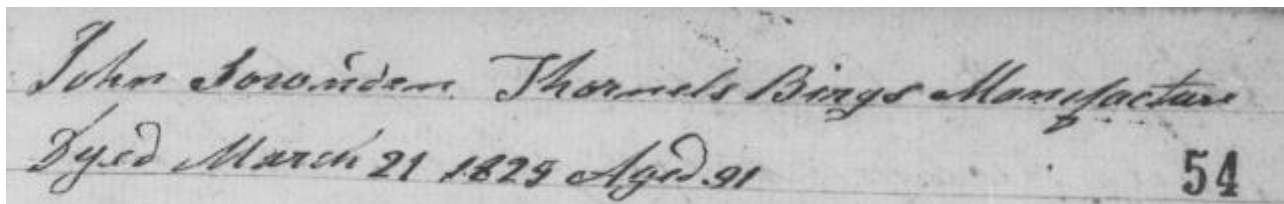
Joshua Sowden & Hannah Wood of Thornhill Briggs mar.
Nov. 28 1734

Joshua and Hannah Sowden baptised four children in Northowram Chapel: Nancy on 5th September 1735, John on 17th November 1737, Samuel on 26th November 1739 and finally Joseph on 23rd February 1743. For Nancy's christening her parents were 'of Hove Edge' but then for her younger brothers' christenings they were from 'near Thornhill Briggs'.

Eldest son John Sowden married Mary Stockwell at Hartshead on 24th August 1763. According to the newspaper article they had ten children. Seven christenings have been found at Rastrick for John on 3rd June 1764, William on Christmas Day 1765, Mary on 20th September 1767, Joseph on 2nd April 1769, Rachel on 23rd July 1775, Samuel on 23rd May 1779 and finally Jonas on 11th August 1782. Ann, who was the daughter of John Sowden was born on 3rd May 1777 and christened on 4th June 1777 at Brighouse. On each occasion father John Sowden was 'of Thornhill Briggs'.

Both Ancestry and FindmyPast have a Christmas Day burial in 1786 for a Joseph Sowden son of John Sowden. The burial place is given as Lightcliffe, Yorkshire but it is not in our St. Matthew's Church records. Twenty-two-year-old Rachel Sowden, the daughter of John and Mary Sowden, was buried on 5th March 1797 at Brighouse. This burial record is in the 'Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers' for Brighouse (Wesleyan).

Rachel and Joseph's deaths along with a possible two other infant Sowden deaths – perhaps before they were christened - would leave "six out of ten children living" when their father John Sowden died on 21st March 1829. He was buried along with his wife Mary, who died on 12th August 1803, at the Wesleyan Methodist Church at Brighouse.



Samuel Sowden's family have already been researched and written up accounting for some of the "45 grandchildren, and 53 great grandchildren".

This article will now concentrate on Samuel Sowden's eldest brother, John Sowden of Hove Edge, and his family to account for some more of the 45/53 descendants and where they ended up.

John Sowden of Hove Edge

John and his wife Jane baptised four daughters at Brighthouse Methodist Church; Sarah on 22nd December 1805, Hannah who was born on 24th November 1807 on Christmas Day 1807, Rachel who was born on 22nd April 1809 on 11th June 1809 and finally Elisah [sic] who was born on 10th April 1812 on 23rd May 1812. But when did John Sowden marry and who was his wife? The only John Sowden marriage to a Jane at roughly the right time occurs on 1st January 1802 in Wakefield when a John Sowden married a Jane Sutcliff. It is tempting to think that this is the right pair, and that Jane was related somehow to Martha Sutcliffe, but this has not been established. No baptism record has been found for a Jane Sutcliff(e) of the right age – working back from her death age. It is possible that she was a widow when she married John Sowden but the marriage record does not state that and neither does it make it clear where the pair were from although the assumption is that both were ‘of this [Wakefield] parish’.

What we do know is that when 10-month-old Eliza Sowden of Hove Edge died she was buried in St. Matthew’s churchyard on 28th March 1813 in an unknown grave within the closed churchyard. Then just four years later her forty-seven-year-old mother Jane Sowden also died. Jane Sowden, wife of John Sowden of Hove Edge, was buried in another unknown Lightcliffe plot on 22nd May 1817. Widower John Sowden was then left with three young daughters aged 8 to 11/12 years old. Is this when John’s younger brother Samuel and sister in law Martha stepped in to help him bring up these three little girls? Hove Edge and Sutcliffe Wood Bottom are not that far apart geographically. Nine-year-old Hannah Sowden could well have helped her uncle and aunt in the house or on the farm. Perhaps she even lived with them to start the family folklore that she was ‘brought up’ by Samuel and Martha Sowden.

Seventeen-year-old Sarah Sowden, daughter of John Sowden of Hove Edge, was buried in an unknown grave in Lightcliffe on 14th August 1823. It would be comforting to think that this might have been with her mother Jane if not with her baby sister but there is no way of knowing whether this was the case.

Sisters Rachel and Hannah Sowden survived to adulthood each marrying in the early 1830s. **Rachel Sowden** married Joseph Woodhead on 18th January 1831 at Birstall. Perhaps this was where Rachel was living then. But after they married their residence was Lightcliffe when three children of ‘Weaver’ Joseph and Rachel Woodhead were baptised at St. Matthew’s Church: Harriet on 17th November 1833, John on 27th September 1835 and Mary Anne on 6th August 1837. But the burial record for sixteen-month-old Mary Anne Woodhead daughter of Joseph gave the abode as Bailiffe Bridge when she was interred in yet another unknown grave at Lightcliffe on 15th November 1838. Two more children William born 6th April 1839 and Sarah Ann Woodhead arrived before the 1841 census although no baptism records have been found.

1841 census

Joseph Woodhead 34 Stuff Weaver

Rachel Woodhead 33

Harriet Woodhead 7

John Woodhead 5

William Woodhead 2

N K 3 Weeks [This was Sarah Ann Woodhead born Q2 1841.]

Address Lightcliffe

Martha and Alfred were born before the next census Martha in 1844 and Alfred in 1847. Again, no baptism record has been found for Martha, but Alfred was baptised at St. Matthew's Church on 15th August 1847 when his father was a 'Labourer' of Lightcliffe. And then when another son Lewis was baptised at St. Matthew's on 8th June 1851 the family of 'Labourer' Joseph Woodhead were living in Brighouse. Before the year was out little Lewis Woodhead would be yet another infant buried in an unknown grave in the churchyard on 14th December 1851.

1851 census

Joseph Woodhead Head 44 Warp dresser
 Rachel Woodhead Wife 42
 Harriet Woodhead Dau 17 Power loom worker
 John Woodhead Son 15
 William Woodhead Son 11 Worsted spinner
 Sarah A Woodhead Dau 9 ditto
 Martha Woodhead Dau 6 Scholar
 Alfred Woodhead Son 3
 Address Commercial Road., Hipperholme cum Brighouse

Twenty-year-old Harriet Woodhead of Brighouse was buried on 29th January 1854 in another unknown grave in Lightcliffe churchyard.

1861 census

Joseph Woodhead Head 54 Cotton Warp Dresser
 Rachel Woodhead Wife 52
 William Woodhead Son 22 Latter day saint travelling preacher
 Sarah A Woodhead Dau 19 Stuff Weaver
 Martha Woodhead Dau 16 ditto
 Alfred Woodhead Son 13 Scholar
 John Brown Widower Visitor 60 Carpenter
 Emila Dyson Visitor 16 Woollen Weaver
 Address Holm Top St., Little Horton, Bradford

Eldest son John Woodhead has not been found in the 1861 census. But he may well be the John Woodhead who married Elizabeth Firth in the Bradford district Q3 1865 and then appears in subsequent censuses giving his birthplace as Bailiffe Bridge

The rest of his family emigrated to the USA in 1862 arriving there from Liverpool on 26th June. Some of them are listed in a 'Utah Mormon Pioneer Travel Database' and some were baptized as 'Early Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints'. Father Joseph Woodhead died on 10th June 1866 and was laid to rest in the Pioneer Memorial Cemetery, Utah. Rachel lived with her son Alfred until she died on 8th May 1899 again in Utah; this is her headstone.



Martha married William Currie on 24th January 1863. In 1866 they left Utah for Iowa where Martha died on 11th January 1899. Sarah Ann married Janes Stewart on 19th March 1864 in Salt Lake City. She died on 30th January 1920 in Weber, Utah, USA. William Woodhead the travelling Mormon preacher from Lightcliffe died on 3rd September 1919 at Barnard Nodaway County Missouri, USA. Alfred died on 10th May 1927 also in Utah.

Meanwhile going back to Yorkshire and Hipperholme in early 1831 **Hannah Sowden** had given birth to a son Alfred. He was baptised at St. John's Church, Halifax on 20th March 1831 as this baptism record details.



Then a year later, on 22nd March 1832, she married a widower David Collins in Bradford. Why did the marriage take place in Bradford? Perhaps after the birth of her son Hannah and baby Alfred moved to Bradford. David Collins was probably baptised at Cleckheaton on 21st September 1797, the son of a Benjamin and Rachel Collins. No record has been found for his marriage to a Mary who died aged just thirty-one. She was buried at St. Matthew's Church, Rastrick on 30th November 1831. This was where they had baptised two sons Garforth on 14th October 1827 and Ben – he appears to have be just Ben but is variously recorded as Benjamin, Benj and Benn - born 16th April 1829 on 7th June 1829. But then they buried Garforth there on 18th April 1828. This would become a recurring theme.

Blacksmith David and Hannah of Hough [Hove] Edge buried their one-month old son Luke in Lightcliffe churchyard on 12th January 1834. They baptised twins Jane and George on 30th November 1834 at St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe but then buried them at 20 weeks on 1st and 3rd March 1835 in an unknown plot in the churchyard.

Thankfully their next three children survived. Sons Ephraim and Thomas were baptised at Lightcliffe on 27th December 1835 and 6th August 1837. Daughter Betty was born late 1838 and appears on the 1841 census but was not baptised until she was nearly nine years old.

1841 census

David Collins	40 Blacksmith
Hannah Collins	30
Benjn Collins	12 M.S.
Ephraim Collins	5
Thomas Collins	4
Betty Collins	2
Alfred Sowden	10
John Sowden	8
Address Hove Edge, Hipperholme cum Brighthouse	

This census transcription is interesting as it confirms the siblings and their half siblings. But who was the 8-year-old John Sowden, born 1832/33? No baptism record for a John Sowden has been found as it has for Alfred Sowden. And by early 1832 Hannah Sowden was married to David Collins. Their first child was born late 1833.

My theory is that the age was an error and should have been 80 as I believe that this was Hannah's widower father, John Sowden. Although for the 1841 census adult ages were supposed to be rounded down to the nearest five sometimes the reverse sometimes happened. The fact that he was 'of Hove Edge' when he died in 1843 and has not been found in any other household strengthens the case too.

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-1985 for John Sowden				
Lightcliffe, St Matthew > 1843				
John Sowden No. 174.	Hove Edge	March 23 rd	4 ^{pm} 70	Wm. Gregory

Although the whereabouts of this grave and many others is unknown now this does not mean that at the time families did not know where their relatives were buried. So again, it would be good to think that his daughters or even his brother Samuel Sowden, for a time churchwarden at Lightcliffe, knew where his wife Jane had been buried so that he could be interred with her. We know where his brother Samuel and many of his family were buried because the ledger stones – one pictured below -, which give so much useful information, are still readable. Did John and Jane Sowden have a ledger stone that has since disappeared? It certainly was not visible when transcriptions were made in the late 1920s / early 1930s so perhaps there never was one.



The story of Hannah Collins nee Sowden is continued in the article.

The Collins family of Hove Edge.

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