

More Than Oliver Twist: Biography

Name: John Wilson

B 1815, d 1881.

John Wilson was the son of Isaac and Mary Wilson (nee Dawtry) (1). He was born in Leeds on 23 November 1815 and baptized at St Peter's church, on 16 January 2016 (2). His father was a weaver by trade. The family home was at the Bank, East Street, Leeds(3).

On 28 November 1842, John married Emma Ainsley at St Peter's church. The couple both lived on Richmond Road, Leeds at the time (4). John worked as a bricklayer. This was a skill in great demand during the Industrial Revolution. He worked in the building trade throughout his life (5). In the 19th Century, builders were often called bricklayers. They worked with bricklayer's labourers who carried out the heavy work (6).

On 3 November 1843, John and Emma had a daughter Frances Ainsley. She was baptized on 17 February 1845 (7). The family lived on Vincent Street. By 1851 (8), John, Emma and Frances, aged 7, lived on Charing Cross Street, West Leeds. Ten years later, in 1861 (9) they had moved to Wright Street in North Leeds. According to the census records, Frances appears to have been the couple's only child. By 1861, aged 16, Frances worked as a weaver, as her grandfather Isaac had.

Frances married James Bartle, a miner, on 17 August 1863. On the marriage record John, her father, is recorded as a builder (10). Sadly, in 1869 John's wife, Emma, died at the age of 50. She was buried in Beckett Street cemetery on 1 November that year (11). As a result, John moved in with his daughter Frances, her husband and his three grandchildren, John Edward, Sarah and Emma. John was recorded as living there in the 1871 census (12). The family lived in Chapeltown, Potternewton.

By 1881 John, a widow, had had to move into the Leeds Workhouse (13). His former occupation was recorded as 'brick-setter'. At the end of his career he had worked in a brick works 'in the kilns, stacking or setting the bricks ready for firing'(14).

John Wilson died in the Union Infirmary in late 1881 (15). He was buried in Beckett Street cemetery on 29 December that year (16). He was described as 66 years and a bricklayer.

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