

Joseph and Sarah Watson

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Origins

This chapter looks briefly at the lives of the grandparents and parents of Joseph Watson and Sarah Spence, in the period before the latter were born.¹

Grandparents

Jacob Watson

Joseph Watson's paternal grandfather, Jacob Watson, was born around 1722. There is only one surviving reference to his occupation: at the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth to Thomas Tessimond, in 1805, he is described as a miner. Given his age at the time one assumes he was no longer actively engaged as such.²



Huntwell, photographed by Julia Whitaker

Hannah (Bell) Watson

Joseph's paternal grandmother was born Hannah Bell on the 27th September 1738, at Close, Carlisle, Cumberland.³ Jacob and Hannah were married in 1765, notice being given in July that year. They lived in Huntwell, and later at Tedham, in Allendale, Northumberland, as part of the Quaker community. The couple had eight children: Hannah (1766), Jacob & Joseph (twins, 1769), Joshua (I) (1771), Jane (1775), Ann & Elizabeth (1778), and Anthony (1781).⁴

¹ Joseph Watson, co-subject of this account, should be referred to here as Joseph (II) Watson, to distinguish him from his grandfather and son of the same name; however, although the Roman numeral will be used with the others, references to this Joseph will normally omit the numeral.

² Percy Corder (1914) *The Life of Robert Spence Watson*. London, Headley; TNA: RG 6/188, /355, /527, /1155, /1271.

³ RG 6/228, /1271, /1402.

⁴ RG 6/226, /1155, /1271; Corder.



Tedham, photographed by Julia Whitaker

Joseph Watson

Joseph's maternal grandfather, Joseph (I) Watson, was born on the 21st December 1753, and at the date of his marriage in 1782 was living at the Riding, near Allendale, where he remained till at least 1812. In 1803 he was described as a carpenter.¹



The Riding, photographed by Julia Whitaker

¹ RG 6/188, /334, /355, /1155, /1271.

Rachel (Wigham) Watson

Joseph's maternal grand-mother was born Rachel Wigham on the 12th June 1763, in Allendale. She married Joseph (I) Watson at Coanwood, Northumberland, on 3 July 1782. Their five children were: Hannah (1784), Esther (1786), William (1788), Rachel (1790), and Joseph (1792). All were born in Northumberland, and all but Hannah were born at Ryding, Allendale.¹



Coanwood Meeting House, 2003, photographed by Sue Nicholls

Rachel became a minister of the Society of Friends in about her 24th year. It was recorded of her that “Altho her Words were few, yet being savoury often administered Grace to those that heard. In private Life she was very exemplary”, and that she was a loving wife and affectionate mother. “She was privileged with the nursing care of her valuable mother, who took up her residence in their family, and with whom she travelled as companion, in one of her last journeys, in the exercise of her ministry.”²

Rachel herself died after a short illness, soon after her 31st birthday, on the 20th June 1794. Her body was buried on the 23rd on the east side of the Friends' burying ground at Wooleyburnfoot, Northumberland.³

Robert (I) Spence

Sarah Spence's paternal grandfather, Robert (I) Spence, was born on the 6th August 1742 at Darley, Hampsthwaite, Yorkshire. He was brought up a Friend. His first wife was Deborah Hardcastle, whom he married on the 1st December 1774, at Dacre in Netherdale. They had two children: John (1775), and Hannah (1777). Deborah died in 1779, and Robert (I) married Sarah Walker as his

¹ RG 6/188, /334, /355, /1155. Hannah was probably also born at Ryding, but this is isn't stated anywhere.

² *Dictionary of Quaker Biography*, TS, Friends House Library; George Richardson (1848) *Some Account of the Rise of the Society of Friends in Cornwood in Northumberland, especially in connexion with the family of Cuthbert Wigham*. London, Charles Gilpin: 36–7.

³ RG 6/312, /1271.

second wife, on the 30th April 1783, at Gildersome, Yorkshire. At that date he was described as a butcher, of Hartwith, Kirby Malzard, Yorkshire; he continued in this occupation till his death (after which he was described as a yeoman).¹

He was said to be of a remarkably generous disposition, which sometimes led him into errors; his open free and easy manners were a disadvantage to him, and the means of leading him more into company than was deemed profitable.²

He made his will on the 22nd June 1793. The will describes several parcels of land in his ownership, amounting to more than 14 acres, at Menwith Hill with Darley, Darley Carr, and Dacre Pasture; and 2½ houses, of which one was occupied by his father-in-law Robert Walker. Much of the property was left to his brother John Spence upon trust, to raise £100 on mortgage for his wife Sarah, to whom an annuity of £8 was also to be paid. The house occupied by Robert Walker was left to his son Robert (II). By a codicil dated the 30th July 1793 the sum to be raised on mortgage was increased to £125.³

Robert (I) Spence died on the 9th September 1793, after two apoplectic fits.⁴

Sarah (Walker) Spence

Sarah Spence's paternal grandmother Sarah Walker (after whom she was presumably named) was born at Driglington, Birstal, Yorkshire, on the 8th June 1760, and was brought up as a Friend. She and Robert (I) had six children: Robert (II) (1784), Thomas (1785), Abraham (1786), Thomas (1788), Rachel (1790), and Sarah (1792).⁵

After Robert's death Sarah (Walker) Spence lived at Hartwith, engaged in farming.⁶

Some time before 1809 she married, secondly, William Stothart or Stotheart. Her son Robert (II) gives the following account of the circumstances:

My poor Mother having I believe given way to the artful insinuations of an old servant, who had resided with her before and since my fathers decease and had got one or two of her own brothers introduced as men servants, and my mother thinking she had been rather slighted by some of her relations who ought to have encouraged and cheared her, got into a low & depressed state of mind, and in some strange delusive whim took off with one of these Brothers called W^m. Stotheart, to the chapel or church & they were married, none of my relations had courage or inclination to inform me of the state of things [. . .] My father in law, is now, a very strict and scrupulous Methodist, but *they* are surrounded by such a numerous train of hungry relations that seem like a tribe of locusts, and my poor Mother does now get but very little out to Meetings.⁷

¹ RG 6/527, /785, /901, /1091, /1165, /1562, /1571; Philip Spence (1939) *Robert and Mary Spence of North Shields*.

² Journal of Robert Spence, in Spence (1939).

³ copy will, Knaresborough Peculiar Wills, Wyl1012, Peculiar Wills Bundle V - W, to be found on Ancestry.co.uk.

⁴ RG 6/902, 1165; Spence.

⁵ RG 6/228, /527, /785, /1245, /1562; Spence.

⁶ Spence.

⁷ Spence.

Robert Foster

Sarah Spence's paternal grandfather Robert Foster was born at Lancaster on 24 April 1754, and brought up in a Quaker household. He had a good education, completed at the Free School in Sedbergh. Though he had been encouraged to train as a physician, he was not so inclined, and instead left for the West Indies in 1772, to learn the business of a merchant as storekeeper in Antigua, for his grandfather and great-uncle Myles and James Birket, who were then West India merchants.¹

In 1775, against his family's wishes, he decided to remain in the West Indies, and—even more to their dismay—in May of the following year, at the start of the American war, quit the store and entered aboard the four gun government brig *Endeavour*, which was fitted out in Antigua to cruise against the American privateers. Warned by his uncle that he risked disinheritance for his actions, he nevertheless persisted, and during the next three years saw action with the *Defiance*, 64 guns, and the *Jupiter*, 50 guns. In October 1778, the master of the *Jupiter* being killed in action, Foster was appointed acting commander. In April 1779 he was appointed Lieutenant of the *Pelican*, 24 guns. The appointment was not confirmed by the Lords of the Admiralty, and he was still at Portsmouth when he learned of the death of his only brother Myles. He returned to Lancaster for an emotional reunion with his family, and only briefly returned to sea before quitting the Navy for good. Surprisingly, he was never disowned by Friends for his violation of their long-held prin-



Robert Foster with his grandson Robert Foster; from Steel (1899)

¹ *Dictionary of Quaker Biography* (Friends' House Library, typescript), Percy Corder (1914) *The Life of Robert Spence Watson*. London: Headley; PRO RG 6/1616A, RG 6/1209; Joseph Foster (1862) *The Fosters of Cold Hesledon*; Robert Spence Watson in John William Steel (1899) *A Historical Sketch of the Society of Friends 'in Scorn called Quakers' in Newcastle & Gateshead 1653-1898*. London & Newcastle, Headley Bros.: 111; Myles B. Foster (1860): MS Memoir of Robert Foster; Adam Sedgwick (1870) *Supplement to the Memorial of the Trustees of Cowgill Chapel*. Cambridge: CUP; James Birket: Ms letters; Melinda Elder (1997) 'Dodshon Foster of Lancaster and the West Indies (1730-93)', *Lancaster Maritime Journal*, Vol. 1

ciples.¹

From 1780 he took over management of his grandfather's 331-acre estate of Hebblethwaite Hall, near Sedbergh, settling down as an agriculturist. His grandfather gave him the stock, and let him live there rent-free.²

On the 1st March 1784, at Brigflatts Friends meeting house, Robert Foster married Mary Burton, who had been his housekeeper at Hebblethwaite. His old friend Prof. Adam Sedgwick gave his opinion

that love is in conflict mightier than fire and the sword. He was smitten by one of the youthful Sisterhood, as by a fire from a masked battery, and brought to the ground, never again to rise in his former strength. [. . .] His visions of future glory vanished like the colours upon an air-bubble, and he collapsed into the condition of a country gentleman, much honoured in the Dale, and of a leader in that Society in which fate had first placed him.³

In the spring of 1785 his grandfather Myles Birket died, leaving him both the Hebblethwaite Hall and Sarthwaite estates and various houses & iron furnaces near Lancaster. After the land became his



Hebblethwaite Hall, east elevation; photographed by John Mounsey, 1990

own, he let it, retaining in his own hands only sufficient for the keep of two cows and two horses, besides the woods and plantations in which he took great interest, planting thousands of trees, chiefly larch, with his own hands. He worked hard, and extended his activities in aid of the community by erecting a mill on the estate, for knitting coarse woollen yarn into stockings, caps, gloves and mittens, used by men working in the Greenland fishery; and opening a school for his workers. It was said that he “became a sort of father, physician, lawyer, and judge among his dependents and country

¹ James Birket: Ms letters; Joseph Foster (1862) *The Fosters of Cold Hesledon*; Myles B. Foster (1860): MS Memoir of Robert Foster; RSW in Steel (1899): 112; Lieutenants' logbooks at the National Maritime Museum, ADM L/P/60 (*Pelican*), ADM L/J/144 (*Jupiter*), and ADM L/H/113 (*Hornet*).

² James Birket: Ms letters; Joseph Foster (1860); Myles B. Foster; RSW in Steel (1899): 112.

³ RSW in Steel (1899): 113; Corder; Sedgwick; RG 6/1081, RG 6/851, RG 6/155; Myles B. Foster.

neighbours.” Around 1790/1791 his second cousin, the young George Birkbeck, who was later to be the founder of Mechanics’ Institutions and of University College London, lived with Robert Foster while he attended school at Sedbergh. In 1791, at the request of William Wilberforce, Foster gave evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the slave trade, which had been a familiar fact of his life in the West Indies. He extended his woollen business in 1796, building a second mill, and trading into adjacent counties, particularly Cumberland.¹

In November 1799 his wife Mary died of consumption. Robert was married again, at Brigflatts, on the 25th February 1802, to Margaret Burton, the widow of John Burton, brother of his first wife. This marriage produced no children.²

William Wordsworth spent a week at Hebblethwaite in 1804 or 1805, having first met Robert Foster in 1804. Of the first meeting Dorothy wrote: “a very pleasant conversation we had—he is a very sensible and entertaining Man and seems to have an independent Manly Mind, intended for something better than bartering for wool. We were very much pleased with him.” Wordsworth gave Foster a letter of introduction to Robert Southey, who wrote to Richard Duppa on the 23rd March 1806:

Oh! Wordsworth sent me a man the other day, who was worth seeing; he looked like a first assassin in Macbeth as to his costume—but he was a rare man. He had been a lieutenant in the navy; was scholar enough to quote Virgil aptly; had turned quaker, or semi-quaker, and was now a dealer in wool somewhere about twenty miles off. He had seen much, and thought much; his head was well stored, and his heart in the right place.³

In June 1812, when Sarah’s maternal grandfather Robert Foster and his wife were on a visit to their married children at Newcastle, Shields, and Sunderland, where he also intended to devote part of his time to business, he had a severe attack of rheumatic gout, a complaint to which he was prone. This seems to have led him to conclude to sell his estates, and he notified Joseph Dover that he would be placing advertisements in the Lancaster and Kendal papers. It was a difficult decision, as Hebblethwaite Hall had been in the family for a hundred years, and his own grandfather Myles Birket had wished him to entail it on his eldest son, Myles Birket Foster. But he acted on his resolution, and Hebblethwaite Hall, Sarthwaite, Gill House, and Dovecoat Gill were sold by auction at the King’s Arms in Sedbergh on the 7th September 1812, for £10,800; the purchaser was Warwick Pearson, Esq., of Kirby Lonsdale. The Wood estate was sold a day or two later by auction at the Commercial Inn in Kendal, for £5000 or more; the purchaser was John Wakefield of Kendal. Early in November Robert and Margaret removed to a house in Northumberland Street, Newcastle, which he afterwards purchased. Here they were joined by his son John, who had become a partner with Anthony Clapham in the soap-making business. The Quaker removal certificate was dated the 29th December 1812, and was received by Newcastle Monthly Meeting on the 13th January 1813. David Sutton and Daniel

¹ RSW in Steel (1899): 113-5; Myles B. Foster (1860); John George Godard (1884) *George Birkbeck, The Pioneer of Popular Education*. London, Bemrose:11; Joseph Foster (1871) *A Pedigree of the Forsters and Fosters of the North of England*: 40; Joseph Foster (1862): 61-2; Joseph Foster (1873) *Pedigrees of the County Families of England*, Vol.1, Lancs.; evidence given by Robert Fo(r)ster to the House of Commons Select Committee on the Slave Trade, 1791-03-01.

² RSW in Steel (1899): 116-7; Foster (1862); Foster (1871); RG 6/710, /851, /1143, /1562; Myles B. Foster (1860).

³ Ernest de Selincourt, ed. (1967-82) *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2nd edⁿ, Oxford; RSW in Steel (1899): 116-7; Foster (1862); Charles Cuthbert Southey, ed. (?1849) *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, London, Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, Vol. II, pp. 29-30; Myles B. Foster (1860)

Oliver were appointed to visit them, but their report was not received until the 3rd October 1813.¹

Mary (Burton) Foster

Mary Burton was born at Sedbergh on the 12th February 1753. She had met Robert Foster by 1782, when he stayed at her father's house, The Hill; and she became his housekeeper not long after this. They married on the 1st March 1784, at Brigflatts meeting house.²



Brigflatts meeting house, from www.visitcumbria.com

Their children, all born at Hebblethwaite Hall, were: Myles Birket (1785), Dodshon (1786), James (1787), John (1788), Elizabeth (1788), Mary (1790), a stillborn child, Jane (1794), Isabel (1796), and Sarah (1797).³

In the spring of 1799, returning with her husband on horseback from Kendal Quarterly Meeting, she was exposed to wet, and took a severe cold which terminated in consumption. She died on the 9th November 1799, at Brigflatts. Her body was buried at Brigflatts on the 12th. A great many friends and neighbours assembled at the house to attend the funeral and to assist in carrying the coffin on their shoulders the 3½ miles from Hebblethwaite, as was the custom.⁴

¹ Myles B. Foster (1860): MS Memoir of Robert Foster; RSW in Steel (1899): 116-7; Foster (1873); Foster (1862); list or removals, Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 168; Removals into, Testimonies & Certificates 1812-1820, TWAS MF 188.

² Foster (1862 & 1871); RSW in Steel (1899): 113; RG 6/1081.

³ Foster (1862 & 1871); RSW in Steel (1899): 113; RG 6/1081.

⁴ Foster (1871); Steel (1899): 116; Myles B. Foster (1860).

Parents

Joshua (I) Watson

Joseph Watson's father was born on the 15th August 1771, in Allendale, Northumberland.¹

As a young man he worked as a leadminer—apparently before 1803, though he is still described as such in 1806. Leadminers are said to have constituted a most democratic confraternity. Each man took his bit of ground to be explored at a certain figure from the Lord of the Manor, without the relationship of master and servant.²

But the town had its fascination for him, and he came to Newcastle in 1804, after staying for a year or perhaps less in the catchment area of Carlisle Monthly Meeting. He lived in the Side—then almost a fashionable quarter of Newcastle—over the shop in which he carried on the business of a cheesemonger.³

On the 27th August 1806 he married Esther Watson at Allendale meeting house; he was described as a cheesemonger, of St Nicholas's parish, Newcastle. By November 1806 he had subscribed £100 towards the fund for the new meeting house in Newcastle. He was one of two representatives to Monthly Meeting in December 1806, as well as three times in 1807, once in 1808, three times in 1809, once in 1810, twice in 1811, and then not again until 1817.⁴



Joshua (I) Watson; from Steel (1899)

¹ RG 6/1271; HO 107/2492 f140 p58; Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341 says he was born in Cumberland; a source I have misplaced gives his birthplace as Huntwell.

² RG 6/355; RSW in Steel (1899): 131-3.

³ Testimonies & Certificates 1788-1811 p. 105, Tyne & Wear Archives Service MF 188; RSW in Steel (1899): 131-4 (which says he came to Newcastle in 1803); RG 6/188.

⁴ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 167, 168 & 169; minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting 1761-1814, TWAS MF 191; RG 6/355, /1155; according to Whellan's *Directory of Northumberland*, 1855, the new



ESTHER WATSON.

Esther Watson;
from Percy Corder's *Robert Spence Watson*

Gildersome school for a year (he was there in April 1797).³

Esther (Watson) Watson

Joseph's mother Esther Watson (no link has yet been established between the two Watson families, incidentally) was born at Ryding in Allendale on the 16th January 1786. She married Joseph at Allendale in 1806, and they had three children: Joseph (1807), William Wigham (1809), and Joshua (II) (1811). All were born in St John's parish, Newcastle.¹

She began her service to the local Quaker community when she was appointed as one of two Newcastle women representatives to attend Women's Monthly Meeting in October 1806.²

Robert (II) Spence

Sarah Spence's father Robert (II) Spence was born on the 10th February 1784, at Whaite Mill House, Hartwith come Winsley, Kirby Malzard, Yorkshire. Around 1788-9 he was inoculated against smallpox. He was, however, already infected, and came down with the disease, during which he was blind for eleven days. He was taught locally at first, then for a time at a boarding school at Burntyeats. From 1794 to 1796 he was at Ackworth school, still usually residing at Hartwith. He then went on to

meeting house was erected in 1805.

¹ RG 6/304, /335, /628, RG 9/3812 f19 p35 [Allendale]; minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 167.

² Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1761-1815, TWAS MF 194; minutes of Newcastle Women's Monthly Meeting 1803-814, TWAS MF 182.

³ Spence; Ackworth School Centenary Committee (1879): *List of the Boys and Girls admitted into Ackworth School 1779-1879*, Ackworth.



Whaitemill House, 1985; photographed by the author

From Gildersome he returned to his mother's to assist in farming operations. He became apprenticed in the drapery business to his brother John Spence of Yarm, where he next went. While there, he formed an attachment with a young woman "of a very respectable family, but her circumstances in life rather low." Following the disapproval of his relatives, he eventually broke it off. In 1804, shortly before his apprenticeship expired, he was released to go into partnership with Joseph Procter as a linen and woollen draper in North Shields. On putting up his share of the capital, he was to take a third of the profits from the 1st April 1805.¹

In 1808 he lived at the Wooden Bridge. In April 1809 he was made an overseer of the poor for North Shields. In the next month he suffered an attack of typhus fever. From November 1808 he regularly acted as one of two representatives from Shields at Newcastle Monthly Meeting, and from September 1809 he was frequently also one of four Monthly Meeting representatives to Quarterly Meeting.²



Robert (II) Spence, from a miniature;
from Spence

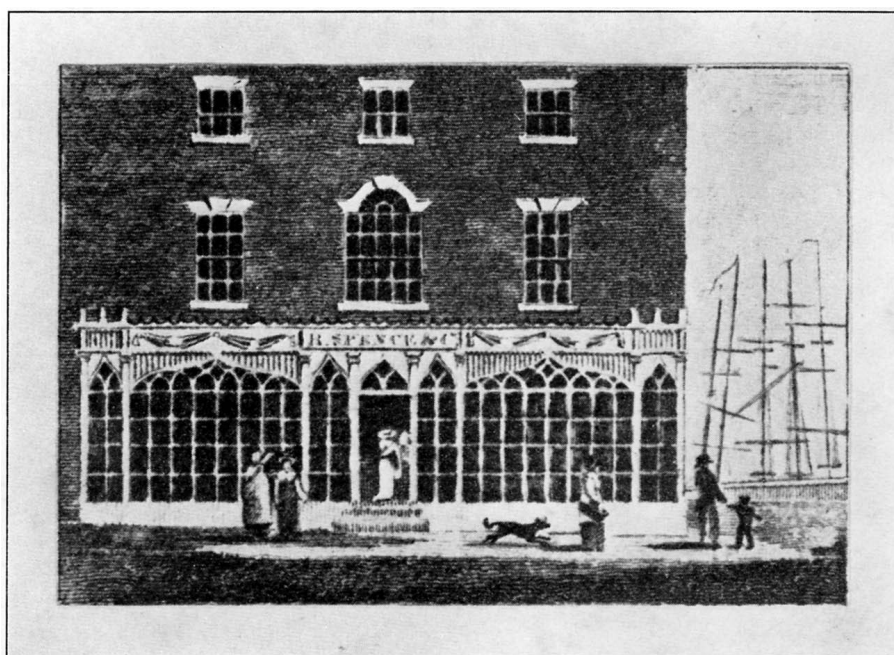
On the 29th August 1810 he married Mary Foster, at Brigflatts meeting house. Not long afterwards the business of Procter & Spence, Woollen drapers, and agents for Sir Cha^s Loraine & C^o, bankers

¹ Spence.

² Spence.

in Newcastle, was removed from the Wooden Bridge (the Low Street) to the house at the corner of Howard Street and Tyne Street. The ground floor was converted into a shop, and Robert and Mary lived upstairs. The business sold a wide range of items, including bombazine, tartan, carpet, and hats. At the registration of the birth of each of the couple's 18 children (1811–32) Robert was described as a draper (in 1815 a linen & woollen draper, specifically).¹

In August 1812 he first signed the minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting as Clerk. On the 7th January 1813 he appeared before the Lieutenant at Newcastle on account of being balloted for the local Militia; presumably, as a Friend, he was refusing to serve.²



THE OLD HOUSE AND SHOP IN HOWARD STREET, NORTH SHIELDS

From Spence (1939)

Mary (Foster) Spence

Sarah's mother was born Mary Foster on the 2nd May 1790, at Hebblethwaite Hall, Sedbergh. Still normally resident at Hebblethwaite, in 1802 she began school at Trinity Lane Friends' School, York.³

In 1808, with her sister Elizabeth, she went on a visit to Newcastle, Shields and Sunderland, when friendships were formed which led eventually to the marriage of Elizabeth to Anthony Clapham of Newcastle (1809), and of Mary to Robert (II) Spence.⁴

¹ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 168; Spence; RG 6/710, /775, /1562; Myles B. Foster (1860).

² Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 168; Spence.

³ *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906*. 1906, York: Sessions.

⁴ Spence; Robert Spence Watson in Steel (1899): 116–7; PRO RG 6/628, /710, /775, /1149, /1562; Myles B. Foster (1860); minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 168; Robert Spence letters in possession of Peter Robson.

Robert and Mary Spence's eldest child was born at Howard Street on the 4th October 1811, and named after her mother. She lived less than three weeks, dying on the 23rd. She was buried at North Shields on the 24th.¹

Their second child, born at North Shields on the 16th Jan 1813, was also named Mary, and survived.²



Mary (Foster) Spence, from a miniature;
from Spence

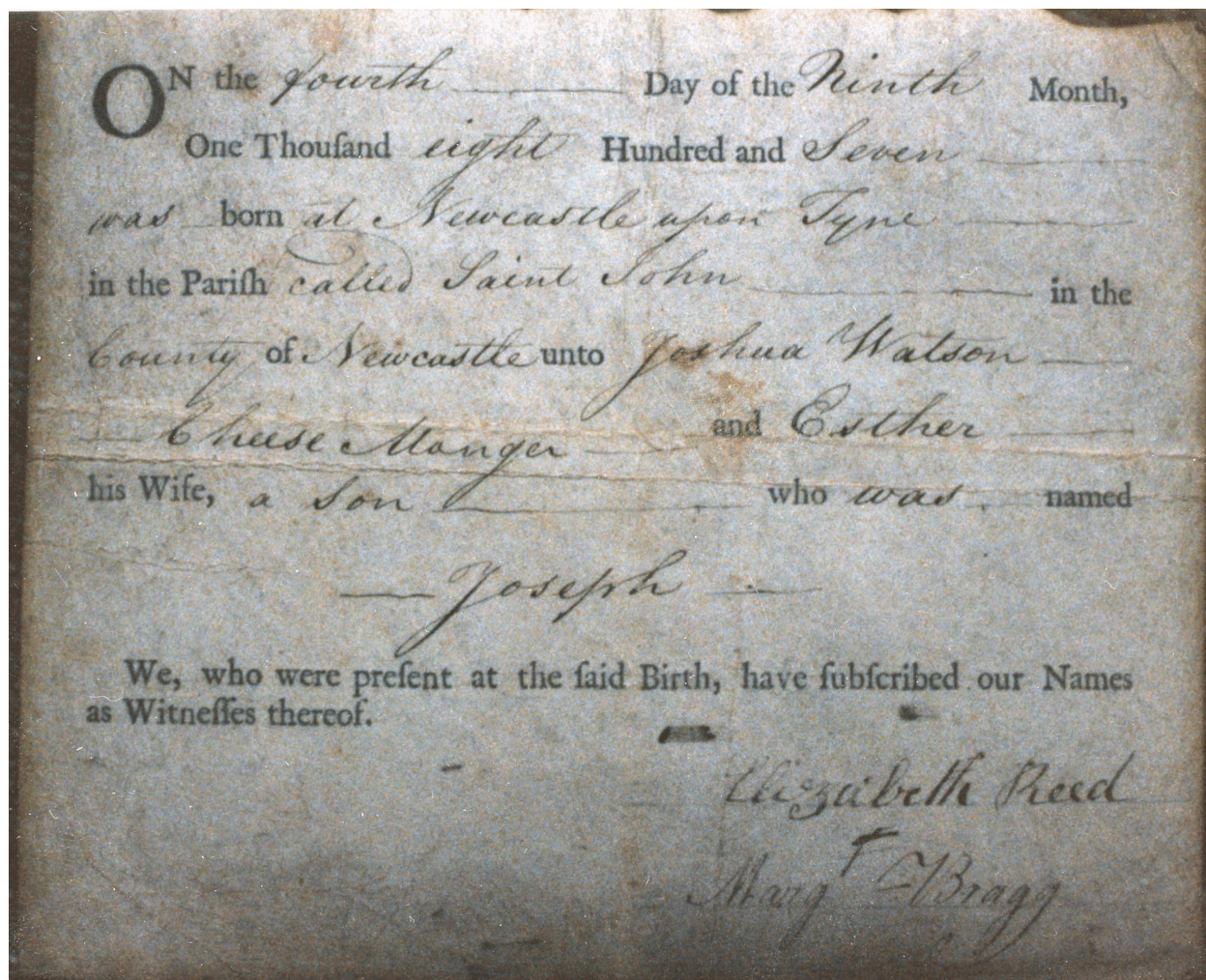
¹ RG 6/226, /775; Foster (1871).

² RG 6/775; Foster (1871).

Early life

Joseph Watson

Joseph Watson was born in St John's parish, Newcastle, on the 4th September 1807. The birth was witnessed by Elizabeth Reed and Margaret Bragg.¹



Birth note; in the possession of Kathie Coleman

Robert Spence Watson told a story of Joshua (I) Watson, Joseph's father, in the following terms:

Behind his house and shop his garden ran up steeply to the Moot Hall. When his eldest son, Joseph, was born, in 1807, he was anxious that the child should have plenty of fresh milk; and, laying down the little garden, or garth, in grass, he bought a cow: but the problem was how to get it into the garden! A long and steep flight of stairs intervened between the Side and the garth. Joshua Watson was little

¹ RG 6/628; Quaker birth certificate in possession of Kathie Coleman; *Yorkshire Post*, 3 March 1911; RSW in John William Steel: *A Historical Sketch of the Society of Friends 'in Scorn called Quakers' in Newcastle & Gateshead 1653-1898*. London & Newcastle, Headley Bros. 1899:169.

of stature but a Hercules in strength, and he carried the astonished cow up the stairs and deposited it in the garden,—no doubt with much groaning of spirit on the part of both!¹

Joseph's paternal grandmother, Hannah (Bell) Watson of Tedham, died at Tynemouth on the 13th September 1808, and was buried at Newcastle on the 16th.²

Joseph's father Joshua (I) Watson was one of two representatives to Monthly Meeting in December 1806, as well as three times in 1807, once in 1808, three times in 1809, once in 1810, twice in 1811, and once in 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, and 1827. His mother Esther, likewise, was one of two women representatives to Women's Monthly Meeting in November 1808, twice in 1809, twice in 1810, once in 1811, once in 1812, three times in 1813, once in 1814, and once in 1828.³

Joseph's brothers William Wigham Watson and Joshua (II) Watson were born at Newcastle upon Tyne on the 29th May 1809 and 18th May 1811 respectively.⁴

Joseph's paternal grandfather, Jacob Watson of Tedham, died on the 28th March 1813, and was buried at Allendale.⁵

In late 1814 and early 1815 Joshua (I) Watson took action in the Sheriff's Court for recovery of debt, from a few individuals. In September 1815 he purchased premises in the Side, at an auction at Wallace's, through a Mr Richardson; he took a £1000 mortgage from Benjamin Slater; the purchase was completed at the George Inn, on the 26th September; conveyancing fees totalled £57.10.0d.⁶

Joseph's maternal grandfather Joseph (I) Watson was described in 1817 as a yeoman of Allendale.⁷

On the 23rd September 1816 Joseph's parents applied for his admission to Ackworth School, through its agent in Newcastle, Anthony Clapham. He was admitted on the 9th August 1817, just short of his tenth birthday. Examined on admission, he was found to spell "well" and read "pretty well"; in arithmetic the record shows "comp & addition"; as to grammar, he had "none".⁸

¹ RSW in Steel; *Yorkshire Post* 3 March 1911, E. Spence Weiss: 'The Background of the Bensham Grove Settlement'.

² Corder; RG 6/226.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 167, 168 & 169; minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting 1761-1814, TWAS MF 191; minutes of Newcastle Women's Monthly Meeting 1803-1814, TWAS MF 182; minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1761-1815, TWAS MF 194; RG 6/355, /1155.

⁴ RG 6/628.

⁵ Corder; RG 6/527.

⁶ Tyne & Wear Archives Service, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2.

⁷ RG 6/1155.

⁸ West Yorkshire Archive Service search ref. AE12/41/JR 2006-03-15; documents searched: C678/11/2/2 [List of Pupils], C678/11/5/1 [Examination Book], C678/1/3/1/2 [Admissions record].



ACKWORTH SCHOOL, FROM THE GREAT GARDEN.

Joseph was educated at Ackworth School from 1817 to 1819; but in those days the discipline was severe (though the school discipline book has no record of any offences committed by Joseph¹) and unsuited to those boys who had special attractions at home, and he was not sorry to leave it. According to the later account by his son Robert, when Joseph's younger brothers met him at the coach office they refused to walk home with 'the funny little old man' (as the gamins of that day called him), attired in broad-brimmed beaver hat, Friends' coat and vest with brass buttons, knee breeches, grey stockings, and shoes with plain buckles. He went afterwards to the then well-known school at Darlington kept by the brothers Cowan. Here he was in a more congenial atmosphere, and made great progress under those enlightened masters. His remarkable memory retained throughout life much of the Greek and Latin poets, with whose worlds he then became familiar. Though not at Ackworth concurrently with Joseph, he became friendly with two other notable Ackworth old scholars: John Bright and William Howitt; he retained Bright's friendship throughout his life.²

In 1818, when the enclosure award was made, Joshua (I) Watson purchased two allotments on Gateshead town fields, from a Mr Fairweather, and another there from a Mr Gibbon; conveyancing fees amounted to £20.15.6d. It may be that these transactions relate directly to his purchase that year of Bensham Grove, as a country cottage for his children. Possibly he overstretched himself, for around 1819 he borrowed £600 from a Margaret Watson, of which he had only been able to return £100 by July of 1820.³

¹ WYAS search ref. AE12/41/JR 2006-03-15; document searched: C678/11/15/1/2 [Discipline Book].

² *Yorkshire Post*, 3 March 1911; *Ackworth School Centenary Committee: List of the Boys and Girls admitted into Ackworth School 1779-1879*, Ackworth 1879; RSW in Steel; Foster (1862 or 1871); Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341.

³ F.W.D. Manders (1973) *A History of Gateshead*, Gateshead Corporation; Tyne & Wear Archives Service, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2; Corder; Weiss: 'The Background of the Bensham Grove Settlement' (which gives the purchase of Bensham Grove as being in 1801).

After leaving school in 1819 Joseph Watson became a clerk in Backhouse and Company's Bank, in Darlington, where he remained for nearly two years, gaining that knowledge of accounts which enabled him afterwards to take a leading part in all legal enquiries in which figures were involved. He had an unusual gift for mental arithmetic and he never lost this. (In 1860 he was to have a contest with George Bidder, the famous 'calculating boy', in which he came off victorious).¹

It appears that Joshua (I) hadn't entirely lost interest in leadmining, for on the 1st November 1825, at an auction at the house of Mrs Wallace, innkeeper, Newcastle, he purchased 1/64 part of Foreshield Grains Lead Mine, for £31—held under lease of the Commissioners and Governors of Greenwich Hospital at one fifth Duty.²

Joseph's maternal grandfather Joseph (I) Watson was listed in the 1827 edition of White's *Directory . . . of Durham and Northumberland* as a farmer, of Warburton Place, Gateshead. The directory listed his father Joshua (I) as a cheesemonger and bacon factor, with his business at 109 Side, and his home at Bensham, Gateshead. By 1830 it's clear that Joshua's business was more that of a provision merchant, dealing in not just cheese and bacon, but everything from oats to oranges.³

Wishing to have a more independent life, by 1827 Joseph Watson was articulated to John Fenwick, of Messrs Kirkley and Fenwick, a well-known local firm of solicitors. That year—described as a gentleman—he was granted by his father an annuity of two guineas a year for life, payable out of a plot of land of 18 acres 3 roods and 5 perches in the Forest Greveship of East Allendale, Northumberland, one of the two plots late part of Allendale Common which were, upon the division of parts of Hexhamshire and Allendale Common, allotted to Joseph Watson late of Shildon near Blanchland yeoman deceased in respect of his copyhold estate at Tedham then held of the Manor of Hexham, to be paid half-yearly. On the 21st December 1827 Joseph's aunt Ann (Watson) Gray died.⁴

At the end of January 1828 Esther Watson was appointed an overseer by Newcastle Monthly Meeting.⁵

Joseph concluded his clerkship, then spent the year 1829–30 in London, attending law lectures by Professor Amos at University College, which had only been founded the previous year. In April 1830 he was living at 33 Poultry, London. In one term he shared the first prize, writing to his parents that "It is unnecessary for me to say that this is the greatest event in my life." As he expected, however—partly due to his study being disrupted by Yearly Meeting—he didn't do so well in the final exam, coming second, beating, amongst others, James Whiteside, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of Ireland.⁶ The full text of Joseph's letter is as follows:

¹ RSW in Steel; Corder; *Northern Mail*, 3 March 1911.

² Tyne & Wear Archives Service, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2.

³ White: *Directory & Gazetteer of Durham and Northumberland*, 1827; Ihler's *Directory of Newcastle & Gateshead*, 1833; M.A. Richardson's *Directory of Newcastle and Gateshead* 1838; stock book, TWAS DX 139/1; Tyne & Wear Archives Service, probably Acc 4439 25.

⁴ Corder; RSW in Steel; Tyne & Wear Archives Service, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2; Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341.

⁵ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁶ Corder; RSW in Steel; Tyne & Wear Archives Service, Acc 4439 23; Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; S. Middlebrook (1950), *Newcastle upon Tyne. Its Growth and*

My dear Parents

It ~~was~~ is with no ordinary satisfaction that I now write you. I am glad to be able to tell you that altho' I have not kept my place in the examination I have not changed it for the worse—nay that I have not risen from the 4th to the 3rd or to the 2nd class— but that I am one of the 1st— There are 3 of us in the first class & we know not which of our answers were the best but we stand in numerical order

112	136	143
Craig –	Watson –	Tatham
2 nd Class –		
120	133	
Whiteside –	Udall –	

It is unnecessary for me to say that this is the greatest event in my life, & that it was not less pleasing from being unexpected. I should not have been pleased if I had not been in the 2nd class, but to be in the 1st with two such lawyers both barristers as the two with whom I stand— & to be above Whiteside & Udall is more than I dared to think of. Whiteside has missed it from his having gone out too much to tea parties &c. during the last course He bore away the 2nd prize last year, he was one of the first class at Christmas & is a man of the greatest talent. The Professor requested the 3 of the first class to come to the table & accept a present from him— They were all the same— a law Book “Perkins Profitable Book”^[1]— bound in red Morocco & gilt— with a handsome inscription— I shall send you mine down shortly as I expect to have many opportunities before long. I afterwards received the congratulations of nearly the whole class. This has given me some hopes of the result of all at the close of the Session— but I do not expect too much I think I stand a good chance of a certificate. Whiteside will rouse himself like a lion & most probably stand first, & the Yearly Meeting will also considerably interrupt me. I doubt not that you will be as pleased to hear of this as my friends here are. I am I believe the only Attorney that was named & am determined now more than ever not to slacken.

I am invited to meet Charles Bragg this morning at Rittson's. I sho^d like to have such pleasure but if I am there at all it will only be for a short time.

I am not sure but that I could get R. Sturges' s rooms for you at the Yearly Meeting. She has gone to Brighton to wait on a sister who's unwell & has given notice of leaving her rooms but whether she will do it so soon as then I cannot say. Please tell me in your next if I should ask about them. In the meantime I desire to be remembered to all Inquirers & am

Your affectionate Son
Jos: Watson

Achievement. Newcastle: Newcastle Chronicle & Journal: 216

¹ John Perkins's *Profitable Book*, first published in 1528, reached its 15th and final edition in 1827 (presumably the edition presented to Joseph Watson); it was mainly about land law, and especially conveyancing. J. H. Baker, 'Perkins, John (d. 1545?)', *Oxford DNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21970].

BK/1

33 Poultry 27/4 1830
My dear Parents,

It was with no ordinary satisfaction that I now write you. I am glad to be able to tell you that at the examination I have not kept my place in the examination. I have not changed it for the worst - nay that I have not risen from the 4th to the 3rd or to the 2nd class - but that I am one of the 1st. There are 3 of us in the first class I know not which of our answers were the best, but we stand in numerical order

112 136 143
Craig - Walton - Nathan
120 2nd class -
133
Whitwell - Odell.

It is unnecessary for me to say that this is the greatest event in my life. That it was not less pleasing from being unexpected. I should not have been pleased if I had not been in the 2nd class, but to be in the 1st with two such lawyers both barristers as the two with whom I stand, & to be above Whitwell & Odell is more than I dared to think of. Whitwell has missed it from his having gone out too much to tea parties &c. during the last course. He bore away the 2nd prize for son. He was one of the first class at Christmas. He is a man of the greatest talent. The Professor requested the 3 of the first class to come to his table, accept a present from him. They were all the same - a Law Book "Perkins Profitable" bound in red Morocco gilt with a handsome inscription. I shall send you mine down shortly as I expect to have many opportunities before long. Afterwards received the congratulations

I nearly the whole class - This has given me
some hopes of the result of all at the close of the
Lesson - but I do not expect too much. I think
I stand a good chance of a certificate. But I
will leave myself like a lion & most probably
stand first. & the Quarterly Meeting will be
considerably interrupted. I doubt not
that you will be as pleased to hear of this
as my friend & here are. I am. I shall be
an Attorney that was named. I am determined
now more than ever not to slacken.

I am invited to meet H. Martineau & Bragg
this evening at Pittsford. I like to give
such pleasure but if I am there at all it can
only be for a short time.

I am not sure but that I could do it.
I am now going for you at the Quarterly Meeting.
She has gone to Brighton to wait on a sister who is
unwell. I have given notice of leaving her room
but whether she will do it or not as then
I cannot say. Please tell me in your next
if I should ask about her. In the meantime
I desire to be remembered to all inquirers
& am

Yours affectionate Son
J. W. Martineau

In the Easter term of 1830 Joseph was admitted to practise as an attorney.¹

On the 13th April 1831 Joseph was one of two representatives from Newcastle at the Monthly Meeting held at Shields.²

¹ 1862, 1868 & 1872 Law Lists.

² Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

Joseph Watson was an ardent lover of literature, and was a frequent contributor to the *Newcastle Magazine*, although it's not clear at what date. He is said to have excelled in light sketches of a popular character, but sometimes left the region of prose and produced poems of considerable merit. One of his pieces, entitled 'An Address to St. Nicholas Steeple,' appeared in the *Magazine* and became very popular.¹

As a young man, Joseph Watson fell in love with Jane Wigham, daughter of John Wigham, shawl manufacturer of Edinburgh; and it is said that he set off the same day as Edward Richardson, to propose to her. His suit was unsuccessful. Many years later he was delighted when his son married the daughter of his old love.²

In July 1831 Joseph was one of 45 men Friends who signed the certificate for George Washington Walker³, at Newcastle Monthly Meeting, as was his father. The following month the latter was one of the two representatives from Newcastle at Monthly Meeting, as he was again in each of the years 1834, 1836, 1841, and 1849. Joseph served in this capacity at Shields on the 11th October 1831.⁴

Politically, Joseph Watson was "a fiery reformer". It's said that, when the Lords threw out the first Reform Bill, he was among a dozen local politicians who met at John Fife's house in Newcastle to consider whether, in the event of the ultimate defeat of the measure, open rebellion would not be justifiable. (This was a genuine possibility, taken seriously by local and national authorities, at the time of the constitutional crisis centring on the Bill.) The story tells that Watson, as a Quaker, was alone in opposing such extreme measures. In any event, another of the twelve reported the discussion to the authorities, and it's clear that, had the bill been defeated, all the conspirators would have been arrested. He spoke on the Reform Bill to a mass meeting of 50,000 on the Town Moor on the 17th October 1831, organised by the Northern Political Union. A newspaper report also survives of his address on the subject to a public meeting held at Oakwellgate, Gateshead, on the 17th May 1832 (two days after the meeting held in Newcastle's Spital Field on the 15th May):⁵

On Thursday last, pursuant to advertisement, a public meeting of the inhabitants of Gateshead and its vicinity was held in Oakwellgate, to take into consideration the state of the reform bill, and the measures necessary to be adopted, in order to secure its passage through the House of Lords.

...

Mr JOSEPH WATSON then came forward and said, that, like his eloquent friend who had just addressed them, he rejoiced in the success of the popular cause, and hailed that as the brightest day that ever

¹ Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341; the *Newcastle Magazine* doesn't appear in the British Newspaper Archive, and the 'Address' itself remains untraced.

² Evelyn Weiss: Ms Foreword to Ts RSW Reminiscences, Tyne & Wear Archives Service, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2.

³ Walker was shortly to embark on what was to be a 27 year mission to the southern hemisphere. Charlotte Fell-Smith, 'Walker, George Washington (1800-1859)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28486>].

⁴ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁵ Obit. of Robert Spence Watson, *Daily News*, 3 March 1911; Aaron Watson: 'Modern Influences. XLI. The Right Hon. Robert Spence Watson'. *Millgate Monthly* Vol. IV part 1, No. 42, March 1909: 337-42:338; *Tribune*, 9 October 1906; *Newcastle Courant*, 22 October 1831; *Newcastle Chronicle*, 19 May 1832; Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings II; Middlebrook (1950):175. John Fife (later Sir John Fife, 1795-1871) was a Newcastle surgeon, and a founder of the Northern Political Union (*Oxford DNB*, at <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9416>)

dawned upon the liberties of his country. But yesterday, when requested to move one of the resolutions, he had thought that he must address them in a tone somewhat subdued, and call upon them to continue peaceable and orderly in their conduct, but the hour of their mourning was become one of jubilee and rejoicing—they had exchanged heaviness of heart, for lightness of countenance—their sorrow was turned into gladness, and he had now only to congratulate them on their triumph and recommend them to exercise the same moderation as when they were less successful [cheers]. They lived in strange and stirring times. The events of the present day were forgotten in those of the morrow. Their ears still vibrated with some announcement of mighty import, when another of yet greater interest burst upon them. The House of Lords had, by a large majority, rejected the reform bill—the King had refused to create a number of peers sufficient to ensure its enactment—Earl Grey had resigned the seals of office—the Duke of Wellington was for two days a premier without an administration—and Earl Grey was once more the prime minister [cheers]. But these events had taught lessons which would not be soon forgotten, on which the future statesmen might reflect, and the legislator meditate with advantage. They shewed, in the first place, how far the people might put their trust in princes and their confidence in the House of Lords. Whilst they shewed, on the one hand, that that assembly contained some men of integrity, wisdom, and honor; on the other, they proved that trick, dissimulation, and fraud might dwell even in the bosoms of right honorables [cheers]. They shewed that henceforth reliance must be placed in the House of Commons; in that house which, even after Earl Grey had vacated office, declared, by a majority of 80, its determined attachment to him, and its unabated regard to the reform which he had proposed. They ensured the speedy passing of the reform bill in its full force, which otherwise might have been curtailed, mutilated, and long deferred. They shewed the party which had opposed the wishes of the nation, that the power was gone from their hands without a chance of its return, since they were themselves compelled to acknowledge their defeat, and to be “the joyous heralds” of their own disgrace [hear, hear]. Above all, they shewed the majesty and moral strength of the people [loud cheers]. “Tell me not,” said he of revolutions effected by violence. Talk not of an appeal to physical force. Here is a revolution, the most glorious that is recorded in the annals of this or any other country, carried forward without tumult, and concluded without bloodshed [cheers]. Tell me not that by violence Magna Charta was wrested from King John on Runnymede—that by violence the Commonwealth was founded on the kingly misgovernment of Charles the First—that by violence James the Second was forced to abdicate his throne, and the revolution of 1688 was accomplished. I answer, that the great mass of the English in the feudal ages, and even in later times, were ignorant and uncivilised—bondsmen, servile minions, ready to march to the field in whatever cause, at the beck of the lord whose vassals they were, and were but one degree superior in intellect to the beasts which they herded. But “a change had come o’er the spirit” of the people. Education had been diffused, knowledge had been spread, and intelligence communicated; they had begun to read, to think, and to reflect; they formed opinions of their own, and on these opinions they acted; nor would they submit to the dictation or control of any man or set of men whatever [cheers]. They had become conscious of the possession of a moral power, which, if brought to bear upon any one point, was irresistible. It might be unsound in its operations, but it was not therefore less certain in its effects. It might be wanting in the splendour of military array, as it was also wanting in those disgusting accompaniments which are more properly connected with carnage and bloodshed; and it might not possess the glitter of the sabre and the revolver, but neither was it followed by the groans of the widow or the cry of the orphan.—[Cheers.] Let men behold how it has been exhibited throughout the kingdom during the last few years, how the people without connivance, communication or correspondence, had made a simultaneous movement. They had assembled in all the large towns. They had agreed to similar resolutions. They had adopted everywhere the same course of proceeding, and they had literally carried Earl Grey back to office and seated him there more firmly than any minister of England ever was before.—[Cheers.] And if, even yet, by any unforeseen and untoward circumstance the House of Commons should be dissolved, and the members who had acted so patriotically should be thrown back upon their constituents, the nation would again rise in its might—would again return the members who had evinced their integrity in the cause of reform, would prove that the enthusiasm which it exhibited last spring had not evaporated, that the zeal which it displayed in 1831 did not glow less intensely in 1832, but had increased with time, and strengthened by delay—[Cheers]. For himself, he must confess that, of late, the times had seemed to him dark and

troubles. The aspect of the political horizon threatened a convulsion. The sky was thick and lowering. The clouds were gathering over their heads, and already they might hear the distant muttering of the thunder, ere long, to burst in fury and vengeance on this devoted land. But by the mercy of that Being, who alone had the power, the calamity had been averted, and Britain once more basked in the sun of liberty—[Cheers]. And, the home of the brave and the free—the mistress of the ocean, and the empress of the world—the land, where commerce had attained its brightest eminence—where the arts were fostered, and religion was established in all its varied sects, but with all its tolerance—would soon be freed from the dissensions which now agitate her—would rise from her low and fallen estate to occupy her wonted place among the kingdoms of the earth. Lightened of the lead with which misgovernment had hardened her—and reinvigorated by an infusion of the life-blood of reform, she would commence another and a brighter career of honour and glory—she would again present the magnificent spectacle of the different orders of her state “moving in their allotted spheres in harmony and joy”—of a King less desirous to rule by the attributes of monarchical power, than to reign in the hearts and affections of his subjects—of nobles, less desirous of being eminent for the factitious circumstances of their lineage and birth, and the adventitious appendages of their rank, than for the cultivation of their intellects, and the superior endowment of their minds—for their ermine and their coronets, than for their learning, wisdom, and patriotism—and of a people, educated, enlightened, intelligent and free,—that “peace may be once more within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces”—[Loud cheers]. Mr. Watson concluded, by moving the 5th resolution, which was seconded by Mr THOS. ROBINSON, and carried unanimously.



By courtesy of the Central Library

Newcastle upon Tyne from the Side,
1834.

From S. Middlebrook (1950), *Newcastle upon Tyne. Its Growth and Achievement*.
Newcastle: Newcastle Chronicle & Journal

The King gave his assent to the Reform Bill on the 7th June 1832, to widespread rejoicing.¹

Though Joshua (I) Watson didn't vote in the 1820 election, he did so in 1832, for Charles Attwood, voting as an inhabitant householder, a shopkeeper, of the Side; he also voted in 1835, as a householder, for William Ord and James Aytoun.²

In April 1834 Joshua (I) Watson became a member of the first committee for the Friends' sabbath school in Newcastle, and one of the teachers; he subscribed 5s. By May he had also donated 18 books and a monthly magazine, and by September he was one of the seven school librarians. By 1840, though, he had ceased teaching there.³

Esther Watson attended Monthly Meeting in February 1835.⁴

Sarah Spence

Sarah Spence was born in North Shields on the 13th April 1814.⁵

Her aunt Sarah Spence married James Gilpin of Newcastle, at North Shields on the 23rd March 1815.⁶

Her sisters Elizabeth Foster Spence and Rachel Spence were born at Howard Street, North Shields, on the 7th August 1815 and 25th September 1816 respectively.⁷

Robert (II) and Mary Spence's first son was born at Howard Street on the 12th December 1817, and named after his father.⁸

In February 1818 Sarah's father stood down as Monthly Meeting clerk in favour of Myles Birket Foster.⁹ On the 1st August that year he extended his business by entering into a copartnership with Chapman's as the North and South Shields Bank. After this date he is usually described as a banker.¹⁰

Sarah's brother John Foster Spence was born at Howard Street on the 8th November 1818.¹¹

¹ Middlebrook (1950): 175

² DQB. Charles Attwood (1791–1875) was another founder member of the Northern Political Union; he actually came bottom of the poll in 1832 (<https://co-curate.ncl.ac.uk/charles-attwood-1791-1875/>).

³ Minutes of Friends' Sabbath School, Newcastle, TWAS MF 208.

⁴ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁵ RG 6/775; Foster (1871); 1872 *Annual Monitor*.

⁶ RG 6/527, /1245; Spence.

⁷ HO 107/2410 f. ? p81; RG 6/404, /775, /1245; Foster (1871).

⁸ RG 6/404, /775, /1245; Foster (1871); *Bootham School Register*, 1971.

⁹ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

¹⁰ Spence; IR 26/ and 27/1125; death certificate; IR 26/ and 27/1722; wife's death certificate.

¹¹ RG 6/404, /775, /1245; Foster (1871); *Bootham School Register*.

On the 1st December 1818 Robert Foster suffered “a very afflicting bereavement” by the death at his house of his son John, from typhus fever, aged just 30. Sarah’s father, too, was devastated by the loss, noting in his diary that he had been “the dearest friend I ever had & his loss to me seems irreparable”; it was on John Foster’s advice that he had entered into the copartnership with Chapman’s.¹ On 16 September 1819 Robert Foster, gentleman of Newcastle, was a witness at the marriage in North Shields of Sarah Spence’s aunt Rachel Spence to Thomas Hagen; the Hagens subsequently removed to Stanwell, Middlesex.²

Sarah’s brother Joseph Spence was born at Howard Street on the 28th December 1819.³

In January 1820 Robert (II) Spence was reappointed clerk to Monthly Meeting, this time with Jonathan Priestman as his assistant.⁴



Hardcastlegarth; photographed by the author

In 1821 Sarah’s paternal grandmother Sarah (Walker) Stoheart was living at Hardcastlegarth—which still survives, apparently little changed.⁵ Robert (II) visited his mother there on the 20th February that year. Her health had been declining for some time, and on the 26th he persuaded her to return with him to Shields.⁶

On the 30th April 1821 Robert Foster made his will, having already made

provision for Myles Birket Foster, James Foster and Anthony Clapham, and partial provision for Robert (II) Spence; the latter was appointed co-executor.⁷ In July 1821 Robert Foster was one of the two representatives from Newcastle at Monthly Meeting held at Sunderland.⁸ Adam Sedgwick recorded seeing Robert Foster for the last time that year, recollecting that

The load of years had then been resting upon him: but his heart had not become cold; for the old man

¹ Myles B. Foster (1860); RG 6/226; Spence.

² RG 6/527; Spence.

³ RG 6/404, /775, /1245; Foster (1871).

⁴ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁵ Spence.

⁶ Spence.

⁷ Durham Probate Records, Robert Foster 1827; IR 26/ & 27/1125.

⁸ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

received me with the warmest welcome; and then he walked with me, (no longer with his firm step of former years,) and shewed me some of the neighbouring establishments on the river Tyne. He seemed to be again in his own element; and all the persons connected with the shipping interests of the river treated him with marked respect and confidence. After a while he said, "We will go and rest ourselves at the study of one of my friends. You will like to know him, for he is a man of genius and a great humourist." It was Bewick, the well-informed naturalist and celebrated engraver upon wood; and we had a long and delightful interview with that great artist and humourist of Newcastle. It was I believe on the day following that I saw for the last time my aged and honoured friend Mr Foster; whose name I retain in grateful memory, associated with many endearing thoughts of the friends and scenes of my early years.¹

Sarah's brother Thomas Spence was born at Howard Street, North Shields, on the 17th June 1821.²

In August 1821 Mary Spence was appointed as an overseer in Shields meeting.³ In February 1822 Robert Foster was one of the Newcastle representatives to Monthly Meeting, held there.⁴

Sarah's paternal grandmother Sarah (Walker) Stothart was by this time "in a very reduced delicate state requiring constant medical attendance". Her illness became so serious that Dr Headlam from Newcastle was brought in, as well as the local Dr Greenhow, but their efforts were in vain, and on the 1st April 1822 she died at North Shields, and was interred on the 4th in the Friends' burial ground at Stephenson Street, near North Shields. For her son, Robert, she had been "One of the kindest & most affectionate of parents & much beloved by those that knew her worth."⁵

Sarah's sister Jane Spence was born at Howard Street on the 23rd February 1823.⁶

On the 22nd March 1823 Sarah's great-aunt Elizabeth Foster died at Lancaster, "who for many years had evinced the true kindness & affection of a parent" to Robert and Mary Spence, Sarah's parents.⁷

In May 1823 Robert Foster attended Yearly Meeting in London, as he frequently did, travelling in a collier, by sea. Robert (II) Spence also visited London that month, to present an anti-slavery petition to the House of Commons; but they didn't travel together, as Robert Spence took the mail coach. In November 1823 Foster attended Monthly Meeting at Newcastle.⁸

On the 22nd January 1824 Mary Spence gave birth to twin sisters, given the names Ann and Margaret. Ann died the same day, and her body was buried in the Friends' burial ground in Stephenson Street the next day. Margaret only lived a few months, dying on the 31st October and being buried with her

¹ Adam Sedgwick (1870), *Supplement to the Memorial of the Trustees of Cowgill Chapel*. Cambridge: CUP: 58–9.

² RG 6/775; Foster (1871).; *Bootham School Register*, 1971.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁴ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁵ RG 6/226, /1245; Spence.

⁶ RG 6/775; Foster (1871).

⁷ Spence.

⁸ Myles B. Foster (1860); RSW in Steel (1899): 116–7; Foster (1862); minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169; Spence; Robert (II) Spence letters in possession of Peter Robson.

twin sister on the 2nd November.¹

In February 1824 Robert Foster suffered a slight stroke, and a few weeks later his wife suffered a much more severe stroke (though she was to survive her husband eight years). Though Robert recovered, his general health was shaken and he was gradually to become more and more feeble.²

On the 5th July 1824 Robert (II) Spence, with nearly 50 friends, took the *Britannia* steam packet to Stockton, to the Quarterly Meeting.³

On the 22nd July 1824 Sarah Spence left to begin her schooling, with her sister Mary, at Doncaster. their parents accompanied them on the journey, taking in the marriage of Robert's niece Jane Spence to John Procter, at Staindrop on the 23rd July, on the way. Nothing is known of Sarah's school career, except for the reference, in her letter to her own son Herbert, in 1865, to her own "very mixed feelings" on leaving school.⁴

On the 7th May 1825 Robert (II) Spence bought premises at the corner of Howard Street, North Shields, for £1600.⁵

On the 12th August 1825 Mary Spence again give birth to twin sisters at her new home in Howard Street. As they had done two years earlier, Robert (II) and Mary gave them the names Ann and Margaret (almost as if they were being given a second chance with the same children).⁶

Over April/May 1827 Robert (II) Spence spent a week in Scotland, visiting Edinburgh, Glasgow, the falls of Clyde, &c., but also taking in the General Meeting for Scotland on the 30th April. In that year the local directory recorded his business as "Robert Spence & Co., linen & woollen drapers, Howard street, North Shields."⁷

Robert Foster was ill for many months prior to his death, sometimes suffering severely, but bearing it with great patience. For the final weeks he lost the power of speech, "yet he evinced great tranquillity and sweetness of spirit, in the near prospect of his final change." He died on the 15th June 1827, and was buried on the 20th in plot 19 of the old graveyard in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle.⁸ The *Kendal Chronicle* on the 30th June reported:

The late Robert Foster was a scholar, a gentleman, and a philosopher, in the most expanded sense of the word, and last and most valuable of all, a Christian. It may with justice be said of him, that he was

¹ RG 6/775, /1245; Foster (1871).

² Myles B. Foster (1860); 1824 *Annual Monitor*; RSW in Steel (1899): 116-7; Foster (1862).

³ Spence.

⁴ Spence; *In Memoriam Sarah Watson; The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906*. 1906, York: Sessions.

⁵ Spence.

⁶ HO 107/1491 p41; RG 6/775; Foster (1871).

⁷ Spence; Robert (II) Spence letters in possession of Peter Robson; *History, Directory and Gazetteer of Durham and Northumberland*, 1827.

⁸ Myles B. Foster (1860); 1824 *Annual Monitor*; RSW in Steel (1899): 116-7; Foster (1862); Durham Probate Records, Robert Foster 1827; Spence; IR 26/ & 27/1125; RG 6/226.

a man cautious in advising, scrupulously honourable in promise, and capable above most men, when mystery was to be unravelled, confusion brought to order, doubt made certain, or truth conspicuous. He has lived to a good old age, and has gone down to the grave with a character free from stain or reproach, dearly loved by many, and esteemed by all.¹



From S. Middlebrook (1950), *Newcastle upon Tyne. Its Growth and Achievement*.
Newcastle: Newcastle Chronicle & Journal

Sarah's sister Hannah Maria Spence was born at Howard Street on the 13th July 1827.²

Robert Foster's will was proved at Durham on the 25th August 1827, his estate being sworn under £4000. He left to Mary Spence his freehold dwelling house in Northumberland Street; also £1200 to Robert (II) Spence (who was a co-executor), from which to pay an annuity of £40 to Margaret Foster; the residue went to Sarah Foster, except that Margaret Foster was offered her choice of furniture, and Sarah Foster was to pay an annuity of £60 to Margaret Foster.³

On the 15th July 1828 the whole Spence family, including twelve children and three servants, set off for Newcastle by steam. "Too many eggs in one basket," Robert noted."⁴

In January 1828 Robert (II) Spence had been appointed an overseer by Newcastle Monthly Meeting.

¹ Foster (1862).

² HO 107/2410 f55; RG 6/774; Foster (1871).

³ Durham Probate Records, Robert Foster 1827; IR 26/ & 27/1125.

⁴ Spence.

In October he was listed among the trustees for the meeting house and burial ground. He was regularly subject to seizures for non-payment of church rates—for example, a distress warrant was issued against him for £1.3s.4d, on the 30th December 1828. In 1829 there were roughly 200 Friends in membership at Newcastle; though disproportionately influential, the degree of their influence was not perhaps as striking as in Sunderland or Darlington.¹

Late November 1828 was an anxious time for Sarah's father, as the bank's London agents, Fry & Co., stopped payment. Later confidence was completely restored, however, and "many very gratifying instances of it exhibited".²

On Boxing Day 1828 Robert noted in his diary, "Burk convicted of killing persons for their bodies at Edinbro !!!".³

On the 25th June 1829 Sarah's sister Frances was born at North Shields. She lived just a month, dying at North Shields on the 24th July that year. Her body was buried in the Stephenson Street burial ground on the 26th.⁴

In 1829 Sarah's brothers Robert (III), John Foster, and Joseph Spence began school at Lawrence Street school in York, the precursor to Bootham. Robert (III) attended school there until 1832, John Foster leaving in 1833, and Joseph in 1834. Thomas Spence was at Lawrence Street school from 1830 to 1836.⁵

In March 1830 Robert (II) Spence was one of three representatives appointed by Newcastle Monthly Meeting to inquire into Edward Richardson's clearness to marry.⁶

On the 17th May 1830 Robert (II) Spence was part of a deputation that had an interview with the duke of Wellington, at the Custom House in North Shields. He visited the House of Commons on the 23rd.⁷

On the 2nd May 1830, in a letter to William Rowntree, Robert (II) Spence noted that "All our flock are well . . .". But in mid-1830—as King William IV was being proclaimed at Shields—Sarah fell ill with the measles, and was confined to bed at the same time as seven of her sisters.⁸

Sarah's sister Emma Spence was born at Howard Street on the 19th November 1830. In a letter to William Rowntree of the 12th December her proud father noted that "our little Emma seems a

¹ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169; Spence; Robert (II) Spence letters in possession of Peter Robson; Jeff Smith (2001) 'The Making of a Diocese 1851–1882', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester, Phillimore:100.

² Spence.

³ Spence.

⁴ RG 6/1245; Foster (1871).

⁵ *Bootham School Register*.

⁶ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169

⁷ Spence; Robert (II) Spence letters in possession of Peter Robson.

⁸ Letter from Robert (II) Spence to William Rowntree, in possession of Peter Robson; Spence.

blooming hopeful blossom . . .”. On the 30th December he reported that “the rest of our flock are all well . . .”.

After a bitterly cold night, on Christmas morning 1831—as much later recorded in the reminiscences of Mary Ann Blyth, who was an escaped slave from America—“the two Miss Spences of the Friendly Society”—in all probability the two eldest daughters, Sarah and her sister Mary—visited Blyth on her arrival in Shields, having heard that Mr Otterway, the mate of the ship she’d come over in, had a slave with him. Settling in Shields, she was later to enter service in the Spence household, where she stayed seven years—“and that family has always been kind to me and has never lost sight of me.”¹

On New Year’s Eve 1831 Robert (II) Spence petitioned the trustees of Lord Crewe’s Charity, in his capacity as secretary to the Committee for relief of the indigent, in North Shields.²

During August and September Mary Spence was “in very delicate health”, partly arising from a severe cold taken whilst visiting Margaret Bragg at Tynemouth, followed by a troublesome cough. She was attended on by her sister Sarah during this time. Her illness caused Robert (II) great anxiety: she was seriously ill for some time, and then went to Benwell to convalesce.³ On the 4th September, however, there were widespread celebrations in Shields on the occasion of the coronation of King William and Queen Adelaide: boat races, balloons, fireworks, &c.⁴

On the 23rd January 1832 there was an Essay Meeting at Summerhill, at which Joseph Watson was one of the readers, with W. Doeg. His own contribution was described as “A Magazine Ditty, by Joseph Watson, a very clever six-line verse on the events of the Past and the Coming Year.”⁵

In February 1832 Joseph Watson and Edward Richardson were the two representatives from Newcastle at Monthly Meeting there.⁶

In October 1832 a letter from Sarah’s father Robert (II) Spence to William Rowntree recorded of his eldest son that “Robert is also at home in the shop and I hope likely to become useful in relieving his father before many years pass over from a part of those cares which a family large or small necessarily has attached to it [. . .]”. Mary Spence gave birth to their 18th and last child, who was to be named Lucy Fisher Spence, at 7 o’clock on Wednesday, the 10th October 1832, at Howard Street. A letter written on the 12th describes her as “a very bonny blooming daughter who is yet nameless . . .”. The same letter reports that “we have now 10 all at home & in excellent health . . .”.⁷ On New Year’s Eve 1832 Robert (II) reported to William Rowntree that all “our numerous tribe” were well.⁸

¹ ‘Mary Ann Blyth’s story of her escape from slavery’, in Spence.

² Petition in Northumberland Record Office, NRO 452/C/2/563.

³ Letter from Robert (II) Spence to William Rowntree, in possession of Peter Robson.

⁴ Spence.

⁵ Steel (1899): 129

⁶ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169

⁷ Letters from Robert (II) Spence to William Rowntree, in possession of Peter Robson.

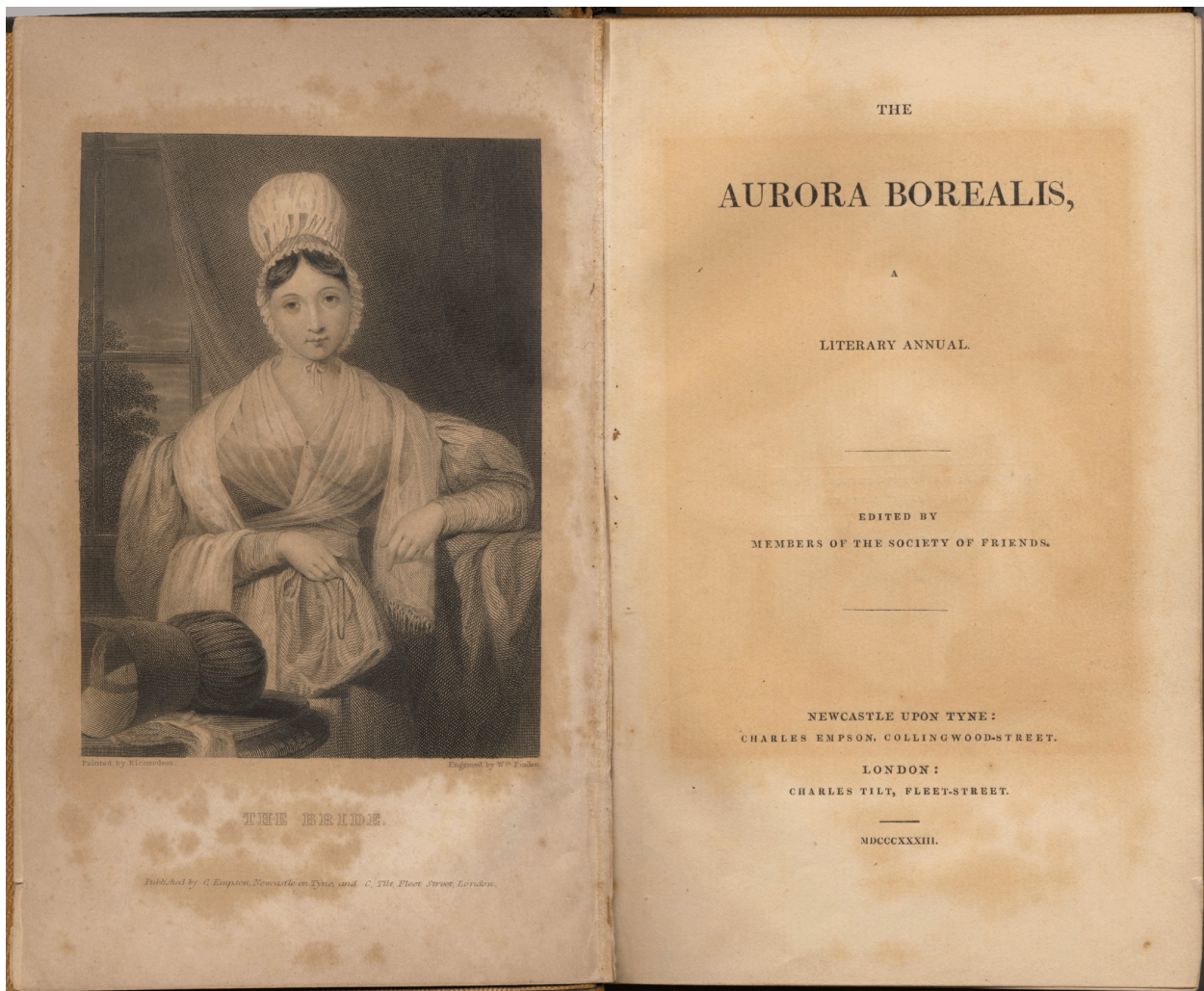
⁸ Letter from Robert (II) Spence to William Rowntree, in possession of Peter Robson.

A few days earlier, on the 22nd December, Robert (II) had made a point of noting in his diary the election of Joseph Pease to Parliament, the first Quaker MP.¹

The entry for Joseph Watson in Ihler's *Directory of Newcastle & Gateshead* in 1833 shows him living at Bensham Grove, and practising as a solicitor at 23 Nicholas' Churchyard, Newcastle. The *Law List* for that year and for 1835 describes him as an attorney of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; his London agent was Richardson, Shield & Hall.²

In 1833 Joseph Watson of Bensham and Robert Spence of North Shields both subscribed to the publication of John Sykes's *Local Records; or Historical Register of Remarkable Events, which have occurred in Northumberland and Durham, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Berwick upon Tweed . . .*³

In 1832 and 1833 Joseph assisted Mr W. Doeg, described as "a literary gentleman in the employment of Charles Bragg", in preparing and editing an annual, the *Aurora Borealis*, "which was considered a very creditable production of its kind." (Original letters to its editors survive from Bernard Barton,



¹ Spence.

² Ihler's *Directory of Newcastle & Gateshead*, 1833; *Law List*.

³ John Sykes (1833) *Local Records; or Historical Register of Remarkable Events, which have occurred in Northumberland and Durham, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Berwick upon Tweed . . .*, Vol. I: xiv.

William Howitt, Amelia Opie, and J. Addington Symonds.) It included a poem by Joseph himself ('The Angel of the Pestilence'¹), giving a graphic description of a mother's bedside vigil beside her dying, and only, child, concluding with a plea that Death should not come "Till we have bowed us in the dust and made our peace with God." He also contributed a story called 'The Bride'², which has been described as "one of the few Quaker stories which have been written by a Friend and full of the right Quaker atmosphere." The hero of the tale, Edward Fletcher, following the death of his parents, had been brought up by his uncle. He had received a good education, followed by time in the office of a merchant which had enabled him to become 'principal of a mercantile establishment'. He felt it was time to marry and discussed with a fellow young Quaker, though a confirmed bachelor, the qualities necessary in a wife. The two young men consider six young women, none of whom match up to their demanding criteria, namely that "She must be a woman whose virtues are the fruit of religious conviction; she must be modest without affectation and cheerfulness without boldness; lively in person and accomplished in mind." Fletcher recalls a young girl he knew when he was growing up in the Lake District. He returned for a visit and met, at First Day Meeting, a local yeoman farmer, who proved to be the grandfather of the girl he had known as a child. The two met again and the young woman, Elizabeth, lived up to all hopes and requirements. Elizabeth could not quite believe she was good enough for Edward, but he never, apparently, wondered if he were good enough for her. The story finishes with an account of their marriage, which is deemed typical of many Quaker marriages of the period:

Never, perhaps, was the old Meeting House so filled as on the morning of the marriage . . . and though there were none of those signs of outward show by which such occasions are commonly distinguished, though there was no firing of cannon, no ringing of bells, no flying of flags, their vow of affection till death, sounded no less solemnly and impressively on the ears of the hushed assembly.³

Joseph also had a number of literary pieces published in the *Newcastle Chronicle*. On the 1st August 1834, at Newcastle, he wrote 'The Day of Jubilee' to celebrate the abolition of slavery⁴. He also wrote verse, and around this time he wrote his poem 'The Triumph of Northumbria.'⁵ Perhaps his most successful long poem was 'The Legend of the Lambton Worm'⁶; he was a tolerably regular contributor for some years to *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (in which 'The Legend' first saw publication), and wrote for the anti-slavery album called *The Bow in the Cloud*, published at the time of the abolition of the slave trade in 1834. He had a rare talent for epigram, and did good work with it upon many occasions. His great love of children led him to write many a pretty story for their delectation.⁷

In February 1834 Joseph was one of two Newcastle representatives to the Monthly Meeting held

¹ Joseph Watson—*Selected poetry and prose*: 3.

² Joseph Watson—*Selected poetry and prose*: 11.

³ Ruth Sansbury (1998) *Beyond the Blew Stone. 300 Years of Quakers in Newcastle*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne Preparative Meeting: 157–8; RSW in Steel (1899): 171-2; Corder; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; Ms letters in the Robinson Library, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

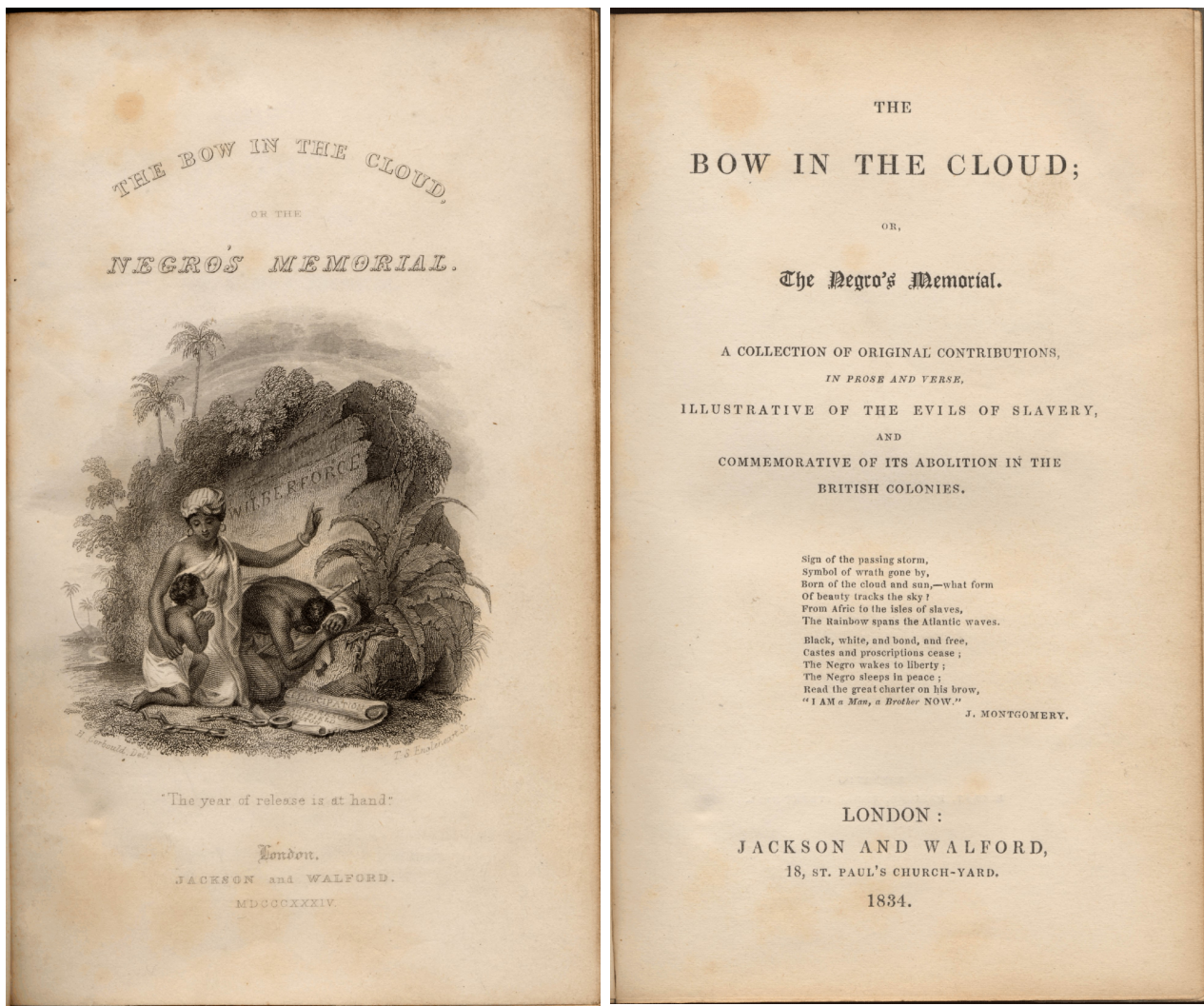
⁴ Joseph Watson—*Selected poetry and prose*: 23.

⁵ Not located.

⁶ Joseph Watson—*Selected poetry and prose*: 25.

⁷ Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341; poems; RSW in Steel (1899): 171-2; Corder; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

there. In September he fulfilled the same service at Sunderland, where he was appointed to the committee in charge of deeds and papers relating to trust property.¹



In August 1834 Robert (II) Spence spent a week in Edinburgh. In the same month his daughter, Sarah's sister Jane Spence, began school at the Mount, in York. She finished her education there in July 1837.² Some time after 1834 Joseph Spence was apprenticed to the drapery trade at Stockton.³

¹ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

² Spence; Robert (II) Spence letters in possession of Peter Robson; *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906*. 1906, York: Sessions

³ *Shields Daily News*, 18 December 1889.

Middle years

At Newcastle Monthly Meeting on the 11th February 1835, at which Sarah's elder sister Mary was present, according to the minutes,

Joseph Watson & Sarah Spence both members of this Monthly Meeting have laid before us their intention of taking each other in Marriage and the Parents of both Parties being present and having signified that it is with their consent the following Friends viz Will^m Brown, Ja^s Gilpin & Thomas Robson are appointed to make the needful enquiries as to his clearness from all others in this relation & report to our next and Will^m Brown and Ja^s Gilpin are desired to give public notice thereof in Shields & Newcastle Meetings.¹

Sarah's father noted in his diary:

James Watson & my daughter Mary, Joseph Watson & my daughter Sarah laid their intentions of marriage before friends at the Monthly Meeting at Newcastle—May the blessing of heaven rest upon their intended unions! Daniel Oliver spoke very encouragingly to them and they all acquitted themselves with great propriety & gained much credit from their friends.²

At the following Monthly Meeting, held at Newcastle on the 11th March,

Report is made that nothing had appeared to prevent the further procedure of Joseph Watson regarding his intended Marriage with Sarah Spence, public notice thereof having been given in Shields and Newcastle Meetings 15th of 2nd month they are therefore at liberty to proceed to the accomplishment thereof. Henry Brady & Ed^d Richardson are appointed to see that it be conducted agreeably to good order & to prepare abstracts of the marriage certificate.³

That evening, Sarah wrote a short letter to Joseph:

I wish once more, my beloved friend, to write a line or two to thee as thy own Sarah Spence, since, ere tomorrow's sun has set, I shall, in all human probability, be thy own *Sarah Watson*. How strange it seems to writ the name in black and white!

. . . Be assured, that so far as lies in my power, to make thee a *tolerable* wife and a happy home is, and I believe ever will be, the earnest wish of

Thy sincerely attached,

SARAH SPENCE.

Howard Street,

11th of the 3rd Month, 1835.⁴

¹ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

² Spence.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁴ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*. Privately printed pamphlet, copy at Newcastle Lit. & Phil.

Joseph and Sarah married on the 12th March 1835, at the Friends' Meeting House in North Shields. For Sarah's father it was "a most interesting occasion", as she was married in a double wedding with her sister, which "excited quite a sensation in the town." Her sister Mary married James Watson; their witnesses were William Brown, miller of North Shields, Edward Richardson, tanner of Newcastle upon Tyne, and Henry Brady, surgeon of Gateshead. James Watson (from an unrelated Watson family) was a draper of North Shields, son of William Watson, manufacturer of Hawick, Roxburgh, Scotland, and his wife Margaret.¹



Joseph Watson, from S.J. Meisner archive



Sarah (Spence) Watson, from S.J. Meisner archive

On the 15th April 1835, at the Monthly Meeting held at Shields, "The Friends appointed report that the Marriages of James Watson with Mary Spence and of Joseph Watson & Sarah Spence were accomplished and conducted agreeably to good order, they have also produced abstracts of the marriage certificates."²

Joseph's brother William Wigham Watson was married at Carlisle on the 26th May 1835 to Mary Carrick. He was described as a cheesemonger of Newcastle. Mary was the daughter of David Carrick of Carlisle (deceased), and his wife Sarah.³

Joseph Watson was an ardent lover of civil and religious liberty; and his exceptional oratorical gift made him a powerful ally of the Liberal party in the struggles which went forward in the late 1820s and early '30s. His speeches in favour of Catholic Emancipation, the Abolition of Slavery in the

¹ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169; RG 6/527, /1245; Spence.

² Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

³ RG 6/1155.

West Indies, and the Reform Bill, were filled not merely with eloquent passages (which were said to abound) but with the glow of generous conviction..¹

On the 15th September 1835 Sarah's brother Joseph was bound apprentice to A. Sanders and Cuthbert Wigham, at Stockton.²

In June that year Joseph had been one of the two Newcastle representatives to Monthly Meeting, held at Shields.³ At Newcastle Preparative Meeting in November Sarah was one of two women appointed to attend Monthly Meeting at Newcastle on 4th day.⁴ In 1835 Joseph Watson was a member of the preparative meeting's committee "to examine such provisions of the Municipal Reform Bill as concern members of the society." The committee concluded that members should not hold municipal offices, though there was no longer a legal bar. This was for the reason that office holders had to declare they would uphold the Church of England. Joseph was one of four signatories to the paper presented to the report, in December that year.⁵

Joseph and Sarah's first child, Lucy, was born on New Year's Day 1836, at Claremont Place; among the witnesses was Henry Brady, surgeon of Gateshead. Claremont Place was recently built (1819–24) as 'select' housing for richer people, away from the town centre, the first such terrace at Bensham.⁶



1–17 consec., Claremont Place, [from www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk);
© D.S. Ridley

On the 23rd January 1836 Sarah's father recorded that a "fearful gale from the West South West blew down the bank chimney

through the roof of our back room, & Emma had a very narrow escape with her life, being enveloped by the dust & mortar of the falling ruins just as she left the room."⁷

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; RSW in Steel (1899); *Tribune* 9 October 1906; Sergius Stepniak (n.d.): *Nihilism as It Is*. London: Unwin; Corder; obit. of Robert Spence Watson, *Daily News*, 3 March 1911; obit. of Robert Spence Watson, *Annual Monitor* 1912.

² Spence.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁴ Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

⁵ Sansbury:167–8.

⁶ HO 107/2405; RG 6/1149; Foster (1871); Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (1998) 'A Short History of Gateshead', www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/DUR/GatesheadHistory/Ch5.html#Pg60; Manders.

⁷ Spence.

Sarah's sisters Ann and Margaret Spence began school at The Mount in August 1836, and continued their education there until the end of 1840.¹

On the 21st February 1836 Esther Watson witnessed the birth of her grandson William Joshua Watson (son of William Wigham Watson). In that year William Wigham Watson's family was living at Sedgwick Place, Gateshead.²

In February 1836 Joseph and his parents all signed the Monthly Meeting testimony to Thomas Richardson. They signed the testimony to Margaret Bragg in December 1840 (as did Robert (II) & Mary Spence), and to Rachel Wigham in January 1848; Joshua (I) also signed the testimony to Daniel Oliver in September 1848.³

The *Law List* volumes for 1836 to 1846 continue to show Joseph Watson as an attorney of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; for this period his London agents are given as Shield & Harwood.⁴

Monthly Meeting, in January 1837, appointed Joseph Watson as one of four tasked with looking at the implications of the new law on births, marriages, and deaths. With the introduction of civil registration midway through that year the July Monthly Meeting, at Sunderland, gave Robert (II) Spence responsibility for burial notes and birth statements for Shields.⁵

Esther Watson was one of two Newcastle women representatives at Monthly Meeting in March 1837, February 1838, and July 1843. She was one of five signatories to a letter regarding the reinstatement of Hannah Richardson, reported to Monthly Meeting in November 1839.⁶ Joseph Watson was one of the two Newcastle representatives at Monthly Meeting at Shields in April 1837, and August 1838.⁷ In June 1837 Robert (II) and Mary Spence, both now elders, were the Newcastle representatives at the Monthly Meeting of Ministers & Elders, as they were to be every three months until June 1845, missing very few meetings.⁸

On the 8th June 1837, at 10 Claremont Place, Gateshead, Sarah Watson gave birth to the couple's eldest son, Robert Spence Watson.⁹

Sarah's sister Elizabeth Foster Spence married Henry Brown, a starch manufacturer, at North Shields, on the 17th August 1837.¹⁰

¹ *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784-1816, 1831-1906*. 1906, York: Sessions.

² RG 6/1149; Steel, op. cit: 69.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁴ *Law List*.

⁵ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁶ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁷ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁸ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Ministers & Elders, TWAS MF 180.

⁹ RG 6/1149; *Bootham School Register*; Foster (1871).

¹⁰ Marriage digest; RG 6/1245.

The Watsons went away for a few days at the end of June 1838, accompanied by Sarah's parents. Robert Spence recorded:

Accompanied by my dear wife & Joseph & Sarah Watson went by the Chevy Chase to Melrose, thence by chaise to Abbotsford & Selkirk to Hawick a most beautiful & interesting ride & abounding with scenery & incidents of no common interest.—Left Hawick on the 27th by Moss Paul, Langholm, Longtown & Carlisle to Wigton, on the 28th attended the Q. Meeting there—the town in bustle on acct. of the Queen's Coronation.—29th After the General Meeting returned by the Rail to Newcastle & thence home delighted to be back to my own nest.¹

On the 13th December 1838 Sarah gave birth to a daughter, Esther Mary Watson. Joseph, giving his address as 10 Summerhill Terrace, Westgate, Newcastle, informed the registrar. The address where the Watson family was living at this period is elsewhere stated as 4 Claremont Place, Gateshead; and they were also said to have lived at 8 Claremont Place at some point. Whether these were genuinely different addresses, or whether instead these designations represent renumbering and/or renaming of the same property, remains obscure.²



7-12 Summerhill Terrace, from www.imagesofengland.org.uk; © Bob Cottrell

In 1838 Robert (II) Spence's banking business amalgamated with the Union Banking Co., of Sunderland, as the Newcastle, Shields and Sunderland Union Joint Stock Banking Company. The goodwill of Chapman's was sold for £20,000. The North Shields branch continued to work almost independently, with Robert (II) Spence as manager until 1845. Joseph Watson, as a close family member, took an active part in the merger. "At this time Mr. Watson occupied himself very much in business affairs, and became an attorney of considerable practice."³

The Victoria Blind Asylum was established in Newcastle in 1838, and Joseph Watson was one of its founders, as well as its first secretary.⁴

¹ Spence.

² Birth certificate; Foster (1871); RG 13/4781 f130 p7; Corder; M.A. Richardson's *Directory of Newcastle and Gateshead* 1838; 1861 & 1871 census; son's marriage certificate; Ward's *Directory of Newcastle & Gateshead*; Steel: 69.

³ Spence; White's *Newcastle & Gateshead Directory*, 1847; *Memoirs of John Wigham Richardson*; RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341, Newcastle Central Library.

⁴ W. Harris Robinson in Steel (1899): 70; <https://co-curate.ncl.ac.uk/royal-victoria-school-for-the-blind-1838-1985/>.



Thomas Spence; from Spence

On the 7th January 1839 Robert (II) Spence's shop had to close, "owing to a violent hurricane from South West to North West & business of all sorts suspended".¹

By 1839 Sarah's brother Thomas—still living at home—was apprenticed to a surgeon. But, in his 18th year, he died of a continued fever on the 2nd March that year. His body was interred in the Friends' burial ground in Stephenson Street, North Shields. His brother John Foster Spence, of Howard Street, North Shields, informed the registrar of his death. Joseph's uncle Anthony Watson also died in 1839.²

On the 17th June 1839 the North Shields & Newcastle & Brandling Junction Railways opened, and on the same day there was a terrible thunderstorm and waterspout at Newcastle.³

On the 16th July Sarah's brother John Foster Spence, with Charles and Richardson Brown, set out on a tour to the Continent.⁴

On the 20th July 1839, at the height of the Chartist agitation, a riot began in the Side, and disorder broke out again several times during the following few days. In August the Newcastle Chartists opened a joint-stock provision store in the Side, which survived for two years, providing an unusual form of competition for Joshua Watson.⁵

In August 1839 Joseph was one of the two Newcastle representatives at Monthly Meeting. That month Sarah's brother Hannah Maria Spence began school at The Mount, where she continued her schooling until the summer of 1843.⁶

In February 1840 Joseph was one of five men appointed by Newcastle Monthly Meeting to prepare a memorial on Sufferings, to go to the Secretary of State. The memorial was produced in mid-March.⁷

Joseph and Sarah's son Joseph (III) Watson was born in the township of Westgate, Newcastle, on

¹ Spence.

² Death certificate; RG 6/1245; Foster (1871); Corder.

³ Spence.

⁴ Spence.

⁵ Middlebrook: 179

⁶ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169; *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906*.

⁷ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

the 28th March 1840.¹

Described as a yeoman, Joseph's maternal grandfather Joseph (I) Watson died of old age on the 15th July 1840, at Holly Hill, Heworth, Gateshead.²

Joseph and Sarah's son Robert recalled that:

In the year 1840 my father hired a conveyance which was known as "the Tub" and drove us through Rothbury in it. It was a beautiful drive. The whole country, after passing the Town Moor, was embowered in trees and every here and there we came upon a gipsy encampment. I should think that we saw no fewer than six between Newcastle and Rothbury.

We stayed at the well known inn "the Three Half Moons" kept by Maxwell. It was a queer tumble-down place, an old thatched inn with rats, but very comfortable.

It was on this visit that Robert killed his first trout.³ In his *Reminiscences* he gives an interesting glimpse of family life in the Watson household:

In those early days and for several years afterwards things were very queer and we children were then treated rather as we treat horses now. For instance, every Saturday night we were taken into the kitchen and every one was given a tumbler of Epsom Salts whether he was well or ill. On a certain day in October a "poor man's plaster" was put on your chest which you wore for the whole of the winter. On a certain day in March every one of us had before breakfast a tablespoonful of treacle and brimstone. There were no nurses in the present acceptation of the term. If we were ill we were entrusted to the old "howdies" who attended my mother when she was in her confinements.⁴

In November 1840, assisted by a Mr Greenhow, Joseph carried a series of resolutions at the Lit. & Phil. on the expediency of establishing a Collegiate Institution in Newcastle.⁵

The following month Joseph and Sarah signed the testimony to Margaret Bragg, at Newcastle Monthly Meeting, held there.⁶

On the 20th February 1841 Robert (II) Spence, banker of North Shields, made his will, with provision for his wife, and a trust for their children during their minority. He made a codicil in August 1845, amending the provision for his wife and children.⁷

At the end of May a surviving letter shows that Joseph was in Stamford Hill, having been at Yearly Meeting; given the location from which the letter was sent, it seems likely that Joseph, and very possibly Sarah, had been staying with Sarah's uncle Joseph Foster. The letter reads as follows:

¹ Birth certificate; Foster (1871); *Bootham School Register*; *Annual Monitor*; HO 107/2405 f74 p 68.

² Death certificate.

³ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

⁴ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

⁵ Robert Spence Watson (1897): *History of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1793–1896)*. London: Walter Scott: 270; *The Friend* 45:259 1911: RSW in Steel (1899): 171-2.

⁶ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁷ Will at PROB 11/2080; IR 26/ and 27/1722.

My dear Father & Mother—

I am writing at an open window with a beautiful pyracanthus pushing its bunches of flowers into the snow at one side and luxuriant ivy covering the other. The blackbird is whistling in the garden below and everything looks fresh and lovely—Last evening as I returned from the city, the lightning was very brilliant and ~~frequ~~ the flashes frequent. We had had the most oppressively hot weather for some days and shortly after I got into the house, a heavy thunder shower came on, about 10 o'clock it ceased and we went into the garden where we stood for some time listening to the nightingales which were singing around us. But I must continue my acct. of the Y.M.

4th day evening. A minute of the ~~Yearly~~ Meeting of the Meeting for Sufferings on the subject of the African Fund was read from which it appeared that £660 had been paid to John Candler and £300 to the school at the Cape of Good Hope, leaving upwards of £1300, in the hands of the Meeting. Josiah Forster stated that the sum paid to John Candler was not only for his personal expences great part of which he bore himself but included grants made by him to schools in the West Indies & in the [prosecution?] of other charitable objects. He stated that Mr. Candler had left the West Indies, had visited Hayti—is now at Philadelphia & expects to return home in the course of the summer. Joseph John Gurney said he believed that John Candler's visit had been to his own pecuniary loss but had been the means of doing much good. In Jamaica he was everywhere respected & beloved. J.J.G. then proceeded with an account of his own travel. He said that he believed he might reverently say that it was undertaken under a feeling of Gospel Love & ^{was} ^{of} the Divine Requiring—that he ~~w~~could not express his gratitude for the goodness of God, in leading him forth, in caring for him during his journey, in preserving him, in enabling him he trusted faithfully to discharge the object of his mission and allowing him to return safely to his Family & Friends, after an absence of nearly 4 years. After proceeding to speak for some time in this strain he commenced to describe the state of the descendants of Africa in the various parts of the world which he visited. He said that to Canada from the United States it was computed that 100 slaves per month escaped—a strong evidence considering the dangers which they encountered in their passing through the States of their desire to embrace Freedom. There are computed to be 20000 persons of colour now subjects of the Queen in the British Possessions in North America. Many of them are in ~~great~~ a state of great destitution and claimed the sympathy and assistance of the British Philanthropists. The Friends of New York had shewn them much kindness having forwarded to them a considerable sum of money—and interested themselves in establishing schools for their education. He next spoke of the state of the free people of colour in the Northern States of the Union confirming the statements which we have recently heard of the effects of prejudice on the part of the Whites. He stated that in the State of Pennsylvania by a recent alteration in the law—merely the inserting of the word 'white' 40,000 free people of colour have been deprived of the rights of citizenship. He alluded to the attempt to prevent their education which was of itself sufficient to shew the ~~dreadful~~ opposition of this system of slavery—to the law of God—by preventing the enlightenment of the understanding and the developement of that reason which the Almighty had given him. He said that notwithstanding all opposition the free people of colour were making great progress in education and were becoming more diligent in their attendance at places of worship. He deprecated the efforts of the Colonization Soc^y to remove them from the locality where they are now fixed & expressed his belief that ere long the present oppressive laws against them will be relaxed and that they will become an important section of American Citizens. In Virginia N^o. & S^o. Carolina, Maryland & Georgia the state of things was most melancholy—a heavy cloud was hanging and brooding over the land—education was entirely prohibited and cruelty reigned in the most awful forms. The land was crushed—instead of the conservance of its natural productions it ~~exh~~ was exhausted and exhibited nothing but a second growth of stunted spirits. The slaves there were considered only as a marketable commodity and were reared for sale—and in many cases such as Bankrupt Estates, families were divided without the slightest regard to their feelings. Some ^{other} parts were just at the turning point—the land is refusing to yield its increase—and the planters are turning their attention to the rearing of slaves instead of cultivating the ground. He visited the gaol at Charleston in N^o. Carolina, where he found the

prisoners in a state of the greatest wretchedness. The master is there by^{law} allowed to administer flogging to the amount of 19 stripes without the intervention of any magistrate. He also attended the Slave Market and saw them exposed for sale like cattle. He afterwards visited the Island of Cuba—where if possible affairs are in a more deplorable state. He chanced to sail in the same vessel with a person of high official station by whom he was allowed to visit the . . .

[it appears that a page or more of the letter is lost, here]

. . . they also would be convinced of their truth [illeg.] then separated—nothing but harmony has prevailed.

I have not time to add a word but I will send you some remarks in a short time.

Yours truly,

Your affectionate Son

Joseph Watson¹

¹ Letter in possession of Jonathan Dale.

Stanford Hill

6th day morning 29th 1845.

My dear Father & Mother -

I am sitting at an open window with a beautiful pyracantha bunching its bunches of flowers into the wall at one side and luxuriant ivy covering the other. The blackbird is whistling in the garden below and everything looks fresh and lovely. Last evening as I returned from the city the lightning was very brilliant and from the flashes frequent. We had had the most appreciably hot weather for some days and shortly after I got into the house - a heavy thunder shower came on - about 10 o'clock it ceased and we went into the garden where we stood for sometime listening to the nightingales which were singing around us - but I must continue my act. of the 5th.

4th day evening - A minute of the Yearly Meeting of the Society for Sufferings on the subject of the African Fund was read from which it appeared that £600 had been paid to Wm Bandler and £500 to the school at the Cape of Good Hope - leaving upwards of £1500. in the hands of the Meeting. Miss Forster stated that the sum paid to Wm Bandler was not only for his personal expenses great part of which he bore himself but included grants made by him to schools in the West Indies for the promotion of other charitable objects. He stated that Mr. Bandler

had left the West Indies. had visited Bayte. is now
in Philadelphia & expects to return home in the course of
the summer. Joseph John Turner said he believed that
John Bandler's visit had been to his own pecuniary loss
but had been the means of doing much good. In Jamaica
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with an account of his own travel. He said that he
believed he might reverently say that it was undertaken
under a feeling of Gospel Love & the divine ^{word} requiring that
he should not express his gratitude for the goodness of
God in leading him forth - in caring for him during
his journey - in preserving him - in enabling him to
trust faithfully to discharge the object of his
mission and allowing him to return safely to his
Family & Friends - after an absence of nearly 6 years. After
promising to speak for some time in this strain he commenced
to describe the state of the descendants of Africa in the
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that he had seen from the United States it was computed
that 100 slaves per month escaped - a strong evidence
considering the danger which they encountered in their
passing through the States of their desire to embrace
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colour now subjects of the Queen in the British Possessions
in North America. Many of them were in great a
state of great destitution and claimed the sympathy

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Northern States of the Union confirming the
statements which we have recently heard of
the effects of prejudice on the part of the Whites.
He stated that in the State of Pennsylvania
by a recent alteration in the law, merely by inserting
the word 'white' before free people of colour
have been deprived of the rights of citizenship.
He alluded to the attempt to prevent their education
which was of itself sufficient to show the dangerous
opposition of this system of slavery - to the sum of
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the free people of colour were making great
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to remove them from the locality where they are
concentrated & expressed his belief that ere long the
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section of American citizens. In Virginia No. 88.

Carolina Maryland Georgia - the state of things was
most melancholy - a heavy cloud was hanging over
every where the land - education was entirely prohibited
and cruelly reigned in its most awful forms - The
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of Cuba - where if possible affairs are in a
more deplorable state - he chanced to sail
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they also would be convinced of the truth
his ^{supposed} ~~prejudice~~ ^{then separated} - nothing but his own
have not time to add a word but I
will send you some remarks in a short time

Yours truly

Your affectionate son
Joseph Watson

The 1841 census found that the population of Newcastle had increased by nearly 17,000 since 1831 (3.06% p.a., the highest rate of increase of the 19th century) to 71,844. The enumerators recorded Joshua (I) and Esther Watson living at Bensham, Gateshead, with their son Joshua, a paper stainer, a 15-year-old Esther Watson who was probably Joshua's niece (relationships are not stated in the 1841 census), a servant, and an apprentice cheesemonger. Robert and Mary Spence were living in Howard Street, Tynemouth, with nine children still at home, of whom Sarah's brother Robert was a banker's clerk, John a woollen draper, and Joseph a linen and woollen draper; also present were Sarah's nephews Robert and James Foster, accountant and merchant respectively; the household included four servants, as well as the octogenarian Hannah Chicken, who had originally been employed as a nurse by Robert Foster senior as a nurse, after his second wife had had a stroke. Sarah's sister Elizabeth Foster Brown was living in Hutchinsons Buildings, Tynemouth, with her husband Henry, a starch manufacturer, their two young children and two servants. Joseph's brother William, a merchant, was living at 5 Claremont Place, Gateshead, with his wife and infant son, as well as his mother-in-law and a servant.¹

Joseph Watson was recorded in the 1841 census as a solicitor, living with Sarah at Summerhill Terrace, Westgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, with Sarah and four children, as well as two female servants, and a third woman, probably a servant but not identified as such. This corner of Newcastle was quite a Quaker enclave, and the very next page in the enumerator's book shows three related Richardson families, of which one included the two-year-old Elizabeth Richardson, just round the corner from the four-year-old Robert Spence Watson she was later to marry.²

That year Joseph donated £5 and subscribed £1 to the North of England Agricultural School.³

Joseph and Sarah's son William Joshua Watson was born in the Township of Westgate, Newcastle, on



Joseph (II) Watson and an unidentified son;
cabinet by Downey of Newcastle

¹ HO 107/296/10 f58 p28, /826/3 f8 p8, f9 p9, /626/6 f10 12, /296/9 f34 p16; Mike Barke (2001) 'The People of Newcastle. A Demographic History', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester: Phillimore: 136; Spence.

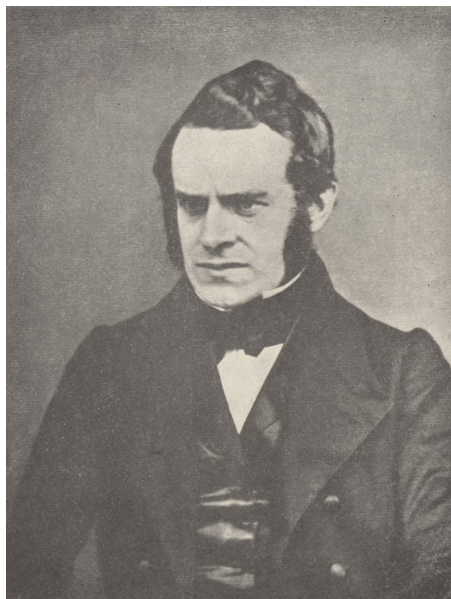
² HO 107/824/10 f21 pp33–4.

³ TWAS MF 188.

the 11th October 1841.¹



Rachel (Spence) Corder; from
Spence



Henry Corder; from Spence

On the 24th March 1842 Sarah's sister Rachel married Henry Shewell Corder at North Shields. He was described as a linen draper of Tavern Street, Ipswich.²

In mid-May 1842 the Watson family went to stay for a week or so with Sarah's father.³

On 25 May Robert Spence recorded:

Yesterday my wife, the twins, Emma, Lucy, Sarah & three of her children went to the Railway to Willington to tea. I joined them at 5 o'clock & Joseph met us from Newcastle—we had a pleasant visit, no noises to disturb us, or the matter ever named except by Jos Procter to Jos Watson privately—who took him upstairs to tell him that Dr Clancy is about to publish Drurys case in Richardsons Table Book—what a piece of folly—⁴

The reference is to the celebrated ghost of Willington Mill, once regarded as the most haunted building in the north of England.⁵

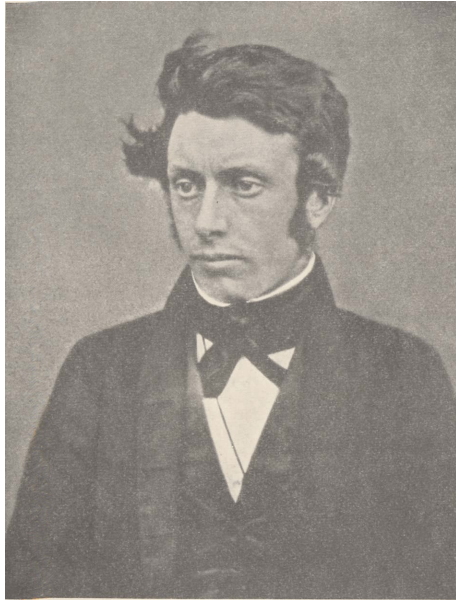
¹ Birth certificate; Foster (1871); HO 107/2405 f74 p68; minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169; *Bootham School Register*.

² Marriage certificate; marriage digest; *Bootham School Register*.

³ Robert Spence letters to Robert Foster, in my possession.

⁴ Robert Spence letters to Robert Foster, in my possession; also quoted in Spence: 37.

⁵ www.ncl.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/exhibition_conjurations_ghost_stories_mill.php.



Robert (III) Spence; from Spence



Sarah (Hagen) Spence; from Spence

Sarah's brother Robert (III), described as a clerk, of Howard Street, North Shields, married Sarah Hagen at Kensington Registry Office on the 2nd June 1842, with Rachel and Henry Corder as witnesses. Sarah was a resident of Earls Court, Kensington, and daughter to Thomas Hagen, a brewer.¹

In July 1842 Joshua (I) Watson leased his shop in the Side to John Lowthin & Musgrave Fallows, Bacon Dealers, at £70 p.a. The purpose of this transaction is unclear, as the business clearly continued in Watson's name until around 1847.²

Sarah's sister Emma Spence was a pupil at The Mount school in York from August 1842 to June 1846.³

On the 14th November 1842 Joseph and Sarah's daughter Sarah Jane was born, in the Township of Westgate. Described as a solicitor, of Elswick Villas, Joseph informed the local registrar on the 2nd December.⁴

Sarah's sister Jane married Charles Brown, a partner in a flour-mill, on 9 February 1843, at North Shields.⁵

¹ Marriage certificate.

² Family papers at TWAS, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2; stock books, TWAS DX 139/2 & /3.

³ *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906.*

⁴ Birth certificate; Foster (1871).

⁵ Marriage digest.



Jane (Spence) Brown; from Spence



Charles Brown; from Spence

In 1843 (probably either March or July) Joseph took a leading part in the return of John Bright as MP for Durham City, being at Durham every day for the duration. Robert Spence Watson later recalled standing side by side with Bright on the hustings in Durham, when the nomination of the candidates was made.¹

From July 1843 and for the next 47 years Robert (III) Spence acted as agent in North Shields for the Friends' Provident Institution.²

John Foster Spence, Sarah's brother, now a draper of Howard Street, North Shields, married Elizabeth Corder of Writtle, Essex, on the 29th September 1843, at Chelmsford. With his brother Joseph, he inherited his father's drapery business.³

In October and November 1843 Joseph had letters in *The British Friend*, on the subject of writing anonymously.⁴

Around 1843/4 an incident happened that imprinted itself vividly on the mind of his son Robert:

At this time new ideas had begun to spread as to the imprisonment of criminals, and I remember that we lunched with Mr. Green who was then the Governor of Durham Gaol and had introduced the new views in it. He took us over the prison, I being a little boy of six years of age. After being shown several desperate characters I was accidentally left behind. The door was shut and locked upon me, and I was alone between two sets of cells. If this had continued long I think I should have lost my reason. The horror of the thing was intense, but fortunately my father observed that I was not with the

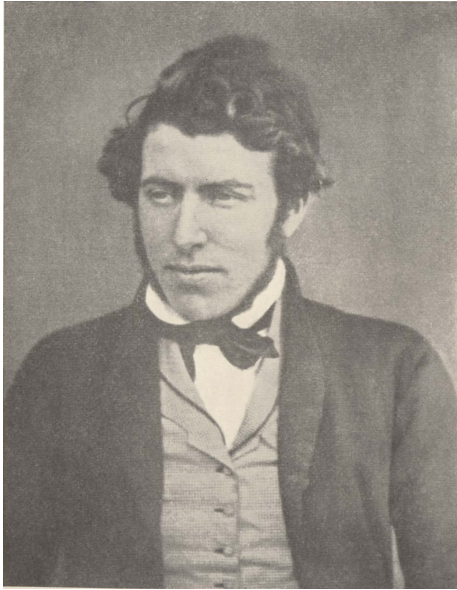
¹ Robert Spence Watson: *History of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1793–1896)*. London: Walter Scott, 1897:270; *The Friend* 45:259 1911; RSW in Steel (1899): 171-2; *Bootham School Register*; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

² Advertisements in *The Friend* and *The British Friend*, passim.

³ Marriage digest; *Bootham School Register*, 1971; *Shields Daily News* 18 December 1889.

⁴ Clipping in volume at Newcastle Central Library.

party and got Mr. Green to turn back and look and I was liberated, to my intense relief.¹



John Foster Spence; from Spence



Elizabeth (Corder) Spence; from Spence

On the 6th April 1844 Sarah Watson gave birth to another daughter, Emily, born at 6 Elswick Villas, Elswick, Westgate, Newcastle. On this occasion Joseph was described as an attorney at law, of 6 Elswick Villas.²

In June 1844 Robert (II) Spence was appointed as one of two representatives from Newcastle to the Quarterly Meeting of Ministers & Elders. That month, and the following, Joseph's brother Joshua (II) Watson acted as joint Hon. Secretary for the Newcastle & Gateshead Temperance Bazaar, "for the sale of useful and fancy work, &c."³

Rachel (Spence) Corder died of puerperal fever at Banas Street, St Matthew, Ipswich, on the 19th July 1844, aged 28. She was buried at Ipswich on the 25th. *The British Friend* recorded that "She was of a remarkably sweet and amiable disposition, which endeared her to all who knew her, and her loss will be greatly felt by her numerous relatives and friends."⁴

In the early 1840s Joseph went to Vauxhall, in South London, to see George Catlin and his North American Indians. He had much correspondence with Catlin and was much interested in the question of the North American Indians. (Catlin was an American painter who specialised in painting Native Americans, and formed one of the earliest Wild West shows in order to show their culture and

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

² Birth certificate; Foster (1871); *The British Friend* suggests 6 March.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Ministers & Elders, TWAS MF 180; *The Friend* II.7:158-9; *The British Friend*.

⁴ *The British Friend*; death/burial digest; death certificate.

highlight their plight). When Catlin's troupe went to Newcastle to give exhibitions they used to visit the Watsons, and a little girl was born there, who died when only a few weeks old. Robert well remembered "the great sympathy there was with the people it belonged to and the funeral in Westgate Hill Cemetery where it was carefully and respectfully buried."¹

Sarah's sister Lucy Fisher Spence started school at The Mount in August 1844, but was only there two years, leaving in November 1846.²

In June 1844 the last link in the railway communication between London and Newcastle was completed with the opening of the Newcastle and Darlington Junction Railway. Joseph Watson and his son Robert were among the passengers on the first through rail journey from Gateshead to London. They left Rabbit Banks at six in the morning, reaching Euston Square after a circuitous route taking in Wolverhampton, at half past midnight. While in London they saw the Thames Tunnel (for Robert "a very great curiosity") and the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens, though Robert found the Surrey Zoological Gardens in Walworth of even greater interest. There they saw one of the displays, remembered by Robert as "the taking of Canton", accompanied by fireworks.³

On the 7th July the mail coach from London to Newcastle ran for the last time. Around this time Robert

had a very dangerous illness and both Henry Brady and Dr. Headlam gave me up and my sisters, who were at a boarding school, were sent for and they told me that I was going to die. But I deliberately denied it and Dr. Headlam was very much surprised that I turned out more correct than he did. Still, this made me weak and ill for a long time.

I remember my father gave me the whole of the Waverley Novels which I read diligently. He had already, at an early age, begun to encourage us to learn a great deal of poetry by heart and by the time I was six years old I knew "The Lady of the Lake", "Marmion" and a considerable amount of Crabbe, and I have never ceased to be grateful to him for having instilled this into me.⁴

Joseph Spence, Sarah's brother, married Caroline Shewell, on the 26th February 1845, at Colchester, where Caroline's family lived.⁵

At this time Joseph Watson was speaking frequently at public meetings on Corn Law reform. He was a northern secretary of the Anti-Corn Law League (of which the Newcastle branch had been formed in 1841), and was secretary for the great Anti-Corn Law Bazaar held in the Covent Garden Theatre in London in May 1845.⁶ Robert recalled:

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Catlin.

² *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906*.

³ Corder; *Bootham School Register*; Middlebrook: 190; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

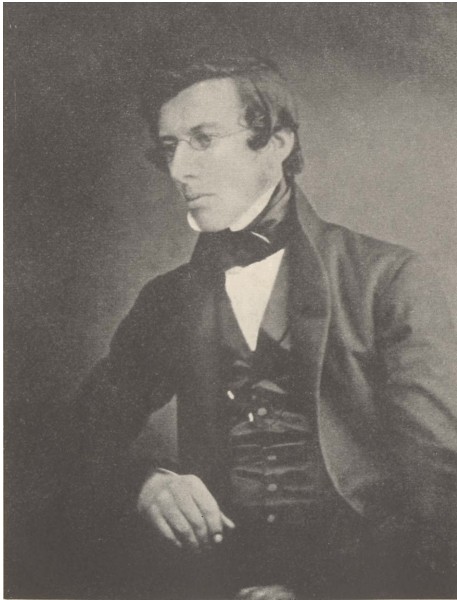
⁴ Corder; *Bootham School Register*; Middlebrook: 190; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

⁵ Marriage digest, *The British Friend*, *The Friend*

⁶ *DQB*; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; RSW in Steel (1899); *Tribune* 9 Oct 1906; Stepniak, op. cit.; Corder (1914); obit. of Robert Spence Watson *Daily News* 3 Mar 1911; obit. of Robert Spence Watson *Annual Monitor* 1912; Norman McCord (1968) *The Anti-Corn Law League 1838–1846*, 2nd edn, London: Unwin: 161, 179; Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341; Middlebrook (1950): 181

At the time of the great Bazaar for Free Trade my father was the Local Secretary, and the collections for this part of the country came to him. They were of the greatest interest and filled many rooms, and a great number of people came to see them. Every day we had large numbers of visitors. There were all manner of interesting objects, but I remember most the guano from British Guiana in which, raking about with a boy's curiosity, I found a great number of the skeletons of birds quite perfect, and many people, especially John Hancock, took a great interest in these.

. . . It also brought a great many of the Anti-Corn Law Leaders to us.¹



Joseph Spence; from Spence



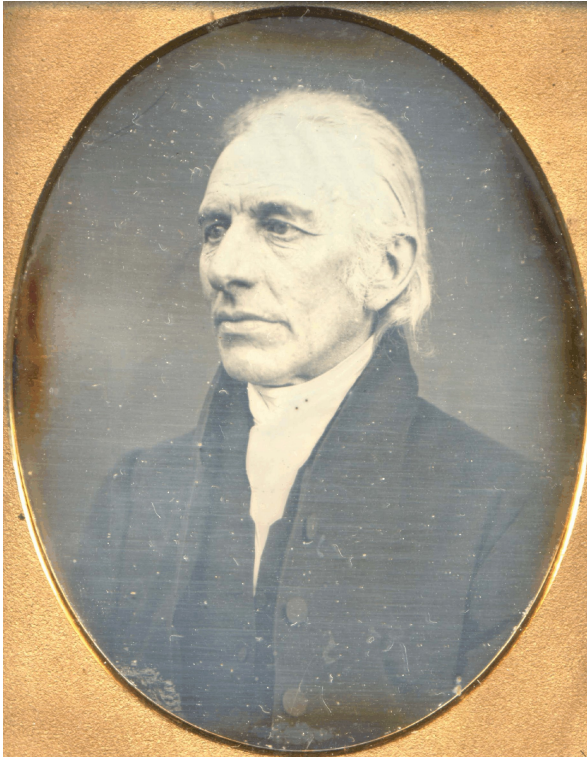
Caroline (Shewell) Spence; from Spence

After an attack of dizziness and a severe fall, and having been twice bled, Sarah's father Robert (II) Spence died at 7:30 pm on the 17th August 1845, in Howard Street, Tynemouth. Joseph Watson was present at his father-in-law's death. Robert (II) Spence's body was buried on the 22nd, at Stephenson Street, North Shields.² It was said that he was one of the most respected residents in his adopted town, ably filling many of its public offices. His presence, rendered conspicuous by his height, his long white hair, and the somewhat dignified gait enjoined by the Quakerism of that day, was long remembered by some of the older inhabitants of the harbour towns. He was a man of considerable literary taste and culture, and the valuable collections of books and manuscripts which were made by his son Robert (III) owed their origin to him. Among them is the original manuscript of *The Journal* of George Fox.³

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

² Spence; death certificate; IR 26/ and 27/1722; PROB 11/1280; death/burial digest.

³ Richard Welford (1875): *Men of Mark 'twixt Tyne and Tweed*. London: Walter Scott, III: 426.



Robert (II) Spence;
daguerreotype in the author's possession

His kindness extended itself to all around him in a remarkable degree, but the privations of the poor especially excited his warm sympathy, and he was much occupied not only in giving them personal relief but also in devising and assisting various benevolent associations for the amelioration of their condition. The regard which was born for him was shown by the general closing of the shops on the day of his funeral.¹

Around 1845 Robert Spence Watson remembered:

going with my father and mother to visit Wigton School, where my two older sisters were. They were very young, the eldest only nine. There was a Quarterly Meeting forward and they came into the room dressed in long, drab cloaks and with what we called Friends Bonnets on—poke bonnets made of silk; quaint little old women they looked.²

In September 1845 Esther Watson was a Newcastle representative to Monthly Meeting of Ministers & Elders, and was appointed to attend the next

Quarterly Meeting of Ministers & Elders. She also represented Newcastle at Monthly Meeting of Ministers & Elders in December 1845, and in March, June & December 1846.³

At this period it was customary for the lawyers to take a holiday on Friday afternoon. As Robert Spence Watson recalled,

If it was a fine day and a likely one, my father was in the habit of taking us up to Ryton, where he used to fish, and where I used to practice my little fishing. We got not many trout but a great many dace. Before we went down to the river we always called at the pretty little public house in Ryton, which was thatched and covered with flowers and was, to my thinking, an ideal public house. They used to make us an excellent tea to which we did ample justice and their “singing hinnies” were really something to be remembered more than 60 years afterwards.⁴

Robert (II) Spence's will was proved at Durham on the 9th October 1845. Mary was co-executor with their sons Robert (III) and John Foster, at Durham. His estate was sworn under £25,000. Mary was left furniture and personal effects of her choice to the value of £1000, plus £800 p.a. for life, payable twice yearly in two equal instalments. At this date, and henceforth, Robert (III) Spence was described as a banker, so it seems reasonable to conclude that he had stepped straight into his father's shoes at the bank. John Foster Spence was also described as a banker at this date, so possibly it was not yet clear which of the brothers would take on which profession, banking or drapery. Their father's

¹ Obit. in *The Friend*, q. in Spence.

² *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Ministers & Elders, TWAS MF 180.

⁴ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

will was additionally proved at London, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the 8th August 1848; Robert (III), John Foster and Joseph were co-executors.¹

On Boxing Day 1845 Sarah's sister Jane Brown, of Spring Terrace, Preston, Tynemouth, died after 4 days puerperal peritonitis certified; her sister Margaret, of Howard Street, was present at the death, and informed the registrar. Jane's body was buried at Stephenson Street on New Year's Day.²



Mary (Foster) Spence;
daguerreotype in the author's possession

Two letters from John Bright to Joseph Watson survive, from the last days of December 1845. The first reads:

Rochdale

12 mo 27. 45.

My dear Friend

Joseph Watson/

We have been discussing the propriety of having another meeting in your good town to further cause & having a special reference to the County qualification movement. If a day can be fixed we will come, that is R Cobden & myself. Would next 6th day the 2^d of the month be a suitable day? if not, the 2^d day after, the 5th might suit us. We intend to hold meetings at Carlisle & perhaps at Lancaster on our way home.

If you have a larger room than where our former meetings were held, you should engage it—for we have been greatly inconvenienced in almost every town by the smallness of the rooms—the meetings this season being more than ever crowded.

Pray consult some of the Free Traders of Newcastle & let me know what you have decided upon. D. Liddell is to help & make the necessary arrangements. We would prefer an open meeting, but if by any other plan you can get together a good assembly of those most likely to qualify for the county, & of your own Town Electoral class, use your own discretion as to your arrangements.

Thy sincere friend,

John Bright

(Over)

¹ Spence; death certificate; IR 26/ and 27/1722; PROB 11/1280.

² 1847 *Annual Monitor*; death certificate; death/burial digest; Foster (1871).

It would be well if a few of the most zealous men from North & South Shields, Gateshead &c could be at the meeting as they might possibly be induced to commence working for the Counties on the return to their own Boroughs & we have not time to visit many places.

On New Year's Eve he wrote from Rochdale again:

I have thy letter— 2nd day will suit us quite well & we will be with you nothing unforeseen preventing.

I had heard of the deep affliction which has visited your family. I know of no trial calling for more sympathy. Every family seems to have its afflictions & yours have been heavy during the past or now passing year. We have suffered from similar strokes of the mysterious hand of Providence & so can feel for those who are bowed down under losses so terrible & so inescapable.

I am very sincerely,

Thy friend,

John Bright¹

Bright visited Newcastle four times between 1842 and 1846, and Richard Cobden three times, to address big meetings.²

In the 1840s and 1850s the Watson household often welcomed fugitive slaves, “who were received and entertained as honoured guests”. These included Charles Lenox Remond (1840/1), Frederick Douglass (1845/6), William Wells Brown (c. 1849–52), and William & Ellen Craft (spring 1851). As Robert recalled,

Their accounts of the cruelties they had undergone made a very deep impression on us children and we became very ardent in the anti-slavery cause.

But it was not only fugitive slaves who came to advocate the anti-slavery cause, for Elihu Burritt, Henry Vincent, George Thompson and other orators stayed with us and held great meetings in the Old Lecture Room, and a very great effect they produced.

William Lloyd Garrison was also among the anti-slavery campaigners welcomed by the Watsons.³

In January and February 1846 Joseph's brother Joshua (II) was recorded as Newcastle agent for *The British Friend*, one of the two national Quaker periodicals.⁴

Joseph and Sarah's son Charles John Watson was born at Elswick Villas on the 14th May 1846. The baby was very soon seriously ill, for he died of atrophy 3 or 4 weeks certified, on the 28th June 1846. His body was buried on the 30th in Westgate Hill General Cemetery. The Corn Law was repealed in June 1846, and the occasion was celebrated by a public dinner in Newcastle; but the Watsons can have been in no mood to join the festivities. Charles John Watson's death must be seen in the

¹ Letters in the Robinson Library, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

² Middlebrook: 181.

³ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; Corder.

⁴ *The Friend* II.7:158-9

context of an infant mortality rate (i.e. deaths of babies under a year old) of 220 per 1000, in Newcastle in 1851: one in five babies wouldn't reach their first birthday. In fact, life expectancy at birth at this time was just 34 in Newcastle, compared to 41 for England & Wales (it was lower still in Liverpool and Manchester).¹

Sarah's mother Mary Spence didn't long survive her husband, and died at Howard Street, Tynemouth, on the 6th October 1846, after eight days of continued fever. Her body was interred at Stephenson Street, North Shields, on the 9th.²

In October 1846 Joshua (I) Watson leased Bensham Grove to William Yellowley, grocer of Newcastle, for seven years commencing the 7th November next, at £60 p.a.; the lease included "garden stable Coach house" etc.; and also referred to "the garden and the hothouse". . . ; Yellowley could only sublet, without Watson's consent, the small house next the road, part of the said premises. Despite this, an 1847 directory shows Watson still living at Bensham Grove.³

In 1846 Robert Spence Watson became a pupil at the Bruce Academy, in Newcastle. The Bruce Academy in Percy Street, of which Dr John Collingwood Bruce was principal from 1834 to 1859, won a high reputation for scholarship, and had many distinguished alumni, including the railway engineer Robert Stephenson.⁴

On the 16th March 1847 Robert (III) Spence wrote to his uncle Robert Foster:

I was pleased to hear from Joseph Watson that he had been advising the JS folks to meet their creditors & shareholders, at the request of Wm Chapman & Jos Grote. This looks as though the Bk of Eng^d & our folks acted together & looks well.⁵

At that time, after Robert (II) Spence's death, his bank—the Newcastle, Shields and Sunderland Union Joint Stock Banking Company, of which his branch had been at 10 Howard Street, North Shields—failed. Joseph Watson was solicitor to, and a large shareholder in, this bank.⁶

According to his son Robert,

Three days before it stopped, he saw William Chapman, who was the leading director of the whole thing, and asked him what he thought he should do with his wife's settlement interests which he had just received, some £300 or £400, and William Chapman said that he could not do better than put it into the Union Bank. He said that the Union Bank was perfectly safe. He knew everything about it and it was quite as good a concern as if it had been the Bank of England. Three days after, he had levanted.

¹ Birth certificate; death certificate; Foster (1871); burials digest; *The British Friend*; *The Friend* IV.44:160, Aug 1846 Middlebrook: 181; Mike Barke (2001) 'The People of Newcastle. A Demographic History', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester, Phillimore: 46–7

² Spence; death certificate; death/burial register; *The British Friend*.

³ Family papers at TWAS, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2; White's *Newcastle & Gateshead Directory*, 1847. Information for the directory was probably collected during 1846.

⁴ *Bootham School Register*; Middlebrook: 218.

⁵ Robert Spence letters to Robert Foster, in my possession.

⁶ Spence; White's *Newcastle & Gateshead Directory*, 1847; *Memoirs of John Wigham Richardson*; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

Nothing was heard of him for some time when a letter came to my father from Florence to say that he had at length found the haven of rest his soul had been longing for.¹

Edward Richardson offered him pecuniary assistance at this time, which, however, he declined. The bank's business was picked up by Woods & Co., and was later absorbed into Barclay's. Joseph subsequently prepared the Bankers Limited Liability Act and saw it through Parliament (it was passed in 1862).²

One of the Newcastle newspapers reported as follows:

When the Union bank failed, Mr. Watson suffered like many others in that unfortunate scheme; but he devoted himself with great regularity and punctuality to the duties of his profession, and soon recovered lost ground. His intimate acquaintance with the bankruptcy laws especially secured for him a large connection in that branch of legal practice, and he was one of the leading attorneys in the Newcastle Bankruptcy Court up to the period of its abolition. Mr. Watson was prominent in founding the well-known banking business of Messrs. Hodgkin and Co., of this town.³

The same source reports that 1847 was

a memorable year in the political history of Newcastle, for that year registered the first election, in which all the sections of the Liberal party united for the return of two Liberal members. In the struggle which then took place when Mr. Ord and Mr. Headlam were returned by large majorities over Mr. Richard Hodgson, the Conservative candidate, Mr. Watson bore his part, and was an active worker on the Liberal Committee.⁴

Robert Spence Watson remembered that in this year:

there came a severe election fight in Newcastle in which Thomas Emmerson Headlam fought Hodgson Hinde. My father took a very active part in that context and I remember going with Mr. Headlam and several gentlemen to the Felling Chemical Works which were even then rather important and had several voters working in them. The partners, who favoured Mr. Headlam, joined the party and we went into a sort of yard at the works and all the voters were brought up one by one and introduced to Mr. Headlam, who pressed them for their votes.

He also remembered going to Morpeth with his father, at the time of a General Election.⁵

By 1847 Joseph Watson's solicitor's office was situated at 25 St Nicholas' Churchyard, Newcastle. The *Law List* for that year lists him as an attorney of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and a member of the Newcastle & Gateshead Law Society; his London agent was Shield & Harwood. The *Law List* entry remains the same through 1855, although the 1849 issue omits reference to his membership of the local law society.⁶

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

² Spence; *White's Newcastle & Gateshead Directory*, 1847; *Memoirs of John Wigham Richardson*; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edⁿ.

³ Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341.

⁴ Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341.

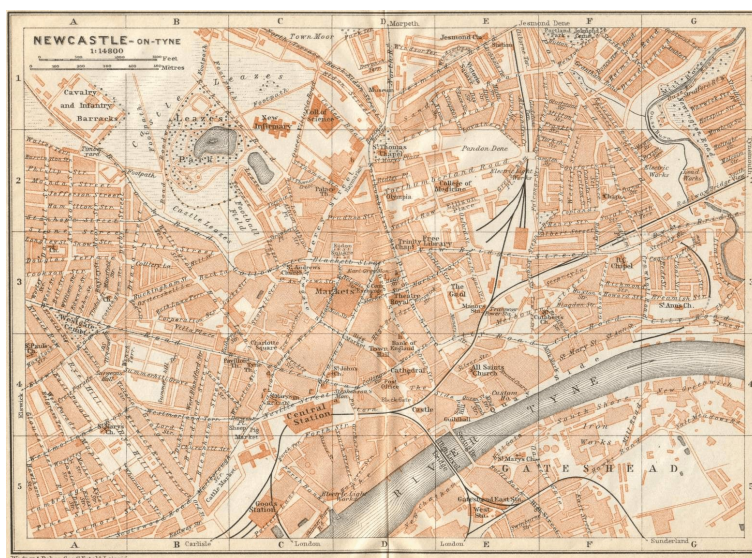
⁵ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

⁶ *White's Newcastle & Gateshead Directory*, 1847; *Law Lists*.

In June 1847 Esther Watson was one of six Friends who visited Mary Chambers regarding her application for membership.¹

In the spring of 1847 Joseph's brother William Wigham Watson had succumbed to tuberculosis, and had returned to his parental home at Bensham. He died there on the 30th June 1847, the cause of death being given as phthisis pulmonalis 2 months certified. The death announcement in *The Friend* and *The British Friend* noted with presumably unintended irony that he had been staying at Bensham "for the benefit of his health". His brother Joshua (II), of Bensham, Gateshead, informed the registrar on the 2nd July.²

In August 1847 Joshua (I) Watson purchased for £12 a double vault in the Westgate Hill General Cemetery, Newcastle—plot n^{os} 302 & 303 in Ward N. It appears that he retired from business at about this time, for in December he let to James Fox & Samuel Sterling, auctioneers of Newcastle, the shop in the Side as lately altered, and which with other premises was lately used by Watson as a cheesemonger's shop; the rent was £75 p.a., starting immediately.³



From Baedeker's Guide, 1910;

http://contueor.com/baedeker/great_britain/newcastle.htm

On the 5th March 1848, at Gresham Place, St Andrew, Newcastle, Sarah Watson gave birth to a daughter, Helen.⁴

In April 1848 Joseph was one of the Newcastle Friends appointed by Monthly Meeting to visit George Miller regarding his reinstatement.⁵

On the 12th May 1848 Joseph and Sarah's daughter Sarah Jane Watson, still only in her 6th year, died at Gresham Place, Newcastle. This young death may have been a bigger blow than that of her baby brother two years before, since by the time a child in Newcastle reached the age band 5–9 the death rate had fallen to 7 per 1000.⁶

A poem by Robert Spence Watson calls back a memory of his mother:

¹ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

² Death certificate; *The British Friend*; *The Friend* V.56:160, Augus 1847.

³ Family papers at TWAS, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2.

⁴ Birth certificate; *The British Friend*; Foster (1871).

⁵ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 169.

⁶ Foster (1871); 1849 *Annual Monitor*; *The British Friend*; *The Friend* VI.67:136, July 1848; Mike Barke (2001) 'The People of Newcastle. A Demographic History', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester, Phillimore: 147.

... I hear my mother tell

In the song which cheered my childhood's days, of 'the banks of the blue Moselle.' [. . .]

And bright is my gentle mother's face, and sweet is her angel voice,

And weary woe must vanish away, and the toil-worn heart rejoice.¹

Robert's friend Henry Tuke Mennell reflected that Robert inherited from his mother "that character of loving sympathy which we all realised and so much appreciated" in her; the "great attraction to that home to us young people was the mother, the most loving and lovable of women" . . .²

At some point in their childhood Sarah Watson wrote the following 'Questions for her children, at the close of the sabbath day', very suggestive of their loving and conscientious mother:



Sarah (Spence) Watson;
albumen print tipped into *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*

Hast thou endeavoured to seek the Divine aid, to restrain all wandering thoughts, and to perform properly all the duties of the day with a sincere desire to please thy Heavenly Father?

Has thou read, or tried to read, thy Bible attentively and prayerfully?

Has thou done, or tried to do, all that thy loving parents have wished?

Has thou endeavoured to be kind and affectionate to thy brothers and sisters, and to maintain good temper throughout the day?

Has thou prayed for strength to overcome those passions which most easily best thee?

Does the retrospect of this day afford thee more satisfaction than that of days gone by?³

¹ Robert Spence Watson: *From Far and Near*, privately printed: 61.

² *Bootham Magazine* (York Old Scholars Assn magazine) V.5:370 November 1911.

³ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*

Around the end of June or the very beginning of July 1848 Joseph Watson wrote to Charles Dickens, for a reason now unknown. Dickens replied on the 3rd July, in the following terms:

Dear Sir.

I am exceedingly sorry that I cannot have the gratification of accepting the invitation with which you honor me, in terms so obliging and agreeable.

The occasion, and the great objects it cannot fail to advance, suggest to me many reasons for feeling the greatest reluctance in declining your proposal.¹

Joseph's uncle Jacob Watson died at Allendale, on the day Dickens wrote.²

In October 1848 Robert Spence Watson went to Bootham School, which he attended until 1852.³

In 1848 John Foster Spence took an active part in the movement to establish a Customs House in North Shields; he was also prominent in the formation of the River Tyne Commission, of which he was many years a life member.⁴

In January 1849 Lucy Watson started at Castlegate Friends' girls' school in York, the precursor to The Mount. She was only there two years, leaving in December 1850.⁵

At Newcastle Women's Preparative Meeting in April 1849 Sarah Watson was one of two women appointed to attend Monthly Meeting at Shields on 4th day.⁶

In June 1849 Joshua (I) Watson put up for sale an allotment of property near Tedham Green Estate, by auction at the King's Head Inn, Allendale Town; his reserve was £900, but the highest bid was £700, so presumably the property remained unsold.⁷

Joseph and Sarah's daughter Sarah Anna Watson was born at 1 Gresham Place, Newcastle, on the 1st July 1849. She only lived two months, dying at Newcastle on the 9th September that year. Her body was buried in the Westgate Hill General Cemetery on the 10th.⁸

According to Robert Spence Watson, in 1849, on his 78th birthday (15th August), Joshua (I) Watson crossed the High Level railway bridge from Gateshead to Newcastle, part of the way on a single plank; and was told, at the Newcastle side, by Robert Stephenson himself, that he was the first man who had done this. Notwithstanding the oral tradition, this seems unlikely, given that the upper (rail) part of the bridge had been fully opened on the 13th August, and a 200-ton train run across as a test.

¹ *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Vol. 5, ed. Graham Storey and K.J. Fielding. 1978, OUP: 359.

² *Annual Monitor; The Friend*.

³ *Bootham School Register*.

⁴ *Shields Daily News*, 24 July 1901.

⁵ *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906*. 1906, York: Sessions.

⁶ Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

⁷ Family papers at TWAS, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2.

⁸ Birth certificate; *The British Friend*; Foster (1871); burials digest.

Queen Victoria formally opened the bridge on the 28th September that year.¹

At Newcastle Women's Preparative Meeting in October 1849 and March 1850 Sarah Watson was one of two women appointed to attend Monthly Meeting at Shields on 4th day.²

In December 1849 Joshua (I) Watson acted as sole executor of the will of his sister, Joseph's aunt Hannah Watson, of which he was also residual legatee.³ At the beginning of January 1850 Joseph's aunt Rachel (Watson) Pattinson died, and was buried in the Pilgrim Street Friends burial ground on the 5th.⁴



Elizabeth Foster (Spence) Brown,
with Elizabeth Brown (b. 1844); from Spence



Henry Brown;
from Spence

In reflective mood, on the 12th March 1850 Sarah wrote herself a memorandum:

This is the fifteenth anniversary of our marriage. May the year now commencing bear, at its close (if life be permitted us), a fairer retrospect for myself, of duties more fully performed towards my dearest husband and children. May I endeavour, with better help, to be a more true helpmate to him than I have hitherto been, endeavouring, as best I can, to lighten or share his many and arduous cares. Oh! how I long that we may help each other in the pursuit of better and more enduring things than any which this world can offer.⁵

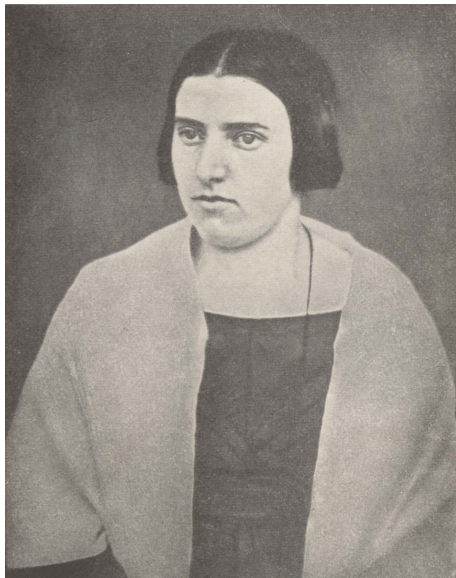
¹ RSW in Steel (1899); Corder; Manders.

² Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

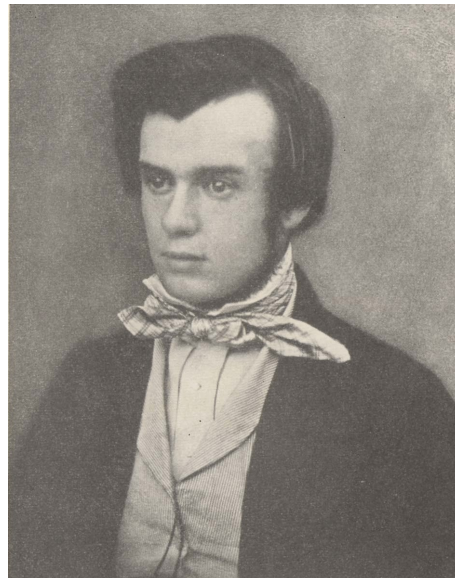
³ Family papers at TWAS, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2.

⁴ Information from Ann Craven, Newcastle Lit. & Phil.; Corder.

⁵ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*.



Ann (Spence) Foster; from Spence



Myles Birket Foster; from Spence

On the 13th August 1850 Sarah's sister Ann Spence married Myles Birket Foster, the artist, of Seaton Sluice, at Earsdon parish church, Northumberland; her brother John Foster Spence acted as a witness.¹

That month Esther Mary Watson started at Castlegate Friends' girls' school in York, where she continued her education until the end of 1855.²

Sarah's sister Margaret Spence, described an independent lady, died of influenza 4 days certified, at 3 White Rock Place, St Mary Magdalen, Hastings, on the 8th March 1851. Her half-uncle John Spence also died that year.³

Ward's *Northumberland and Durham Directory* for 1850 recorded Joseph Watson as one of two secretaries to the Royal Victoria Asylum for the Industrious Blind, in Northumberland Street. Joshua Watson was a gentleman of Elysium Lane, Gateshead.⁴

By 1851 the population of Newcastle had risen to 89,156—up over 17,000 on 1841, though the rate of increase had slowed to 2.41% p.a. The census found Joseph (II) and Sarah Watson, with Lucy, Joseph (III), William Joshua, Emily, and Helen, living with two house servants (both women aged 30) at 2 Gresham Place, St Andrew, Newcastle upon Tyne. Robert



Margaret Spence; from Spence

¹ Marriage certificate; Foster (1871).

² *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906.*

³ Death certificate; Foster (1871); Spence.

⁴ Ward's *Northumberland and Durham Directory* (1850).

Spence Watson was a scholar at Bootham School, St Giles, York. Mary Watson (Sarah's sister) was living at 6 Cumberland Row, Westgate, Newcastle, with her husband, three children, two general servants, and a visitor. Elizabeth Foster (Spence) Brown was an annuitant, living in Siskele Street, Tynemouth, with two daughters and a house servant. Robert (III) Spence was recorded as a bank manager, of Rosella Place, Preston, Tynemouth, living with his wife, four children, and two house servants. John Foster Spence was a general draper and tailor employing 23 men and boys, living with his wife and two sons at Howard Street East, Tynemouth. Joseph Spence was similarly a draper and tailor employing 23 men and boys (the brothers were evidently in partnership), living with his wife, two daughters, three draper's assistants, a house servant, a nurse maid, and a cook. Ann (Spence) Foster was living with her husband and a servant at Marsden Villas, Clifton Road, St Marylebone, Middlesex. Hannah Maria, Emma, and Lucy Fisher Spence were annuitants, living in the household of their cousin Robert Foster at Howard Street East, Tynemouth.¹



Joseph (II) and Herbert Watson; from Spence

In 1851 Joseph acted as local secretary to the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London. The 1851 religious census found that 217 Newcastle Friends attended morning worship on census Sunday, just 0.2% of the population. That year Lucy Watson was listed as a teacher at the Newcastle Friends' Sabbath School.²

In 1851 Joseph Watson, esq., of Gresham-place, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, subscribed to the publication of J. Collingwood Bruce's *The Roman Wall*.³

In March 1852, at Newcastle Preparative Meeting, Sarah was appointed to attend Monthly Meeting

¹ Mike Barke (2001) 'The People of Newcastle. A Demographic History', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester, Phillimore: 136; HO 107/1491 p41, /2353 f231 p32, /2404 f223 p3, /2405 f74 p68, /2409 f571 v, /2410 f55, /2410 f168 p60, /2410 p 81, /2410 f55,

² RSW in Steel (1899): 171–2; Jeff Smith (2001) 'The Making of a Diocese 1851–1882', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester, Phillimore; minutes of Newcastle Friends' Sabbath School, TWAS MF 208.

³ John Collingwood Bruce (1851) *The Roman Wall*, London and Newcastle: xviii.

at Newcastle on 4th day the 15th.¹

Sarah Watson gave birth to a son, Herbert, on the 31st March 1852, at 2 Gresham Place, St Andrew, Newcastle.²

Joseph (III) Watson, attended Bootham School in York from 1852 to 1855.³

Sarah's sister Hannah Maria Spence married William Taylor at North Shields Friends' meeting house on the 15th July 1852. (William Taylor was described as a merchant in 1856.)⁴



Hannah Maria (Spence) Taylor;
from Spence



William Taylor; from Spence

Described as a gentleman, Joseph's father Joshua (I) Watson died of hydrothorax (an accumulation of serous fluid in the pleural cavity) on Friday the 11th February 1853 at Elysium, Bensham, and was buried on the 16th at Westgate Hill cemetery. His will was proved at Durham on the 30th May 1855. He was characterised by his grandson Robert as "a good type of a North Country Friend, plain and direct of speech, resolute, a trifle irritable, and with his temper not always quite in control, no respecter of persons, one to whom the substance meant all, the form nothing. [. . .] under a stern and, to children, rather affrighting exterior, he had the gentlest and softest of hearts. A man of genuine and unaffected piety;—'one who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,'—and whose

¹ Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

² Birth certificate; *Bootham School Register*; *Annual Monitor*; Foster (1871).

³ *Bootham School Register*, 1971.

⁴ Foster (1871); death certificate.

whole life was a simple, honest endeavour to do his duty towards God and man as a faithful follower of Christ.”¹

By the date of his son’s birth—the 24th February 1853—John Foster Spence’s family had removed to Chirton Cottage, near North Shields, where John and Elizabeth were to see out their lives.²

In April 1853, at Newcastle Preparative Meeting, Sarah was appointed to attend Monthly Meeting at Newcastle on 4th day.³

In 1853 Robert spent a fortnight with his uncle James Foster in Sandgate, Kent, and also spent six or seven weeks in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, acting as interpreter for Myles Birket Foster, who was working on his Rhine book (*The Rhine and Its Picturesque Scenery*, 1856). Joseph Watson took Robert on a visit to the Lake District and the Highlands of Scotland that year. Robert found both experiences “exceedingly enjoyable”, writing of the latter as follows:

We took ponies at Ambleside and rode through Langdales, doing some fishing [. . .]

When we were in Scotland we carried our creels and rods and walked the greater part of our journey, fishing in all the streams we came to. There was not then the amount of preserving that there now is and we got a good number of rather good baskets. And here I may say how every year we used to begin our fishing about the 23rd March, going down to the Coquet together and fishing up from Morwick to Guyzance. My father was exceedingly skilful in taking bull-trout upon the small trout fly. I have seen him many a time take one or two weighting seven and a half pounds and it was a great treat to watch him.

We used also to go a good deal to the Whitadder and there we sometimes got splendid baskets. I remember in the Retreat water, whilst my father and Mr. Chartres were putting up their rods, I got ready and went right into the water and, out of part of the stream by the time they were ready and began to watch me, I killed four dozen fish.

Once, when we were coming from Edinburgh, when we got to Tweedmouth across the Border Bridge, we were all ordered out of our carriages into a great shed and our luggage was examined for whisky, I suppose. [. . .]

One day while we were in the Highlands we went by coach from Callander to Killin. The coach held only four people outside on the back seats and we found as our companions President Buchanan of the United States and his niece, Harriet Lane, who, when he became President, acted for him in the place of his wife who had died. She was very charming and we had a most delightful ride for he was full of information and enthusiasm.⁴

Robert reminisced a good deal about fishing with his father, and it’s clear that it was important to both of them, perhaps not just for the fishing but also for bonding as father and son:

I should like to add to the memories of my early fishing days, especially those in which I was my

¹ As yet uncatalogued family papers at TWAS; RSW in Steel (1899); Corder; death certificate; widow’s death certificate; death/burial digest; *Gateshead Observer* 12 February 1853.

² Son’s birth certificate.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women’s) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

⁴ Corder; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; Journal, Newcastle Central Library.

father's comrade. He was, I think, the best of the old-fashioned fishers. He was a great believer in working carefully over all pools, wading at the shallow side if there was one, and throwing a very long line across, and taking plenty of time over it. If there was a good lipper on the pool he was often exceedingly successful. But by and by a new method came in which he did not care so much for. We ceased to use long lines, and very rarely had out a running line more than the length of the rod. In the early part of the year we chiefly fished worm, and frequently in small streams like the Breamish, we could see every fish take the work as the line was so short. We used to stay at some farm or shepherd's house, and rough accommodation we had, but always a hearty welcome. We got into wonderful scenery. Hills which seemed so steep and high that the little stream would sometimes look as though it would be swallowed up, the hills closing in upon you.

I well remember my future brother-in-law, Henry Clapham, being with us on one occasion and coming up one of those streams in the gloaming and getting quite frightened with the effect of the stillness. He came away and said that he preferred to watch us fishing to going up the lonely place any further. We used to start early in the morning. My father, even in May, would have me down to the waterside at half past three in the morning, and we used not to leave off, excepting for breakfast, and for some chance meal at a farmhouse, until late in the evening. No wonder that I considered it nothing extraordinary to kill 14 dozen trout in the day, and we were careful not to take very little ones; our standard was seven inches.

We visited many streams together and I remember well on one occasion I found, when we counted our trout out in the evening, that I had got about a dozen more than he had, and I was really very sorry that I had not known this and quietly given them away. Although he was not a man who showed that he felt it at all, yet I knew that he did.

We were fondest of the Coquet and the streams falling into it, the Wreigh, the Alwin, etc. I still think that there never was any water more beautiful than that about Hepple and Caistron. If you got it in condition and did not bring away a very heavy creel it was your own fault.

On occasions they would stay at Tibbie Shields', at St Mary's Loch, "where the fishing used to be exceedingly good." Robert also recalled an expedition with his father, John Hancock, and Charles St John, author of *Wild Sports of the Highlands* and a great fisherman, when, walking along the haughs near Wylam, "quite suddenly Mr. St John leapt forward and grasped at something and held up a viper which he had neatly caught between the fore and middle fingers of the right hand."

In the days of which I have been speaking, the days between 12 and 20 years of age, it was not only the Coquet which my father and I used to visit together but also the Breamish and the Whitadder and other smaller streams. Now when I tell young fishers that in those days I thought it a bad day's work if I had not taken 14 or 15 dozen trout they seem puzzled and it is only fair to explain that my father used to insist upon my being very early on the water and liked me to be never later than half past three before I made my first cast. It was a splendid time for starting but before 8 o'clock came for breakfast the splendour waned very much indeed. We used to stay at a shepherd's two-roomed cottage, and the farmers, who were few and far between, were all friends of ours, and I got into the habit of going to a farmer's about one o'clock, when they would be certain to be about to get dinner, and dining with them and paying them with half a creel full of trout. It was a beautiful and lonely life, the fishing in those days. We would sometimes wade up for the river for more than a mile with trees meeting nearly all the way overhead and it was not always easy, where the pools sometimes ran deep, to keep out of real difficulty.

I went on fishing after my father left off, but not much more in Northumberland.¹

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson.*

In late 1853 Robert (II) Spence's estate was finally wound up, following the youngest surviving child attaining the age of 21. Each child presumably inherited 1/11th, a bit over £2000, as provided for in his will.¹

In February 1854, at Newcastle Preparative Meeting, Sarah was appointed to attend Monthly Meeting at Newcastle on 4th day.²

In February 1854 Joseph advertised in *The Times* as solicitor for the petition for the appointment of an official manager of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Marine Insurance Company, under the Joint-stock Companies' Winding-up Acts 1858 & 1849; his London agents were again Shield & Harwood, of 10 Clement's Lane, Lombard Street, London.³

On the 23rd March 1854 Sarah's sister Emma Spence was married to Octavius Corder, chemist of Tynemouth, at Tynemouth parish church, by licence. By this time she had been suffering from tuberculosis for six years.⁴



Emma (Spence) Corder; from
Spence



Octavius Corder; from Spence

John Foster Spence was present at Emma's wedding. That year he was elected to the town council.⁵

In 1854 Joseph went on a fortnight's visit to Holland and Belgium with Robert and Lucy. Robert picks up the story:

¹ Robert (III) Spence's will, PROB 11/2080.

² Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

³ *The Times*.

⁴ Marriage certificate; death certificate.

⁵ Marriage certificate; *Shields Daily News* 24 July 1901.

We crossed by the “Lord Raglan” from the Tyne and M. Rochussen and his son and daughter were on board. He was then the Prime Minister of Holland. He was a delightful man and we played chess together frequently.

This was a trip but rarely taken in those days and the inns were much in the old-fashioned condition, exceedingly roomy and exceedingly comfortable. I remember especially the “Pays Bas” on the Boompjes at Rotterdam and the “Fleur de Bles” at Bruges. The rooms in the “Pays Bas” were of extraordinary size and were beautifully decorated by handpainting in a way which I had never seen before.

We met no travellers whatever in Rotterdam but found it an exceedingly interesting place. Its cleanliness, the profusion of seawater in all its streets, and the quiet way in which business was gone about, were all impressive.

I remember that when we were at Brussels we made a pilgrimage to the Field of Waterloo in a coach and four driven by an English coachman and with a guard in pink—the guard playing all manner of old English ditties upon the key bugle. The Field of Waterloo was interpreted to us by Sergeant Munday, who had been in the battle. He was an old but active man and full of story. The centre of the field had been entirely destroyed in order to make a great mound with a lion on the top of it. I remember that an English lady said to the Sergeant, “I suppose that is an English lion?” and he replied in a very scornful way “Did you ever see an English lion with its tail between its legs?” He then went on to explain how it had been erected by the Belgians to commemorate the fact that the whole of their crack cavalry, directly the battle began, galloped off to Brussels without taking part in it whatever.

The most interesting thing was the Farmhouse of Hougomont, where there had been a terrific attempt on the part of the French to take it, but it had held its own. It is Hougomont, I believe, that Irving used to introduce into his little sketch of “Waterloo”.

Bruges was especially delightful. The inn where we stayed was that at which Longfellow had previously stayed and was exceedingly clean and comfortable, but was distinguished by having a chambermaid who was recognised for her beauty through the whole of the Low Countries. She certainly was a remarkable looking woman; tall, stately and calm.¹

William Joshua Watson attended Bootham School from 1854 to 1857.²

On the 6–7th October 1854 there was a great fire in Newcastle and Gateshead, that started in the premises of Wilson’s worsted factory in Hillgate, on the south side of the river, but spread ferociously, and in one mighty explosion it was said that “the High Level Bridge shook like a piece of thin wire, and the surface of the river was agitated as if by a violent storm”. On land the vibration was felt 12 miles away, at sea 20 miles away. Whole blocks of houses were destroyed, and 800 families were made homeless. There were upwards of 270 casualties, of whom 53 were killed. Financial losses were reckoned at £1 million.³

Sarah and Joseph’s youngest child, Gertrude, was born at Gresham Place on the 15th October 1854.

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; Corder; *Annual Monitor* 1912; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Prime_Ministers_of_the_Netherlands. According to the latter source, Rochussen didn’t become Prime Minister until 1858.

² *Bootham School Register*.

³ Middlebrook: 200; Whellan’s *Directory of Northumberland*, 1855; Manders.

Joseph, described as a solicitor, of Gresham Place, informed the registrar on the 13th November.¹

It was probably some time in the mid-1850s that Sarah wrote an ‘Evening Prayer for a Little Child’:

Oh! Lord God Almighty, who knowest all things, and who hast seen all that I have done to-day, whether good or bad, I pray Thee to forgive all that I have done which was wrong. Take care of me whilst I am asleep. Help me to be a better child to-morrow and henceforth. Make me kind to my little brothers and sisters. Teach me to be thankful to my dear parents for their care, and the love which they have for me, for the sake of Jesus Christ, my Saviour.²

She also wrote a prayer in verse:

“Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thy own understanding.”

OH! Thou, who knowest every thought,
And hearest every prayer,
In mercy teach me, as I ought,
Early thy yoke to bear.

Help me, O Father, I implore,
Whilst on this earthly scene,
Daily to love and trust Thee more,
And on Thy strength to lean.

Over my weak and sinful heart
Oh! stay the Tempter’s power,
That I may choose the better part—
The Christian’s blessed dower.

Unmerited the grace and love,
Which Thou to me has given;
Teach me to do Thy holy will
Here, as ’tis done in Heaven.

Unworthy thus Thy grace to sue,
Be I in mercy taught,
Each wayward fancy to subdue—
To sanctify each thought.

First, love to Thee, then be my love
To all my fellows here,
Pilgrims, like me, to Heaven above,
Warm, prayerful, sincere.

But may it be my chiefest aim
To sing my Saviour’s praise—
And glorify His holy Name,
By walking in His ways.³

¹ Birth certificate; Foster (1871). At Edinburgh University Library a brief letter survives from James Ballantine to Joseph Watson, dated 25 September 1854, in reference to the Lit. & Phil. The letter refers to a Mr Scott, but is inherently of little interest.

² *In Memoriam Sarah Watson.*

³ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson.*

Slater's 1855 *Commercial Directory* recorded Joseph as an attorney, now of Royal Arcade, Newcastle. In the same directory Joshua (II) Watson appears as a paper hanger and paper stainer, of 63 Newgate Street, Newcastle. Whellan's *History, Topography & Directory of Northumberland*



Royal Arcade, Newcastle upon Tyne; from www.oldprints.co.uk

recorded Joseph as an solicitor of Arcade, resident at 2 Gresham Place; and Joshua (II) as a painter, of 63 Newgate Street, with his house at Elysium Lane, Gateshead.¹

Joseph Watson apparently owned a number of houses in Elysium Lane at this time, of which Joshua's was perhaps one. John Mawson lived in another, and for a long time (probably around 1856/7) Felice Orsini—who was to be sent to the guillotine in 1858 for his attempt on the life of Napoleon III—either stayed with him or took the house.²

Before his 16th birthday in 1853 Robert Spence Watson had gone to London to study at University College, London. Though he tied for the English literature prize, he neither matriculated nor completed the course, to his later regret. It was probably in 1855 that he entered for the exam:

I went in for it in defiance of the doctors, and was glad that I had done so for my father had come up quite hoping that I would have taken the mathematical prize and he had brought my brother Joe up with him. They were there sitting and one Class after another was called out and nothing for me until the English Class was finally called out, and Professor Masson said that the two leading students in this Class were so strangely equal in his opinion that the prize had to be divided.³

¹ Slater's *Commercial Directory of Durham, Northumberland & Yorkshire*, 1855; Whellan's *History, Topography & Directory of Northumberland*, 1855, London: Whittaker.

² *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

³ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

In the spring of that year, as Robert recalled,

my father came up to spend a Sunday with me and we went to Meeting together, and John Bright said he would like to have some talk with my father. We went a walk in St James' Park together and walked up and down the Mall. My father told him how much he had admired the speech which he had made in the House of Commons about the Crimean War. It was the "Angel of Death speech". He said, "Well, I will tell you rather a curious thing about that. When I had made my speech I went into Bellamy's to have a chop and Dizzy came in and sat down beside me, and he said, 'Bright, I would give all that I ever had to have made that speech you made just now', and I just said to him, 'Well, you might have made it if you had been honest'." There was not much change to get out of a man like that.¹

On the 3rd June 1855 Emma Corder died at Tynemouth village, Tynemouth, Northumberland. The cause of death was given as phthisis pulmonalis seven years, nephritic disease 3 months certified. Her brother John Foster Spence of Chirton was present at the death, which he registered two days later.²



Lucy Fisher (Spence) Spence; from Spence



Josephus Spence; from Spence

On the 22nd July 1855 Sarah's sister Lucy Fisher Spence married Josephus Spence at North Shields. Josephus was a draper, of North Street, Middlesbrough, and was Lucy's second cousin once removed (they shared descent from Joseph Spence and Grace Bramley, the parents of Sarah and Lucy's grandfather Robert (I) Spence).³

In November 1855 Esther Watson and Robert (III) Spence each contributed 5/- to the Highland Destitution Fund; John Foster Spence and Joseph Spence each contributed £2.0.0.⁴

From 1856 John Foster Spence was on the Committee of the Tyne Sailors' Homes. On the 27th May

¹ Bright's 'Angel of Death' speech was on 23 February 1855. 'Dizzy', of course, is Disraeli.

² Death certificate.

³ Marriage digest; Foster (1871).

⁴ *The Friend*.

that year Joseph's uncle William Watson of Gateshead died.¹

Joseph was secretary to the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society from 1852 to 1860, and for many years was chairman of the Newcastle Fine Arts Society. In the years 1854–60 the Lit. & Phil. engaged in heated debate regarding the propriety of reducing the annual subscription, which had been one of the conditions placed on the offer of a generous benefaction from Robert Stephenson, the society's President, the other condition being that the society should raise funds to match his contribution. This proposal had met with "a strange amount of hostility", but at the 1856 Annual Meeting, it was reported that the necessary amount had been raised, and "upon the motion of the Senior Secretary, Mr. Joseph Watson, to whose strenuous exertions the success of the movement and the defeat of the opposition were in a great measure due," it was resolved to reduce the subscription to a guinea. Membership doubled in the following year.²

On the 9th October 1856 Sarah's sister Hannah Maria Taylor died of consumption certified, at 1 Commercial Street, Linthorpe, Yarm, Yorkshire. Very possibly this was in Sarah's mind when, on the 26th of that month, she recorded her thoughts on the vanity of speculation about the afterlife:

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

THIS text, as I happened to meet with it this morning, in the first epistle of John, 3rd chapter, 2nd verse, struck me as a simple but sufficient answer to us when wondering, as we often do, whether we shall assume this or that form or appearance in Heaven. How often, we vainly speculate on what, after all, we cannot discover, instead of simply resting satisfied with the boundless mercy of our Saviour, and the blessed truths that are revealed in such texts as "what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter;" "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face," which shew us that we have abundant ground not to desire to "know above that which is written," and which we are told is "profitable," not for one thing but "for ALL things."³

Sarah's aunt Rachel (Spence) Hagen also died in 1856.⁴ On the 16th February 1857 her aunt Elizabeth (Foster) Clapham died at Newcastle.⁵

By April 1858 Esther Watson was the tenant of 22 Cumberland Row, her tenancy to last at least until November 1860; her landlord was Phillip Holmes Staunton, the rent from November 1858 being £28 p.a. Kelly's *Directory* for 1858 shows her unmarried son Joshua (II), Joseph's brother, as a resident at 22 Cumberland row, so it appears that he was living with his mother by then. The 1861 census recorded her as a house proprietor there, living with Joshua (II), a painter &c., her widowed daughter Mary Watson, and her grandson Thomas Carrick Watson, a grocer's apprentice; they had one house

¹ *Shields Daily News*, 24 July 1901; *Annual Monitor*.

² RSW: 'Northumbrian Story and Song', in *Northumbria*, Lectures delivered to the Lit. & Phil., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on Newcastle in History, Literature, and Art, by Thomas Hodgkin, RSW, R. Oliver Heslop, and Richard Welford. Newcastle: Reid, 1898: 158; Robert Spence Watson (1897) *History of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1793–1896)*. London, Walter Scott; Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920 W341; the Fine Arts Society referred to was probably the North of England Society of Arts, founded in 1837, and situated on the ground floor of the Lit. and Phil. (Whellan's *Directory of Northumberland*, 1855).

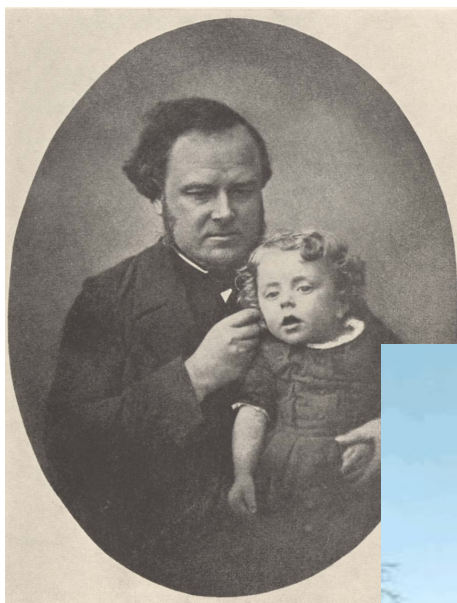
³ Death certificate; Foster (1871); *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*.

⁴ Death certificate; Foster (1871).

⁵ Foster (1871); Sandys B. Foster (1890) *Pedigrees of Wilson of High Wray & Kendal*: 55.

servant.¹

Sarah's sister Lucy Fisher Spence died on the 25th July 1858, at 3 Sussex Street, Middlesbrough, of phthisis certified. At this date her widowed husband was described as a merchant tailor.²



James Watson, with their son
James (b. 1850); from Spence

In August 1858, at Newcastle Preparative Meeting, Sarah was appointed to attend Monthly Meeting at Sunderland on 4th day.³

Robert Spence Watson was apparently a student in London from 1858 to 1860. About this time he took articles with his father, was admitted to practice as an attorney in Trinity Term 1860, and remained a practising solicitor for the rest of his life.⁴

In 1857 and 1858 the *Law List* shows Joseph as an attorney of Newcastle-



1-8 Summerhill Grove,
from www.imagesofengland.org.uk; © Bob Cottrell

¹ Family papers at TWAS, probably Acc 4439 26/1-2; RG 9/3812 f19 p35; Kelly's *Directory of Northumberland and Durham*, 1858.

² Death certificate; Foster (1871); *The Friend* XV.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

⁴ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; *Oxford DNB*; Mary Sturge Gretton (1951) *Re-Cognitions*, Oxford, privately published: 15; M.S.G.: 'A Personal Recollection', in *Manchester Guardian*, 1911; 1862, 1868 & 1872 *Law Lists*.

upon-Tyne, his London agent changing from J.U. Harwood to S.R. Pattison between these dates. Kelly's *Directory* for 1858 lists him as a solicitor ("Joseph Watson, esq.", as he is now designated for the first time), his office at 10 Arcade, his home at 4 Summerhill Grove.¹

Joseph Watson visited York at the beginning of February, but this may have been for a day only.²

In mid-June 1859 Newcastle Monthly Meeting appointed Daniel Oliver, Henry Brady, and Edward Backhouse to report on the proposal of Alexander Corder and Lucy Watson to marry.³

On the 3rd July 1859 Sarah's sister Ann Foster died at Littlehampton, Sussex, of gastric fever certified.⁴

At Monthly Meeting on the 13th July Alexander Corder was cleared to marry, and he and Lucy Watson married at Newcastle on the 20th. Corder was described as a linen draper of 5 Hutchinson Buildings, Bishopwearmouth. It was an unusual occasion, because on the same day, at the same place, Lucy's younger sister Esther Mary was also married, to Henry Clapham, a merchant, of Summerhill Grove, Newcastle. Robert Spence Watson was groomsman at the double wedding. Among the witnesses were Sarah's brothers, John Foster Spence and Joseph Spence, drapers of North Shields.⁵ *The British Friend* gave the following account of the event:

We quote the following from a Newcastle paper:—

'INTERESTING MARRIAGE AT THE FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE.

— Yesterday morning much interest was excited by two marriages which took place at the Friends' Meeting House, Pilgrim Street; the brides being sisters, and the daughters of our much respected townsman, Joseph Watson, Esq., solicitor. The Meeting House was crowded, and all watched the proceedings with the most lively interest. A large crowd assembled in the street, to witness the arrival and departure of the wedding parties, who occupied about twenty carriages. The betrothed couples, with their friends, assembled in adjoining rooms, and went in procession into the Meeting House. George Richardson, Esq., who may truly be designated the patriarch of the Society, he being eighty-six years of age, Jonathan Priestman, Esq., and a few others of the elder members, took their seats on the platform, in front of which, facing the congregation, sat the happy pairs about to be united in wedlock, viz. Mr. Alexander Corder, of Sunderland, draper, and his bride, Miss Lucy Watson; and Mr. Henry Clapham, of Newcastle, merchant, and his bride, Miss Esther Mary Watson. Between them sat Mr. & Mrs. Watson, the parents of the brides, and on the same bench were the two groomsmen, Mr. Hadwen Priestman and Mr. R.S. Watson. The bridesmaids, of whom there were ten, viz., Miss Brady, Miss Wigham, Miss Corder, Misses Harris, Misses Watson, Miss Clapham, Miss Thompson, and Miss Dodshon, occupied seats near. There was a large number of Friends present, but the great bulk of the congregation were not members of the Society—the ladies greatly preponderating. A short period was passed in silence, and then Mr. Jonathan Priestman offered up prayer.

¹ *Law Lists; Kelly's Directory of Northumberland and Durham.*

² Letters from Joseph & Robert Spence Watson held at Newcastle Lit. & Phil.

³ Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 170.

⁴ Death certificate; Foster (1871).

⁵ Marriage certificate; minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting, TWAS MF 170; marriage digest; *The British Friend* XVII.VIII: 219–20, *The Friend*.

‘A few minutes afterwards—

‘Mr. Henry Binns, of Sunderland, rose and addressed the meeting as follows:—‘ [quoted in full, but omitted here]

‘After a short interval of silence, the marriage ceremony, which was brief and simple, was gone through. The bride and bridegroom rose, and taking each other by the hand, made the usual declaration, promising, through Divine assistance to be faithful to each other until severed by death.

‘The marriage certificates were read by Mr. Henry Brady and Mr. George Pumphrey, after which a number of the friends signed their names to the same.

‘Mr. Jonathan Priestman then gave a short exhortation, urging upon his hearers the necessity of seeking Divine assistance to enable them to resist the temptations which beset their path through life.

‘Mr. Binns then engaged in prayer, after which the congregation began to retire. Many persons, however, before leaving affixed their signatures to the marriage certificates. These documents in future years will, no doubt, be referred to with great interest.’¹

In the late summer of 1859 Robert Spence Watson spent a month on a tour of Northumberland and the Borders, with a companion identified only as “T.H.P.”.²

In 1859 a short book was printed, for private circulation, entitled *Autumn Leaves*. Although Robert Spence Watson may have arranged for its production, it is a collection of poems, the majority of which are unattributed. However, there are pencil attributions in a copy which appears to have been given by Robert Spence Watson to “Lizzie Richardson” in October 1862, identifying RSW, LW, and JW as the authors. Five of the poems are by Joseph Watson (one is independently corroborated as being by him, as it is published under his name elsewhere); “RSW” is obviously Robert Spence Watson; “LW” is assumed to be Lucy Watson, written before her marriage. JW’s poems are included in the appendices here.³

In March 1860 John Foster Spence was appointed as a magistrate.⁴

On the 28th May 1860 Lucy and Alexander Corder’s first child was born, at Bensham Grove—Joseph and Sarah’s first grandchild. He was given the name Robert Watson Corder.⁵

On the 10th June 1860 Esther Mary Clapham gave birth to a son, Henry Foster Clapham, born at Summerhill Grove, Newcastle. He only lived four months, dying at 5 Summerhill Grove of marasmus certified. His body was buried at Elswick Lane Cemetery, Newcastle. Marasmus is a severe form of protein-energy malnutrition, so one can only speculate as to what lay behind this.⁶

¹ *The British Friend* XVIII.VIII: 219–20, quoting from the *Northern Daily Express*; marriage certificate.

² Journal, Newcastle Central Library.

³ My copy of *Autumn Leaves*.

⁴ *Shields Daily News*, 24 July 1901.

⁵ *The British Friend* XVIII.VII: 179; birth digest; Foster (1871).

⁶ Birth digest; *The British Friend* XVIII.VII: 179; Foster (1871); burial register; *The British Friend* XVIII.XI: 277; death certificate; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marasmus

Joseph Watson, now described as a gentleman, of Bensham Grove, made his will on the 23rd August 1860, naming Sarah as beneficiary.¹ Making his will at this point was presumably no more than a precaution, given his imminent travel plans. Shortly afterwards Joseph and Sarah, with their son Robert, spent three weeks touring Germany and Switzerland, in the company of Myles Birket Foster and Sarah's niece Mary Spence Brown (who later married Edmund Evans, Birket Foster's engraver²). The party left Newcastle by steamboat and crossed the North Sea to Rotterdam. Robert—who kept a journal of the tour, written up and published as 'A Three Weeks' Ramble in the Autumn of 1860' and published in the *Newcastle Journal*—makes only one obvious direct reference to his father. The entry occurs at this early stage of the tour, and is dated the 30th August:

The Captain had promised to call me before we left Helvoet, and I was therefore somewhat surprized when at half past six my Father, who was already dressed, awoke me, and told me that we were going up the Canal.³

From there the party went by rail to Dentz, and from Cologne to Coblenz, where they took the steamer up the Rhine to Castel. After visiting Frankfurt and Heidelberg they went on to Switzerland, stopping at Basle and Lucerne. From Lucerne they ascended the Righi, and afterwards crossed the Grimsel to Interlaken. All the travellers were on horseback, with the exception of Robert, who preferred to walk. They continued their journey to Geneva by way of Berne, Freyburg and Vevay, eventually returning home through Macon and Paris.⁴

On the 10th June 1860 Esther Mary Clapham gave birth to a son, at Summerhill Grove. The lad only lasted four months, dying at Summerhill Grove on the 19th October.⁵

The 1860 *Law List* described Joseph as an attorney of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and a member of the Metropolitan & Provincial Law Association. His London agent was unchanged.⁶

On the 20th January 1861 Sarah's uncle James Foster, a stockbroker, died at Stamford Hill, London. His brother, Sarah's uncle Myles Birket Foster, a retired porter merchant and bottle manufacturer (and the artist's father), died the very next day, at 12 Carlton Hill, St John's Wood, London.⁷

¹ IR 26/ and 27/1722; will.

² *Oxford DNB*.

³ Journal, Newcastle Central Library.

⁴ H.M. Cundall (1906) *Birket Foster R.W.S.*, London, Adam & Charles Black: 79–80.

⁵ *The British Friend* XVIII.VII: 179, XVIII.XI: 277.

⁶ *Law List*.

⁷ Foster (1871); *Oxford DNB*; HO 107/1491, /1503; RG 6/1157.



Sarah (Spence) Watson; from Spence

By 1861 the population of Newcastle had reached 110,968, up nearly 22,000 on 1851. The census recorded Joseph (II) and Sarah Watson as living with their family at Bensham Grove, where they employed three domestic servants (three young women in their 20s, their occupations only described generically); their offspring at home were: Robert, solicitor, Joseph (III) Watson, iron ship builder, William Joshua, nurseryman, and Emily, Helen, Herbert, and Gertrude, scholars. They had two visitors on census night: Joseph's cousin Esther Roddam, land agent's wife, and Lucy Fenwick, draper's daughter, who was later to married Joseph (III) Watson.¹

Of their married children, Lucy Corder was living with her husband (a linen draper), son, cook and nurse, at 17 St Bedes Terrace, Bishop-wearmouth; Esther Mary Clapham was living with her husband (a coal merchant), a visitor and two servants at 5 Summerhill Grove, Westgate, Newcastle. Mary Watson, Sarah's

sister, was living with her husband (a mercer employing 4 men and 15 women), four children, her nephew, two servants and a visitor at 6 Cumberland Row, Westgate. Elizabeth Foster (Spence) Brown, a widowed chemist and druggist, was living with her daughters, a servant, and two boarders, at 83 Tyne Street, Tynemouth. Robert (III) Spence was recorded as a banker employing 10 clerks, of 4 Rosella Place, Preston, Tynemouth, living with his wife, a cook and a housemaid. John Foster Spence was recorded as a magistrate and town councillor for the borough of Tynemouth, a draper, tailor and carpet warehouseman, living with his wife, four children, and two servants at Chirton Cottage, Chirton, Tynemouth. Joseph Spence was a draper employing 15 men, 6 boys, and 3 women, living with his wife, two children, and two house servants, in Prior Terrace, Tynemouth.²

John Foster Spence was Mayor of Tynemouth in 1861, and an Alderman the following year, in which he was also elected a member of the Tynemouth Board of Guardians, of which he was later vice-chairman and chairman. Joseph Spence was first elected to the Council in 1861. In that year he acted as assistant clerk at a large Quaker committee at Yearly Meeting; he was one of four members

¹ Mike Barke (2001) 'The People of Newcastle. A Demographic History', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester: Phillimore: 136; RG 9/3800 f39 p27.

² RG 9/3772 f45 p45, /3812, /3838, /3839 f76 p49, /3841, /3842.

of a conference on revision of the Book of Discipline, appointed to report to Yearly Meeting.¹

A daughter, Ethel, was born to the Claphams on the 25th July 1861.²

In August 1861 Helen Watson started school at Castlegate Friends' girls' school in York, where she continued her education until December 1864.³

Robert Spence Watson went on his first real climbing holiday in 1861, spending a month with Henry Tuke Mennell, walking round the North country. He also spent his first season in the Alps, with Mennell. He joined the Alpine Club the following year, and by the time of his death fifty years later was one of its oldest members. He holidayed in Switzerland on his own in 1862.⁴



Bensham Grove

On the 27th Oct 1861 the Corders had another son, Walter Shewell, born at 18 Bede Terrace, Sunderland.⁵

By 1862 Joseph had taken his son Robert into partnership, and the firm was trading as J. & R.S. Watson. As well as the Metropolitan & Provincial Law Association, Joseph was now a member of the Solicitors' Benevolent Association. The partners' office was still at 10 Arcade, as it seems to have been for the rest of Joseph's active life. There are rare glimpses of Joseph's working life in the private ledgers of E. & J. Richardsons' leatherworks: an account there for J. & R.S. Watson, solicitors, show £456-0-0 for "Expenses o/a Whittle Dean Water Co.", and £52-5-3 "Lawyers Bills" for 1863. The same source shows, without giving a reason, that David Richardson paid the firm £8-2-2½ in July 1865.⁶

Joseph's mother Esther Watson died on the 8th June 1862, at 22 Cumberland Row, Westgate, Newcastle, after several months of senile gangrene of the foot, a long and painful illness which she had born with great patience and resignation. She was buried on the 12th at the Westgate Hill General

¹ *Bootham School Register*; *Shields Daily News*, 18 December 1889 and 24 July 1901; *The Friend* N.S. 1.6 7 June 1861; *The British Friend*: 135.

² Birth digest; Foster (1871).

³ *The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784–1816, 1831–1906*.

⁴ *Alpine Club Register*: 368–9; 'In Memoriam', *Alpine Club Journal* 15: 648–9, 1911; Journal, Newcastle Central Library.

⁵ Birth digest; Foster (1871); *The Friend*, 2 December 1861: 314; *The British Friend*, 2 December 1861: 303.

⁶ 1862, 1868 & 1872 *Law Lists*; *Ward's Directory of Newcastle & Gateshead* 1865; TWAS Acc. 161/330. The archives of Watson Burton, the law firm prominent in the north-east of England right through till 2019, that traced its origin to Joseph's practice, are now on deposit at TWAS, ref. DT.WB, but at the time of writing these are not yet fully catalogued, only parts are open to research.

Cemetery, the funeral being attended by a large circle of relatives and friends, by whom she was much loved. "A very solemn meeting was held." She was described by her grandson Robert Spence Watson as "a gentle, loving woman, of a quiet and retiring disposition, but calm and wise in counsel, much beloved by all who knew her, and she exercised a powerful restraining influence upon her somewhat impetuous and impulsive husband."¹

In July 1862, at Newcastle Preparative Meeting, Sarah was appointed to attend Monthly Meeting at Sunderland on 4th day.²

In August 1862 Sarah's brother Joseph Spence was recorded as one of five Arbitrators to the Friends' Provident Association.³

In 1862 Robert Spence Watson became Secretary to the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, a position he retained until 1893.⁴



Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson,
1863;
original formerly possessed by Mabel I.
Weiss, present whereabouts not known

In January 1863 Joseph Spence of Tynemouth was among Friends appointed by Yearly Meeting to visit Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting. That year he was alderman and Mayor of Tynemouth.⁵

On the 25th February 1863 Esther Mary Clapham gave birth to a son, at 5 Summerhill Grove, who was to be named Lionel.⁶

A son, Percy, was born to Lucy and Alexander Corder on

¹ death certificate; *Gateshead Observer*, 14 June 1862; death/burial digest; *The Friend*, 1 July 1862: 184; RSW in Steel (1899): 68.

² Minutes of Newcastle Preparative Meeting (Women's) 1834–1878, TWAS MF 194.

³ Advert in *The Friend*, 1 August 1862: 208.

⁴ Corder; *Oxford DNB*.

⁵ *The Friend*, 1 January 1863: 10; *Shields Daily News*, 18 December 1889.

⁶ *The Friend* III: 98; birth digest; Foster (1871).

the 5th April 1863, at High Street, Sunderland.¹

At the Monthly Meeting held at North Shields on the 15th April 1863 Henry Tennant and Robert Foster were appointed to enquire into Robert Spence Watson's clearness to marry Elizabeth Richardson. On the 15th May they were liberated to marry, and Robert (III) Spence and Robert Foster were tasked with ensuring conduct according to good order. The marriage took place at the Friends' meeting house in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, on the 9th June 1863. Robert was described as a solicitor and an attorney at law, of Bensham Grove, Gateshead. The couple honeymooned in Switzerland and North Italy, during which time they made the first ascent of the Balfrin, 12,474 feet (then known as the Balferinhorn). They returned home on the 20th July. From 1863 to 1874 they lived at Mosscroft, Elysium Lane, Gateshead.²

Sarah's aunt Sarah (Spence) Gilpin died on the 24th September 1863.³

A surviving letter by Joseph Watson to Sir Walter Calverley Trevelyan dates from 1863. It relates to the distinguished painter Sir William Bell Scott (who had taught Joseph's new daughter-in-law, Elizabeth (Richardson) Spence Watson).

Newcastle

8/10: 1863.

Sir,

I beg to thank you for your liberal Subscription to the Scott Testimonial.

The Committee have decided to act upon the suggestion of Lady Trevelyan & yourself that the Testimonial shall be in the form of a Commission to Mr Scott to paint a Picture to be hung in some of the Public Rooms here, provided that sufficient amount shall be subscribed.

Yours very respectfully,

Joseph Watson⁴

¹ *The Friend* 1 May 1863: 118, 6 June 1863.

² Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting 1861–67, TWAS MF 170; marriage digest; documents awaiting cataloguing at TWAS; marriage certificate; Foster (1871); Evelyn SW copy of RSW letter, in Weiss book of cuttings; Corder; 1871 census; Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement; *The Friend*, 1863-08-01: 196; *The British Friend*, 1863-07-01: 181; Joseph's will; 1861 census; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

³ *Annual Monitor*.

⁴ Walter Calverley Trevelyan papers, Robinson library, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, ref. WCT 72

Newcastle
8/10: 1863.

Sir,

I beg to thank you for
your liberal Subscription to
the Scott Tercentennial.

The Committee have
decided to act upon the suggestion
of Lady Trevelyan & yourself
that the Tercentennial shall
be in the form of a commission
to Mr. Scott to paint a picture
to be hung in some of the
Public Rooms here provided
that a sufficient room shall

be subscribed

Yours very respectfully

Joseph Watson

Gen W. F. Mendenhall, Bart.

Herbert Watson began school at Bootham in April 1864, where he was to be educated for four years. Sarah accompanied him to York, where she was staying at Scawin's Hotel on the 1st, when she wrote to him in the following terms:

I CANNOT give thee much more of my mind as to thy school duties than I have done, but I can say, my own dear boy, how earnestly I trust that my poor and often erring example, may never be the means of weakening thee in anything that is good. "Follow peace with all men." "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Always seek the company and intercourse of the *good*. Try to be obedient to thy teachers, and amiable to thy school-fellows. When any little trouble comes, as it will now and then to all of us, go in prayer, dear H., lifting thy heart to Him who knoweth all things, and reverently ask of Him to help thee, to show thee what to do, and what to leave undone. He has said, "I have overcome the world," and He will always listen to and help all who come to Him in faith.

I have little fear of thy being happy and getting well on, but things will appear a little strange at first. Don't be discouraged, if any lesson seems hard, but "try, try, try again!"

That God may ever keep thee from all evil, and make thee His own dependent, loving, trusting child, is the earnest prayer of

They always very loving Mother,

SARAH J. WATSON¹

She wrote again at the conclusion of his schooling (or more likely this was the second of the two letters that Herbert kept):

ALTHOUGH it will be delightful to have thee at home dear H., yet leaving school gives rise to very mixed feelings, at least it did to me. Thou hast, I think, been very happy at Bootham, and more free from care than in after life can be hoped for. I would not seek to mar thy bright anticipations for the future. But I would remind thee, my dear Son, above all, that the earnest search for best help to guide thee, and for God's protecting care and blessing in all thy steppings, can alone secure for thee, peace and comfort; "that peace which the world can neither give nor take away."²

Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson had their first child, a daughter, on the 23rd May 1864. Given the name Mabel, she was born at Moss Croft, Bensham, Gateshead.³ Lucy Corder gave birth to a boy, Herbert, on the 10th June 1864, in Sunderland.⁴

By May 1865 John Foster Spence was sufficiently well-known in Tynemouth that his carte-de-visite photographic portrait was advertised for sale @ 1/-, in the *Shields Daily News*. In June that year he laid the foundation stone of the New Hall, Saville Street, West, North Shields (Loyal British Flag Lodge of Oddfellows). In 1865 his brother Joseph was appointed a borough magistrate.⁵ In May of that year, and in the following two years, Joseph Spence was an assistant clerk to London Yearly

¹ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*.

² *Bootham School Register; In Memoriam Sarah Watson*.

³ Birth certificate; *The Friend*, IV.146 2 June 1864; *The British Friend*, 1 July 1864: 179; Foster (1871).

⁴ Birth digest, which gives location as High Street; *The British Friend*, 1 July 1864, which gives location as Bede's Terrace; *The Friend*, 1 July 1864 IV.172, which gives location as Sunderland, and dates as 9 June.

⁵ *Shields Daily News*, esp. 1 June 1865, 18 December 1889.

Meeting.¹

In July 1865 Robert Spence Watson holidayed in Switzerland, during which he ascended Mont Blanc.² In September 1865 Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson spent a fortnight on holiday with their family in Wales, during which they ascended Snowdon.³

On the 10th August 1865, at the Friends' meeting house in Newcastle, Joseph and Sarah's daughter Emily married Henry Richardson, a colliery viewer⁴, of Forest Hill, Northumberland.⁵

On the 10th December 1865 Esther Mary Clapham gave birth, at 1 Winchester Terrace, Newcastle, to a baby boy, Philip. Philip lived just three months, having suffered convulsions throughout his brief life. He died at 5 Northumberland Terrace, Tynemouth, on the 19th March 1866, and his body was buried in St John's cemetery, Newcastle, on the 21st.⁶

In 1865–6 the Watsons' solicitors' office was at 10 Arcade, Newcastle.⁷

On the 10th January 1866 Lucy Corder gave birth to a son, Ernest, at Fawcett Street, Bishopwearmouth.⁸

Gertrude Watson began her schooling on the 14th January 1866, at Castlegate Friends' girls' school in York, continuing there until June 1870. Sarah wrote to her from Bensham Grove, on her starting school:

MY DARLING G——

I cannot do differently with thee, my youngest and dearly-loved child, to the rest; and I have always, when the others first entered a large public school, scribbled for them a few words of love and counsel, on leaving us to enter, as it were, a little new world of their own.

No situation in this life is without its cares and



Royal Arcade by T. Allom, 1883; from www.newcastle.gov.uk/tlt

¹ *The British Friend*, 8 June 1865: 140, 22 May 1867 XXV.6: 134.

² Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement; *Alpine Club Register*: 368–9.

³ Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement.

⁴ 'The manager of a colliery ; one who has the charge of all underground, and generally of all surface, arrangements.' www.dmm.org.uk/educate/mineocc.htm.

⁵ Marriage digest; *The Friend*, 1 September 1865: 203; *The British Friend*, 1 September 1865: 234.

⁶ *The Friend* VI.61:9; birth digest and Foster (1871) give the place of birth as Holly House, Gateshead; death certificate; death/burial register; *The Friend* VI.64.11; Foster (1871).

⁷ Ward's *Directory of Newcastle & Gateshead*.

⁸ *The Friend* VI.62:8; Foster (1871); birth digest.

troubles; but if we only seek the help and guidance of our Heavenly Father, whenever we feel in any little difficulty, He will perform His promise, that none of His dependent children shall seek Him in vain. Remember, darling, that although He is Ever-present, All-seeing, and All-powerful, yet nothing is too trifling about which to seek His aid. Amongst so many school-fellows there must be a variety of dispositions. Endeavour, darling, to be kind and obliging to all, both school-fellows and teachers. In choosing very intimate companions, be careful to choose those whose example will do thee good, by helping thee in every good way and work. Try to be patient, and to give up thy judgment in little things to the judgment of those who, being older and more experienced, are likely to know better than thyself.

We seem so busy to-night, that I must only add my earnest desire, that my darling child may ever seek to dwell, “under the shadow of the Almighty,” who will shield her from every ill, and that my erring example, and many short-comings, may never be, as it were, a stumbling-block in her way.

Ever, dearest G——,

Thy own loving Mother,

SARAH WATSON.¹

In 1865 Robert Spence Watson again holidayed in Switzerland. That year, on the nomination of Francis Galton (the eminent biostatistician, human geneticist, and eugenicist), he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.² In May 1866 Robert and Elizabeth spent a week in London, staying at the Charing Cross Hotel. At the end of July Robert had a severe cold followed by pleurisy, and spent ten days with Elizabeth in Wensleydale, to recuperate. On the 24th October 1866 Elizabeth gave birth to another daughter, Ruth; she was born at about 1 a.m., at Moss Croft.³ In the summer of 1867 Robert and Elizabeth spent six weeks in Switzerland and Italy. On the 25th July Robert made the first ascent of the Sasso di Chiarena, mistaking it for Monte Tresero.⁴

At the end of October 1867 John Foster Spence resigned as a member of the town council. The following month he was recorded as a manager of the North Shields Kettlewell Endowed British School. For years he was secretary of the Royal Jubilee School; he was a trustee or governor of Kettlewell’s Endowed Schools, and of the Union British Schools.⁵

On the 14th February 1868, at Backworth, Earsdon, Tynemouth, Emily (Watson) Richardson gave birth to a boy, given the name Henry. The baby lived just three days, dying at Backworth on the 17th, of convulsions.⁶

At Newcastle Monthly Meeting on the 15th April 1868 notice was given of the intended marriage of Joseph (III) Watson and Lucy Fenwick, an attender. William Wilson and Frederick Clark were appointed to enquire into clearness to marry. At the following Monthly Meeting in May they were liberated, and Henry Clapham and Francis Corder were appointed to ensure good order. Joseph (III)

¹ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson; The Mount School, York. List of Teachers and Scholars 1784-1816, 1831-1906.*

² Elizabeth Spence Watson: ‘Family Chronicles/Home Records’, and supplement; letter to me from the Royal Geographical Society; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; Corder; *Annual Monitor* 1912.

³ Elizabeth Spence Watson: ‘Family Chronicles/Home Records’, and supplement; birth certificate; *The Friend* VI.71: 251; *The British Friend* 12 :306; Foster (1871).

⁴ Elizabeth Spence Watson: ‘Family Chronicles/Home Records’, and supplement; *Alpine Club Register*: 368–9.

⁵ *Shields Daily News*, 24 July 1901; information from Peter Burns.

⁶ Birth and death certificates.

Watson and Lucy Victoria Fenwick married at Newcastle on the 20th May 1868. Joseph (III) was said to be an engineer in the firm of Clarke, Watson and Gurney, Victoria Engine Works, Gateshead. Lucy was the youngest daughter of William Fenwick, of The Cottage, Stanhope.¹ In July Lucy applied for membership of the Society of Friends, and Monthly Meeting appointed Robert Foster, James Foster, Isabel Pumphrey and Jane Richardson to meet with her. They reported back in August, saying that Lucy had already been an attender for six years. She was admitted to membership, and Joseph Procter was appointed to visit her.²

In 1868 Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson made their first visit to Norway. A dexterous fisherman, Robert was especially keen on Norway's salmon fishing. That year Robert published a paper he had read to the Lit. & Phil., entitled 'A Plan for Making the Society More Extensively Useful, as an Educational Institution'. This was the germ of what later became the University of Newcastle. During 1868 Robert assisted Francis Galton with his notable book on *Hereditary Genius*, published in 1869, by researching among northern wrestlers and oarsmen.³

Robert Spence Watson recalled that as his father advanced in years his public appearances became rare, but his Liberal convictions strengthened. In Robert's view, this was never heard to greater advantage than when he took part, in 1868, in a public reception to the great anti-slavery campaigner William Lloyd Garrison. "It was indeed a meeting of brave old men, eloquent once again in the cause for which they had fought so stoutly for so many years, side by side, though in distant lands."⁴ The occasion was amply reported in the local press:

The CHAIRMAN said he felt proud and delighted to have to call upon Mr. Joseph Watson to move an address to Mr. Garrison. Mr. Watson and his family had all been ardent promoters of every good cause of liberality, justice, and freedom, and twenty-one years ago he had the honour of seconding a resolution at a meeting to which he (the Chairman) had referred. (Loud cheers.)

Mr JOSEPH WATSON, who was greeted with loud and continued applause, said that he presumed it was owing to his age that the committee had thought fit to cause to devolve upon him the honour on that occasion of moving the adoption of an address to Mr. Wm. Lloyd Garrison. He was old enough to recollect when the gentleman—whose absence they viewed with regret—Mr. Geo. Thompson—first introduced the question of negro slavery to the people of Newcastle. (Hear, hear, and cheers) Night after night, for a considerable period, he filled the largest chapel in this town—that in Brunswick Place—with audiences who went away delighted with his eloquence—convinced by his arguments—and moved by the earnestness of his appeals. (Cheers.) But they looked upon the meeting that night as the celebration of the triumph of a great and holy cause. He did not think, however, that it was unbecoming that they should look the facts in the face. (Hear, hear.) It was, then, with some feeling of humiliation and shame that he had arrived at the conclusion that the anti-slavery spirit in this town, within the last few years—at a time when the influence of its public expression on behalf of the slave was as necessary as at any other—had been lifeless and almost dead amongst the middle

¹ Marriage digest; minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting 1867–74, TWAS MF 170; *The Friend* VIII.6: 174; *The British Friend* XXVI.7: 192; *Bootham School Register*.

² Minutes of Newcastle Monthly Meeting 1867–74, TWAS MF 170.

³ letters from Elizabeth & Robert Spence Watson to Jane, Caroline and John Wigham Richardson, now at TWAS (as yet uncatalogued); Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; Corder; *Annual Monitor* 1912; *Oxford DNB*; pamphlet as described; John Wigham Richardson (1877) *Memoir of Anna Deborah Richardson*, Newcastle: 219; Corder; Francis Galton (1869) *Hereditary Genius*.

⁴ RSW in Steel (1899).

and the upper classes—(hear, hear)—and, had it not been for the working men here, and throughout the kingdom, he was afraid that this country would have been committed in the great contest which had just been concluded to an expression of strong sympathy with the Southern rebels. (Hear, hear.) What it was that produced that effect it was not for him to say. The old and venerated men who had taken an active part in the abolition of the slave trade, in the first place, in America—and afterwards of slavery in our colonies—had succeeded for all—(cheers)—and the young men had allowed their minds to be prejudiced by the articles which had appeared in the public journals—and they must admit the fact that, with a few honoured exceptions, the papers throughout the country—whether of the Tory or the Whig party—and the papers of all the nondescript parties—had Southern tendencies and proclivities—(hear, hear, and cheers)—and they had told them that the Southerners were a noble and chivalrous people. He would ask them if there was anything noble or chivalrous in men who had sworn allegiance to the constitution—and who had sworn allegiance to the government of their country, and yet who had thrown off their allegiance because they found that their political opponents had obtained supremacy; and if there was anything noble or chivalrous in men, who, having sworn allegiance to the constitution and the government of their country, advanced in opposition to their Government and took even the stores and ammunition which belonged to that Government and used them against the very Government whose officers they were? (Cheers, and hear, hear.) The newspapers were filled with reports of the success of the Southern arms and of the defeat of the Northerners; and they told them that if even the Northern army was successful no conquest could be continued by them. It was not perhaps wonderful that the rising generation should imbibe such notions when they were led on by old statesmen like Lord Derby and Lord Russell, who gave utterance to such sentiments as that which he read with astonishment and heard with pain as having been given utterance to by Mr. Gladstone in our own Town Hall that the South had formed a navy, created an army, and almost created a nation. But what was the result? The North had gained the supremacy. The States were not disunited (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Not one star had fallen from its banner. (Cheers.) It was a fact that the object of the Northern people when victorious in arms was to abolish slavery throughout the nation. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) They rejoiced at the result. But when they spoke to them about the *Liberator* they must ask how much in effect had been produced solely by the influence of public opinion in America. How was the public opinion created? By a small band at first—gradually enlarging itself and increasing its strength. It was created by a small band of true-hearted men and women who joined in the abolition cause, and first and foremost of those was the gentleman in whose honour they had met that evening, who stood alone, as it were, lighting the Torch of Liberty in the darkness of midnight, but who had lived to see the sunlight of freedom. (Loud cheers.) It was thirty-six years since the *Liberator* was first published. What events had taken place within that period; what dynasties had been overturned; what subdivisions of kingdoms there had been; how many monarchs had been removed from their thrones; how many soldiers of both countries, even in the nineteenth century—in that period which should have been one of the reign of the Prince of Peace—had bathed their swords in the blood of their fellows; how many in striving for place and power had given up principle at every point for political purposes; and how many of even the common men had been engaged in small and insignificant and selfish acts; and all that had been going off while there has been one man who had kept his attention directed to one object; who had never faltered through evil report and through good report; amid the hatred of his enemies and the love of his friends; within the prison walls, and although despised as he himself had been by the Southerners, there was one man who had had no other object than the emancipation of four millions of oppressed natives of Africa, who were inhabitants of his own country, and who had lived to see that great end accomplished. (Loud applause.) How little had they and how much had Mr. Garrison accomplished? (Cheers.) They met here to congratulate him (Mr. Garrison) on the success of his labours. He did not need their approval. Mr. Garrison's reward was in the success of his efforts—in the approbation of his own conscience—in the approval of his God! They knew what the promise was, and by whom it was given—'I was hungry and ye fed me, thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a captive and ye took me in; a stranger and ye visited me. Inasmuch as ye did it unto these my little ones, ye did it even unto me.' (Applause.) In honouring Mr. Garrison, they were honouring themselves, and he was sure that the ladies and gentlemen present at that meeting would join him in the expression of opinion contained in the interesting address which he would now submit to them for

their approval:— [. . .]¹

The law firm's details were unchanged in the 1868 *Law List*, except that their London agent was now Pattison, Wigg & Co. The only further change in Joseph's life time was that the 1872 edition stated that Joseph was additionally a member of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Incorporated Law Society. On the 15th February 1869 Pattison, Wigg, Gurney & King, 50 Lombard Street, London, agents for J. & R.S. Watson, advertised in *The Times*, as solicitors to the official manager of the Newcastle, Shields and Sunderland Union Joint-Stock Banking Company, to be wound up on the 15th March.²

Shortly after Christmas 1868 Robert Spence Watson had a mild attack of scarlet fever, followed by gastric fever, and was ill a long time.³

On the 5th March 1869 the Claphams had another daughter, given the name Maud. She was born at Holly House, Gateshead.⁴

On the 21st March 1869 Joseph (III) and Lucy Watson had their first child, Lucy Fenwick Watson, born at 4 Seymour Terrace, Heworth, Gateshead; Joseph (III) was described as an engineer.⁵

On the 30th July 1869 Emily Richardson gave birth to another son, Harold, at Backworth Lodge, Earsdon.⁶

In the autumn of 1869 Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson spent three weeks touring Germany.⁷

Around this time Joseph was secretary to the Coquetdale Angling Club; he visited Rothbury, in Coquetdale, with his son Robert, every year till 1870, long being the only persons who went there. In September 1869 he wrote a dialect poem on 'Rothbury'.⁸

In 1869 Joseph Spence was elected Mayor of Tynemouth for



Emily and Harold Richardson, November 1874;
scanned at Wheelbirks by Sarah J. Meisner

¹ Clipping in volume at Newcastle Central Library.

² *Law List*; *The Times*.

³ Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement.

⁴ Birth digest; Foster (1871).

⁵ Birth certificate; *The Friend* NS IX.100; Foster (1871).

⁶ Birth certificate; *The Friend* NS IX.105:223; Foster (1871).

⁷ Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement.

⁸ RSW in Steel (1899): 171-2; Corder; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; RSW: 'Northumbrian Story and Song', in *Northumbria*, Lectures delivered to the Lit. & Phil., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on Newcastle in History, Literature, and Art, by Thomas Hodgkin, RSW, R. Oliver Heslop, and Richard Welford. Newcastle: Reid, 1898: 158; Joseph Watson—*Selected poetry and prose*: 45.

a second time.¹ In 1870 John Foster Spence was re-elected to the Tynemouth town council, and remained a councillor till his death.²

On the 6th May that year Joseph's aunt Jane (Watson) Hewitson died at Headingley, Leeds.³

Helen Watson (known in the family as Nellie) married Joseph John Gurney on the 27th July 1870 at the Particular Baptist Chapel, Rye Hill, Newcastle, by certificate; her sister Gertrude was one of the witnesses. The groom was a mechanical engineer of 43 Westgate Hill, Newcastle, son of Joseph Gurney, who was a shorthand writer to the Houses of Parliament.⁴

In the summer of 1870 Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson went on a tour of Austria. They were at Salzburg when they heard of the declaration of war between France and Germany. Their return was delayed so long they missed Nellie Watson's wedding. Not long afterwards, at the invitation of the Society of Friends, Robert went to Alsace-Lorraine as one of the commissioners of the War Victims Fund for the distribution of relief to the non-combatants in the Franco-Prussian War, spending a month there over October and November, during which at one point he was condemned to be shot as a spy. At the beginning of March 1871 he spent a further two weeks in Paris, superintending similar work in the department of the Seine. The pamphlet he published, *The Villages round Metz*, gave a vivid picture of his experiences and a haunting picture of the awful waste and the grim horror of the war. In 1873 the French government, through the duc de Broglie, offered him the Legion of Honour, but he declined the distinction; he was, however, presented with a gold medal which was specially struck in acknowledgment of his services.⁵

On the 18th August 1870 a son, Joseph Stanhope, was born to Joseph and Lucy Watson, at Seymour Terrace, Gateshead.⁶

On the 24th October Robert Spence Watson received two letters inviting him to undertake relief work in France. His father's role proved decisive:

We were both of us puzzled to know what to say about this, and at last we agreed to leave it to my father to decide. I think we both felt pretty confident that he would decide that I ought not to go. He was getting old, he was 64, and he was also getting rather timid, and we came up and gave him the letters to read without a word of comment of any kind. He read them carefully through twice, and then laid them down and said to me, "I think that this call is in the way of duty, Robert, and I think that thou ought to go". So I determined to go.⁷

For Christmas 1870 Robert Spence Watson gave his parents a fur rug and an easy chair. The gifts

¹ *Shields Daily News*, 18 December 1889.

² *Shields Daily News*, 24 July 1901.

³ Steel (1899); Corder.

⁴ Marriage certificate; *Oxford DNB*.

⁵ Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement; *Oxford DNB*; *Annual Monitor* 1912; *Northern Echo*, 15 February 1919; William K. Sessions (1991) *They Chose the Star*. 2nd edn, York. The current whereabouts of the medal isn't known.

⁶ Birth certificate; *The Friend* NS X.Sept:228

⁷ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

were accompanied by a poem:

Many a year is passed and gone since first on Christmas day,
Our Christmas Tree so brightly shone, and our wee hearts were gay;
And often again since that olden time have we all joined in glee
With glad obedience to the call to welcome the Christmas Tree:
And the Tree of yore is a Ship to-day—as many a tree hath been,—
But other changes beyond that change the hurrying years have seen;
Fresh faces we find at the festive board each year as we gaze around,
Old faces which gladdened the olden time, amongst us are no more found;
But he is with us still to-day who planted that earliest tree,—
Planter of trees or builder of ships how skilful and wise is he!
And she who guided our childhood's mirth, and dried our childhood's tears,
She gently welcomes our children now, though she's felt the weight of the years.
And we would offer our Mother dear, who our young days so blessed,
And worked and wearied so oft for us, the means of a happy rest;
And our Father, whose constant warmth of soul spreads round us its genial glow,
We offer this emblem of that warmth which all who know him know.
Ay, though time has wrought his work on them, and the snows of age are seen,
Yet well we know that, beneath that snow, their hearts are young and green;
And our heart-felt prayers are that through long years, they both may with us stay,
And gladden our little ones and us on many a Christmas Day.¹

Joseph Watson was quite happy when he could have a children's party, eight or ten little ones, all to himself, showing them toys and telling them tales. From 1839 Christmas was always the most special of occasions:

Christmas Day has always been the day of the year with us. In 1839 William Howitt, who was then travelling in Germany and who was a great friend of my father's, wrote him a very long letter describing the German Christmas and the Christmas tree, which was the first that my father had ever heard of it. William Howitt made drawings of such a tree, and so my father got a great plant-pot and a small fir tree and hung it with candles and all sorts of curious things, amongst which I only remember ginger bread donkeys. Then we had a number of young people came to see it. The smaller children, of whom I was one, knelt round the pot, the larger children standing and leaning over them, and got the things off the tree in that way. It was a great success. Everybody was quite charmed with it. Such a thing had never been heard of before, and so enthusiastic were the children that two of the large ones were unable on the following day, which happened to be Sunday, to go to Meeting. They had dined too largely off the gingerbread donkeys.

Ever since then, almost up to the present time, we have had some sort of Christmas tree or something of the same sort. In my father's time, after becoming a very great tree splendidly planned with the whole of the table on which it stood covered with moss, with a looking glass for a pond, and sheep upon the grass and shepherds, and with an angel flying over the top, it continued for many years. At length he changed it to a ship, and had the ship covered with decorations of one kind and another, and the presents were contained in the hold and on the deck and on the masts. This went on all through his life and almost the last thing he said to me within a very few days of his death was, "For the sake of the little children mind you keep Christmas Day", and we always have.

¹ Poem in R[obert] S[pence] W[atson] (1880) *Wayside Gleanings*, Newcastle, privately printed.

We have never, when we were at home, and we have only been once away, missed having a great family party upon that day. These parties have necessarily varied much in numbers. There have been as few as 50 or 60 and there have been upwards of 100, and once 120, but whatever there were in the olden days we used always to have a present for each child. It was a very difficult thing and it became ultimately impossible to continue this. Still he held the party and had all manner of ways of dispensing the gifts. At times Santa Claus arrived very snowy and clad in furs. At times an evergreen Post Office where the children knocked a real brass knocker. Once an Indian wigham. Then the great lion from the pantomime lent by the Theatre owners. One a grove of Christmas trees and so on. The supper time at these parties was always, to my thinking, about as happy a scene as we could possibly imagine. The way in which boned turkeys, and game pies, and pheasants, and all manner of lighter things, disappeared, was simply enough to do a man's heart good. And I am firmly convinced that those parties not only gave great enjoyment to the people, but that we are very much indebted to them in many ways. Never in the history of our family has there been a real family quarrel, and I attribute that to a very great extent to the fact that, at all events once a year, we have all met together in a warm, genial, friendly way, and all trace of doubt or suspicion or jealousy was stamped out if such indeed existed, which I very often doubt.¹



Sarah (Spence) Watson; copied by Sarah J. Meisner

On the 10th March 1871 Emily Richardson gave birth to a daughter, Helen, at The Lodge, Backworth, Earsdon, Tynemouth.²

The population of Newcastle and Gateshead grew enormously during the lifetimes of Joseph and Sarah Watson. In 1811 they had been 33,723 and 8782, respectively; by 1871 they were 131,198 and 48,627. The 1871 census found Joseph (II) and Sarah Watson to be living at Bensham Grove; the household including a domestic servant, a house servant, and a cook. William Joshua Watson was still living in the parental home, a nurseryman. Also still at home was Herbert Watson, now a solicitor's clerk, having taken articles with his father. Gertrude, too, was recorded at Bensham Grove, with no occupation shown. Emily Richardson was living with her husband, two infants, a ladies nurse, cook, and a nurse and housemaid. Nellie Gurney was living with her husband in his father's household at Birdhurst, Kingston Road, All Saints, Wandsworth. The Corder children were living with their

¹ RSW in Steel (1899): 171-2; Corder; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

² Birth certificate; *The Friend* NS XI.Apr: 95; births digest.

father at 24 Fawcett Street, Bishop-wearmouth. Robert Spence Watson was an attorney, &c., of Leasham Lane, Gateshead (apparently a phonetic spelling of 'Elysium'); the household included his wife, their daughters Mabel and Ruth (scholars), and two domestic servants. Esther Mary Clapham was living with her husband (an import & export merchant), three children, and four servants at Holley House, Gateshead. Visiting them on census night was Sarah Watson's sister Elizabeth Brown. Joseph (III) Watson, was living with his wife, two children and two servants at 9 Seymour Terrace, Heworth, described as an engine manufacturer. Joshua (II) Watson, described as a commission agent, was living with his brother at Bensham Grove. Mary Watson, Sarah's now widowed sister, was living at Hawthorne Terrace, Elswick, Newcastle, with three children and a servant. John Foster Spence was recorded as a magistrate and draper, of Chirton Cottages, Chirton, Tynemouth, living with his wife, son, companion, and domestic servant. Joseph Spence was a Justice of the Peace, alderman and draper, living with his wife and two children at 2 Priors Terrace, Tynemouth.¹

In March and April 1871 William Joshua Watson advertised in *The Friend*, in the following terms:

WM. JOS. WATSON'S	GARDEN SEEDS
WM. JOS. WATSON'S	FLOWER SEEDS
WM. JOS. WATSON'S	AGRICULTURAL SEEDS
WM. JOS. WATSON'S	FRUIT, FOREST, AND ORNAMENTAL TREES, SHRUBS, ROSES, &c.

Catalogues of the above are now ready and will be forwarded post free on application to the TOWN HALL BUILDINGS, Newcastle.

NURSERIES, FENHAM, near Newcastle.²

On the 26th April 1871, at Mosscroft, Elizabeth Spence Watson gave birth to another daughter, Evelyn.³

Sarah must have written the following undated 'Lines found in a memorandum book' around this time:

“We have liv'd and lov'd together,”
So tenderly and true,
That, oh! 'tis hard to utter,
That little word, Adieu!

But don't we often find, love,
When almost too happy here,
Something feelingly reminds us,
Of a holy, happier sphere?

¹ Mike Barke (2001) 'The People of Newcastle. A Demographic History', in Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster eds, *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History*, Chichester, Phillimore: 136; Middlebrook: 321; RG 10/708, /5004, /5048 f6 p5, /5051, /5076, /5114 f68r, /5121, /5128 f30v; *Bootham School Register*; www.visionofbritain.org.uk/data_cube_table_page.jsp?data_theme=T_POP&data_cube=N_TPop&u_id=10139466&c_id=10001043&add=N

² *The Friend* NS XI.Mar:cAds 7 & Apr:9.

³ Birth certificate; *The Friend* NS XI. June 1871:c156; *Bootham School Register*.

Oh! may our steps be tending
 To that peaceful, joyous shore,
 Where our ransom'd spirits blending,
 Shall meet to part no more.

And how sweet 'tis now to know, love,
 When all the day alone,
 At eventide we meet, love,
 Before the Father's throne.¹

By mid-August 1871, according to her daughter-in-law Elizabeth Spence Watson, Sarah Watson



Sarah (Spence) Watson; from Corder

had been very feeble for many months, but was still well enough to entertain the idea of going to Rothbury, when she became suddenly worse. On Sunday the 13th we were all alarmed about her, & D^r Embleton was called in. He spoke assuringly but to many of us it was evident she was fast sinking. On Monday morning we were called early, & hastened to her bedside. Soon the whole family was assembled, & all that day, & that night & until ten o'clock on Tuesday morning, we watched around her bed. She was quite unconscious all the time, & we only knew she lived by her regular breathing. At length she was happily released, & so lovely did she look in death, so peaceful & happy that we could indeed believe that Death had for her been robbed of its sting.²

Sarah Watson died at Bensham Grove on the 15th August 1871, of dysentery, followed by four days' diarrhoea. She was buried in Jesmond Cemetery on

¹ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson.*

² Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement.

the 17th of August—a large number of friends following her to the grave.¹

A Congregationalist minister wrote to Joseph that “Your dear wife was one of the very earliest of the friends whom Mrs. R---- made on coming to Newcastle, and she has always retained a grateful recollection of the many acts of considerate kindness then shewn her.” T.W. wrote that she was “one whose unaffected kindness rendered my two years in Newcastle one of the happiest portions of my life; indeed, your house was more my home than anything else.”²

Others wrote that “her piety, sincere and deep-rooted as it was, was unobtrusive, and was shewn by acts rather than words”; and that “whilst her hopes for eternity were fixed upon her God and Saviour, her earthly affections were all ours.”³

Annie Harwood summed up Sarah’s life: “It was a life that seemed so beautifully, as far as I can judge, to have fulfilled its purpose, and one therefore, which God will find some higher sphere to fill in the perfect life.”⁴

¹ Death certificate; burials digest; Corder; *Gateshead Observer*, 19 August 1871; 1872 *Annual Monitor*; *The Friend* 1871 Sept ads: 7; *The British Friend* 1871 Sept ads: 5.

² *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*.

³ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*.

⁴ *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*.

Joseph's widowerhood

Elizabeth Spence Watson recorded of her father-in-law, after Sarah's death, that he "feels his loss acutely—for him the world is changed—but he bears up bravely, & finds some relief in looking over the countless letters w^h bring back all the past." He went to Rothbury for a few days (or more) after the death. In January 1872 he had printed, for private circulation, a booklet *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*, which includes some items he had found among her papers, as well as tributes by friends. In the introductory note 'To My Children' Joseph observed of Sarah that

. . . her piety, sincere and deep-rooted as it was, was unobtrusive, and was shewn by acts rather than words. Few materials for such a record are left, and I feel that any publication of them would not have met with her approval.

[. . .] Simple and unpretending they are, as she was, but they shew, what indeed required no proof, that whilst her hopes for eternity were fixed upon her God and Saviour, her earthly affections were all ours.

[. . .] May we follow her, as she followed Christ. Through His infinite love and mercy, may we be reunited in that glorious land, whither she has gone before us.

"And meet at last, no wanderer lost—
A family in Heaven."

Your loving Father,

JOSEPH WATSON.

Bensham Grove,

*1st Month, 1872.*¹

The note he sent to accompany the copy he gave to his brother-in-law Robert (III) Spence is Joseph's last surviving letter:

¹ Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement; *In Memoriam Sarah Watson*

15/2:1872

My dear Brother

I have to ask thy acceptance to the accompanying small selection from memoranda found amongst the papers of my precious Wife.

Besides the copies as they are not sub^ted (?) for criticism and were never intended to be published.

With much love to Sarah & thyself

They affectionate

Brother

Joseph Watson

Robert Spence

× The Photographers having lost the original Negative can only supply defective copies of the Portrait.¹

For Robert Spence
'A Brother beloved.'

¹ Letter bound with booklet in the (only known surviving) copy held by Newcastle Lit. & Phil.

Bensham Grove,
Gateshead.

15/2: 1872.

My dear Brother

I have to ask
thy acceptance of the
accompanying small
selection from manuscript
found amongst the
papers of my precious
Wife

Besides the copies

For Robert & Grace
A Brother beloved!

as they are not fitted
for criticism and were
never intended to
be published

With much love
to Sarah & herself

Very affectionately

Brother

Wm. L. G. H. H.

Robert H. H.

+ The Photographers
having lost the original
negative can only supply
defective copies of the Robert

On the 20th October 1871 Joseph gave Robert a beautiful morocco-bound volume in which he had collected a number of original manuscripts relating to the history of the Lambton Worm, together with his own printed version of the 'Legend'. The inscribed dedication was "To Robert Spence Watson from the auld Ballad Writer his affectionate Father Joseph Watson".¹

Joseph Spence was elected as a member of Tynemouth's first School Board in 1871. Robert Spence Watson, similarly, was elected to the Newcastle School Board that year, at its foundation. He continued to sit on the board for 23 years, and was for a long time vice-chairman. Also in 1871 he helped to found the Durham College of Science, later to become Armstrong College, and still later Newcastle University. It may safely be said that he was for many years the real soul of the institution, preserving its continuity through many changes, and always aiming at a fuller development of the comprehensive plan which he had originally formed; he was honorary solicitor to the college.²

During the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s Joseph and John Foster Spence periodically advertised in *The Friend* and *The British Friend* for assistants and apprentices. In their March 1873 advertisement they described themselves as "J.F. & J. Spence, Drapers and Carpet Warehousemen, &c.".³

On the 21st April 1872, at Gateshead, Esther Mary Clapham gave birth to another son, Norman.⁴

On the 4th June 1872 Joseph (III) and Lucy Watson had another daughter, born at 9 Seymour Terrace, Heworth, Gateshead; Joseph (III) was described as a mechanical engineer.⁵

¹ TWAS DF.SPW Acc 4439/9.

² *Shields Daily News* 18, December 1889; census; *Oxford DNB*; *Annual Monitor* 1912; Corder; E.I. Waitt: 'John Morley, Joseph Cowen, and Robert Spence Watson. Liberal Divisions in Newcastle Politics, 1873-1895'. PhD thesis, Manchester Univ., Oct. 1972: 37; letter to me from Nicholas Morrell; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; *Reminiscences of John Theodore Merz*. London: Blackwood (privately printed), 1922: 289 & 306; *The Times* 3 March 1911; Dan Marriott (2002) 'Robert Spence Watson. A Pioneer of Education in the North', University of Durham MA dissertation.

³ *The British Friend*, 1 September 1857 XV.IX: 247, April 1866 XXIV.4: 99, 1873 XXI. March: 72.

⁴ Birth digest; Sandys B. Foster (1890) *Pedigrees of Wilson of High Wray & Kendal*. London: 157.

⁵ Birth certificate.



Joseph (II) Watson;
from carte de visite by Downey of Newcastle

In 1872 Joseph Watson took part in his last public meeting, one held at Gateshead to consider the Education Act. He hadn't assisted in anything of the kind for the last five or six years. The meeting was to hear a Mr Adams of Birmingham. It proved a lively event, some hecklers beating a drum to prevent people hearing. Joseph's son Robert "was very anxious about my father, who was then getting an oldish man. So I told him to declare the meeting over and to get down into the ante-room as quickly as he could, as I saw that the platform would be attacked as soon as he left." Order was eventually restored, but only after the gas was turned off.¹

In August 1872, suffering from headaches induced by overwork, Robert Spence Watson was ordered by his doctor to go abroad for a month, and he went to Switzerland with Elizabeth.²

In March 1873 Robert Spence Watson fell ill with diphtheria, and retreated to Glasgow to convalesce. His brother Herbert accompanied him to Glasgow, but himself succumbed to pneumonia:

he died at Glasgow on the 25th March 1873, at about 5 pm, of pneumonia 3 days certified—just days before his 21st birthday; his death certificate, however, gives his place of death as Bensham Grove, the family home he had never left. Herbert's body was buried in Jesmond cemetery, Newcastle. Joseph felt his son's death as a terrible blow.³

In April 1873 Joseph Watson subscribed 10s. to E.J. Saleebey's Schools at Lebanon. Joseph and John Foster Spence each subscribed 10s.; William Joshua Watson subscribed 5s.⁴

On the 25th April 1873 the Claphams had another son, Herbert Watson Clapham, born at Gateshead.

¹ *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

² Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement.

³ Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement; burials digest; *Annual Monitor*; *Bootham School Register*; death certificate; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*.

⁴ *The British Friend*, XXXI. Apr: 81.

The child only lasted four months, and died at Holly House on the 26th August.¹

In mid-May 1873 Lucy Corder was with Robert Spence Watson in Florence, attending to their uncle Joseph (III) Watson. Robert also spent some time on Lake Geneva with John Wigham Richardson. Joseph (III) was seriously ill with lung disease, and clearly not expected to live. On the 19th May Robert wrote home that he expected to be there at least two weeks, “I have had so much to do for poor Uncle Joe.” He later wrote:

... my brother Joe had been very poorly for some time. It was evident that his chest was affected, and Charley Pease and his wife were going up the Nile, and offered to take him with them in their Dahabieh and we hoped that it would do him great good. The last letters were most encouraging and then there came one from Alexandria which showed that he was laid up there in a very dangerous state. I at once told my father that I would go out and meet him at Naples. He had requested in his letter that someone might meet him. I went out to Naples and was there for twelve days but I never got a letter or a telegram from him or home or anything of the kind, and I was coming away from Naples in despair when I saw a ship I had not known of coming into the bay, and he was in it. He had been very ill, and a young fellow who had met him had tried to get him a first class passage to Naples, but finding that it was impossible, had given up his own first class cabin and got a second berth second class, and brought him through and looked after him. The doctor I consulted said at once that he was dying, and that I could not move him at all, but I managed to take him about a little in the splendid weather, and he was much interested in everything that he saw though he was very weak. I got him on to Rome with great difficulty. After two or three days in Rome I took him on to Florence. That was then a terrible journey of fifteen hours, and how we got through it I cannot imagine. Fortunately everyone saw how ill he was and they avoided getting in to trouble us. He had bad dysentery in addition to long disease. At Florence, with much difficulty and after great trouble, I came upon a Scottish doctor who had just come there from India, having himself been cured of a similar complaint in India. He took us to a most excellent pension kept by Miss Earle, the daughter of an officer, and there we had every possible comfort, and a large room for Joe which I used to make a complete bower of roses for about 1½d. a day. I used to go out in the morning and come back with my arms full of roses—so full that I could hardly carry them. It was a splendid place.

Then my father and sister Gertrude, and my brother Willy came out and brought Joe’s wife with them, and then I came home again. He lived about three weeks longer, but when I parted I could tell, even though the doctor did not say so, that there was no chance whatever of our meeting again.²

Joseph (III), who had been staying at Via degli Strozzi N° 4, died at Florence on the 24th June, aged 33. Described as an iron ship builder and engineer, he was buried in the Protestant cemetery in Florence on the 26th. His tombstone bears the epitaph “WHICH HOPE WE HAVE/ AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL/ BOTH SURE AND STEADFAST/ HEB. VI.19.”³

¹ Sandys B. Foster (1890); *The Friend*.

² Letter from Robert Spence Watson to Mabel Spence Watson, TWAS Acc. 213/13; RSW & ESW letters now at TWAS, but still uncatalogued; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; catalogue of Tyne & Wear Archives Service; *Memoirs of John Wigham Richardson*: 98; burials digest; *Annual Monitor*; death certificate; *The Friend* NS XIII. July: 190; *The British Friend*, July: 182; *Bootham School Register*.

³ Letter from Robert Spence Watson to Mabel Spence Watson, TWAS Acc. 213/13; RSW & ESW letters now at TWAS, but still uncatalogued; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; catalogue of Tyne & Wear Archives Service; burials digest; *Annual Monitor*; death certificate; *The Friend* NS XIII. July: 190, *The British Friend*, July: 182; *Bootham School Register*; www.florin.ms/cemetery4.html.

The Claphams' son Herbert died at Holly House, Gateshead, on the 28th August 1873, aged 4 months.¹

By 1873 Joseph and Robert Spence Watson, solicitors, had 20 £10 shares (out of 800) in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Turkish Bath Company Limited, formed the previous year.²



Gertrude Watson; from Sarah J. Meisner archive

In September 1873 Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson spent three weeks in Switzerland with Alice and John Wigham Richardson.³ Around 1873 Robert and Elizabeth played a key role in establishing the Gateshead High School for Girls, the first girls' day school in the north east.⁴

In January 1874 Joseph Watson wrote and printed his poem 'A Tale of Florence', in memory of "my beloved son" Joseph (III).⁵

At the beginning of August 1874 Gertrude Watson was among Gateshead representatives attending a Conference of the Friends' First-day Schools Association at Darlington.⁶

In 1874 Joseph Watson was recorded as resident in Newcastle, and a registered voter in Gateshead by virtue of his ownership of one undivided third part of a freehold house in Bensham Lane.⁷

Joseph was described by W. Harris Robinson as "a kind and worthy man in all the relations of life".⁸

According to his son, Robert,

Though one who spoke little about religious matters, his voice was always raised on the side of righteousness, and his quiet but effectual testimony to the truth carried conviction into many quarters where such teaching is but seldom received. Shortly before his death he wrote several poems of much beauty, breathing that spirit of Christian resignation which he had in life so

¹ *The Friend* NS XIII. October: 264.

² www.victorianturkishbath.org/5COMPANIES/AtoZCo/NewcastleSF.htm.

³ Elizabeth Spence Watson: 'Family Chronicles/Home Records', and supplement.

⁴ Dan Marriott (2002) 'Robert Spence Watson. A Pioneer of Education in the North', University of Durham MA dissertation.

⁵ Joseph Watson—*Selected poetry and prose*: 47.

⁶ *The Friend*, NS XIV August 1874: 273.

⁷ Electoral register.

⁸ W. Harris Robinson in Steel (1899): 70.

truly exemplified.¹

Others close to Joseph described him as “a man of great integrity, and much esteemed by all persons who came in contact with him both in business and private life.” “He was a fine specimen of a good North Country Englishman and a Quaker. A man with no pretence and no vain show, but a man of strong, solid intellect, earnest conscientiousness, deep and true religious feeling.”²

On the 12th December 1874 Joseph made a codicil to his will, to reflect his wife’s death since the date of the will itself. In the codicil he referred to sums he had advanced to his late son Joseph, and to his son William Joshua, requiring these sums to be accounted for before the division of his estate; beyond that, £3000 was left in trust for his daughter-in-law Lucy Watson, the residue to be split equally between his children Lucy, Robert Spence, Esther Mary, William Joshua, Emily, Helen, and Gertrude; if an individual share amounted to more than £3000, the amount in trust for Lucy (Joseph's widow) would be increased to the same amount.³

Joseph’s daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Spence Watson, gives the most intimate account of the close of Joseph Watson’s life:

When I last wrote my dear Father in law was in his usual health & spirits, & we were all looking forward to his being with us at Christmas—a thing w^h had not happened since his wife’s death. He had bought books for all the grandchildren, & written their names in, but, as if he had had some presentiment of what was going to happen, he said to us, when we laughed at him for being so beforehand, “We cannot tell what may happen before Christmas.” He had had a cough & cold, but made rather light of it, going in to work as usual, when on the 11th of December he was taken much worse. The D^r said at once there was great danger—he was suffering from a complication of disease—bronchitis, heart complaint &c. He thought from the very first he would not rally, & he spoke to us all with calm & joyful anticipation of the approaching end. He told of his happiness, of his faith in Jesus, the only Refuge, & of the joy he had in looking forward to meeting with the beloved ones gone before. We all felt it a privilege to be with him in those last sad days when we felt he was rapidly passing away from us. The watching continued until Monday, the 14th when he quietly passed away. On the 17th he was laid in the grave at Jesmond beside his wife & our darling Herbert, an immense concourse of people joining the procession. A meeting was afterwards held in the meeting house—very largely attended, when T. Hodgkin, R.B. Butler & T. Pumphrey all spoke very beautifully, dwelling on the special characteristics of our dear Father—his love & tenderness, & child-like faith. We did indeed feel that we had lost one whom we had continually trusted & looked up to, & whose place can never be filled [. . .] Letters of sympathy flowed in from all sides—there seemed to be but one opinion as to the love & reverence in w^h our Father had always been held—by men of all shades of opinion & beliefs.⁴

Coverage of the event in the local press was, of course, more detached, but still warm:

. . . five or six days ago Mr. Watson was apparently in the enjoyment of good health, and attending to his professional duties. About six o’clock on Thursday evening, he left his office in Pilgrim Street, and went to his home at Bensham Grove, Gateshead, and he was then in very good spirits, and his

¹ RSW in Steel (1899): 172

² *Reminiscences of John Theodore Merz*. London: Blackwood (privately printed), 1922: 221-2; Dr Thomas Hodgkin, in *Bootham Magazine* (York Old Scholars Assn magazine) V.5:369, 9 November 1911.

³ will and codicil

⁴ Elizabeth Spence Watson: ‘Family Chronicles/Home Records’, and supplement.

family noticed nothing to cause them to anticipate that he was soon to be overtaken by an illness which was to end fatally. He busied himself about some law matters, and sat up writing till a later hour than was usual, and soon after retiring was seized with illness, and was attended by one of his daughters. Two doctors were called in, but their services were unavailing, as his illness developed into congestion of the lungs, and terminated fatally yesterday. Being one of the oldest lawyers in Newcastle, Mr. Watson was well known; and his pleasant and genial manner secured for him the respect not only of his professional brethren, but of all who knew him. His legal opinion in connection with mercantile and commercial matters was highly thought of; and he enjoyed a considerable practice in the old Bankruptcy Court. Being a member of the Society of Friends, Mr. Watson had a considerable practice among that body. He was solicitor to Messrs Hodgkin and Co., bankers, St. Nicholas' Square . . .

His death certificate confirms that he died at Bensham Grove, of pneumonia, on the 14th December 1874. His body was buried in the family vault at Jesmond Cemetery, Newcastle, on the 17th.

The relatives and many of the friends of the deceased gentleman were conveyed in twenty-six coaches from Gateshead to the place of interment, where a large number of gentlemen were assembled when the *cortege* arrived.¹

Amongst those present were the mayors and town clerks of Newcastle and Gateshead, as well as Joseph Swan and Theo Merz.²

Whilst the coffin was being lowered into the vault, two of the lady mourners placed two immortelles upon it, one at the head and the other at the foot. . . . The assemblage then adjourned to the Friends' Meeting House, Pilgrim Street, where addresses were delivered bearing on the character of the deceased. Speakers were Thomas Hodgkin, Mr Rutter, Dr Bruce and Thomas Pumphrey. Rutter noted that 'Even in his last illness, when most people would be wrapped up in themselves or their families, he was much interested about establishing a soup kitchen for the poor on his own premises.'

Joseph's will was proved at Durham on the 25th February 1875 by his executors and trustees, his son Robert, and his brother-in-law Robert Spence. His estate was valued at under £18,000 (£1.13 million, at 2017 values), with no leaseholds. This included Bensham Grove and Mosscroft, the proceeds of some recently sold land at the (Viaduct?) in Gateshead, a £2000 life assurance policy, and shares in the Redheugh Bridge Company and the Newcastle Gas Company.³

A poem by Robert Spence Watson records his father's passing:

. . . But this last change! the father, so beloved,
So wise, so true, so gentle,—he hath passed
Away from us to whom he ever proved
A refuge from life's cold and bitter blast.
Could tenderest love and prudent spirit last,
He were immortal; and from him we learned
To sorrow us with hope; his lot is cast

¹ Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920.

² Newcastle Central Library RSW Cuttings V. 3 N920.

³ Death certificate; *Gateshead Observer*, 19 December 1874; *National Probate Calendar*; www.mswth.com/ppoweruk; as yet uncatalogued family documents now at TWAS; death/burial digest.

With those for whom his heart so fondly yearned:

His day's work done his rest is due and nobly earned.¹

Oral history retained the memory of Joseph Watson until the present millennium: in July 2000 Mabel Weiss told me that her mother, Evelyn (Spence Watson) Weiss, had told her what a lovely man her grandfather Joseph Watson had been, and how fond of children.²

¹ Poem in *Wayside Gleanings*.

² Unrecorded recollection by Mabel I. Weiss, July 2000.

Afterlives

Siblings

In the 1881 census Joseph's brother Joshua (II) Watson, described as a powder agent, was living at 6 Elysium Lane, Gateshead, with Lucy Watson, widow of his nephew Joseph (III), and her daughter Lucy; the household had one general servant. He died at Elysium Lane on the 21st July 1888.¹

Sarah's sister Mary Watson died of heart disease certified at 8 Hawthorn Terrace, Westgate, Newcastle, on the 20th November 1873.²

Elizabeth Foster (Spence) Brown, widow of Henry Brown, miller, died on the 4th May 1876 at Grove Villa, Belmont, Twickenham. The causes of death were given as gall stones 5 years and perforation peritonitis 6 hours certified. Her body was buried in Twickenham cemetery on the 9th.³

John Foster Spence served six years on the Tynemouth School Board, from 1876 to 1882, and was Chairman of the Board from 1886 to 1888. He represented Tynemouth on the Northumberland County Council. He was Mayor of Tynemouth from 1891 to 1894, after which he was made a freeman of the borough. At that time he claimed to be connected with between 70 and 80 committees. He was prominently connected with the Dorcas Society, the Indigent Sick Society, the Bible Society, the Dispensary, the Religious Tract Society, and the Northern Society for the Blind. He was an ardent supporter of the Tynemouth Lifeboat Institution, and connected with the St John Ambulance Association. He was also a leading member of the Lit. & Phil., and was keen on the technical education movement. He was present at his niece Mabel Spence Watson's wedding at Pilgrim Street meeting house in April 1896. "A most picturesque personality," in his last years he was said to be "the best known gentleman on Tyneside." He died at Chirton Cottage, North Shields, on the 22nd July 1901.⁴

Joseph Spence spoke at London Yearly Meeting in 1877, 1880, 1881 and 1883. He was president of the Tynemouth Liberal Association for many years. He died at his residence in Priors Terrace, Tynemouth, on the 17th or 18th December 1889. The *Shields Daily News* recorded that

The manhood of his life, extending up to a twelve month since, was given to public work, and for a great number of years his name was so interwoven with the affairs of the borough as to make it difficult to find his like again. Combined with his indomitable energy and perseverance his strict integrity of character, and his many social and intellectual attainments, were his utter unselfishness, his absolute disregard for personal distinction, and his sincere unostentation in every phase of his public career. Never anxious about his fame, the honours which his townsmen conferred upon him

¹ RG 11/5033 f95 p9; *The Friend*.

² Death certificate.

³ Death certificate; *The Friend* NS XVI. June: 167; death/burial digest.

⁴ *Shields Daily News*, 18 December 1876, 24 July 1901; RSW cuttings at Newcastle Central Library; information from Peter Burns; *Bootham School Register*.

were invariably accepted with reluctance, and only from a real sense of duty.¹

In 1879 Robert (III) Spence subscribed £5.0.0 to the Ackworth School Centenary fund. In 1881 he was still living at 4 Rosella Place, now a widower, living on his own with a housemaid and a cook. He died on the 10th or 11th August 1890, at Rosella Place, Tynemouth.²

Children

Lucy Corder died at The Retreat, York, on the 26th July 1918.³

In 1874 Robert Spence Watson founded the Newcastle Liberal Association, of which he was president until 1897. After his father's death his family moved to Bensham Grove, where Robert and Elizabeth spent the rest of their lives. From 1864 to 1894 Robert pioneered the settlement of industrial disputes by arbitration. In the 1880s he campaigned for Irish Home Rule. From 1890 he



Harry Clapham, Mrs Etty Clapham and Ethel Clapham, apparently all photographed at the Hill, Witley, probably at Christmas 1882; from Sarah Batchelor

was President of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom. From 1890 to 1902 he was President of the National Liberal Federation. His obituary in *The Times* claimed that "Probably no man outside Parliament exerted a wider political influence than he did in those days". He took a prominent part in the Liberal Party's adoption of the radical Newcastle Programme. Robert was subsequently awarded honorary LL.D and DCL degrees, and in 1906 was made a member of the Privy Council. He died of bronchitis and heart failure on the 2nd March 1911, and his body was buried on the 5th in Jesmond Old Cemetery, Newcastle. The Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, sent Elizabeth the following message:

I deeply deplore the death of my old friend, who during so many years strove so devotedly for freedom and all high causes. His death is an irreparable loss to us, and I beg you and your daughters to accept our heartfelt sympathy.⁴

In 1901 Esther Mary Clapham was a widow, living at 5 Osborne Road, Jesmond, Newcastle, with three children, a sick nurse, a waiting maid, and a

¹ *The British Friend* June 1877 XXXV: 131, June 1880 XX: 160, June 1881 XXI: 141, 155–6, 160, 165, June 1883 XXIII: 127, 137, 148; *Shields Daily News* 18 December 1889; *Bootham School Register*.

² March ads in *The British Friend*; April ads in *The Friend* NS XIX; RG 11/5077 f65 p3; information from Peter Burns; *Bootham School Register*.

³ *The Friend* LVIII: 490, 2 August 1918.

⁴ *Oxford DNB*; Robert Spence Watson: *Caedmon: The First English Poet*. London: Longmans Green; *Reminiscences of Robert Spence Watson*; death certificate; 1881 census; Ward's *Directory of Newcastle & Gateshead*; LL.D certificate, TWAS DF.SPW Acc 4439/21; *The Scotsman*, 6 March 1911; Corder; other sources too numerous to itemize in this context.

housemaid. She died there on the 3rd December 1903.¹

William Joshua Watson married Frances Jane Fenwick McCallum on the 8th July 1875. He died of pleurisy at his residence, 4, Graingerville North, Newcastle, on the 7th January 1896, leaving his widow, three daughters, and a son. He was described at his death as “one of the best known seedsmen and florists in the North of England”. His body was buried at St Andrew’s Cemetery, North Road, the following Friday.²

In 1901 Emily Richardson was living at Tudor Lodge, Osborne Road, Jesmond, with her husband, a cook, waiting maid and housemaid. She died at Burley-in-Wharfedale, Yorkshire, on the 17th October 1913.³

Nellie Gurney was living with her husband and daughter at Carn Begg, Freshwater, Isle of Wight, in 1901. Over four months in 1916 she subscribed £20.0.0 to the Friends’ Ambulance Unit. She died very suddenly on the 12th October 1922, at the White House, Newcastle on Tyne.⁴

Gertrude Watson married John Wigham Edmundson at Newcastle on the 24th February 1875, and initially the couple lived at Rothbury, Fox Rock, Co. Dublin, before returning to Gateshead in the late 1880s. In the first decade of the 20th century they lived at 1 Shaftesbury Place, Gateshead. She died on the 4th October 1930.⁵

Grandchildren born after Joseph Watson’s death

Robert and Elizabeth Spence Watson had three further children: Mary, born at Moss Croft on the 7th February 1875; Bertha, born at Bensham Grove on the 18th May 1877; and Arnold, born at Bensham Grove on the 9th December 1879.⁶

Esther and Henry Clapham had one last child: Henry, born at North Ashfield, Newcastle, on the 9th April 1880.⁷

William Joshua Watson and his wife Fanny had four children: Muriel, born in Gateshead in 1877; Gladys Frances, born in Gateshead in January 1881; Leslie, born in 1882; and Esther, born in Newcastle in 1884.⁸

¹ RG 13/4781 f130 p7; *The Friend* XLIII:838.

² *The Friend* NS XV. August: 2245, XXXVI:48, 17 January 1896; *The British Friend* V February 1896:48; *Bootham School Register*; RSW volume of cuttings at Newcastle Central Library.

³ RG 13/4782 f172 p47; *The Friend* XLII: 256; *The Friend*.

⁴ RG 13/1033; *The Friend* 17 November 1916, supp: iv–viii, 20 Oct 1922, LXII: 740.

⁵ *The Friend* 1875–1930; *The British Friend* 1875–1903; RG 13/4760 f16 p23.

⁶ birth certificate; 1881 census; letters from Elizabeth Spence Watson to Mary Spence Watson (Pollard), now at TWAS; *The Friend*; Elizabeth Spence Watson: ‘Family Chronicles/Home Records’, and supplement; *Bootham School Register*.

⁷ *The Friend*; Sandys B. Foster (1890).

⁸ 1901 census.

Emily and Henry Richardson had one last child: Olive Mary, born on the 16th December 1881.¹

Nellie and Joseph Gurney had just one child: a daughter, Helen Mary, born on the 18th July 1874, at 11 Northumberland Terrace, Tynemouth.²

Gertrude and Johnnie Edmundson had six children: Herbert Watson, born on the 5th December 1875; Gertrude Mary, born on the 6th May 1877; John Edgar, born on the 22nd April 1879; Sarah Watson, born on the 11th November 1880; Cyril, born on the 2nd January 1883; and Eva Lucy, born on the 17th November 1888. All but Eva were born at Rothbury, Fox Rock, Dublin; Eva was born at 2 Claremont Park, Gateshead.³

Living descendants

There are believed to be at least 441 living descendants of Joseph and Sarah Watson, as at 2023.

¹ GRO index.

² Birth certificate.

³ *The Friend; The British Friend; Bootham School Register.*