

Humshaugh Churchyard Story

Names - Joseph Scott, Elizabeth Scott

Grave - To the south of the church, towards the east end.

Text on Grave - In loving memory of Joseph Scott, gardener, who died at Consett Station, March 31st 1883, aged 74 years.

Also of Elizabeth, his wife, who died at Humshaugh, January 29th 1871, aged 65 years.

According to census documents, Joseph Scott was born around 1809, in the parish of Longbenton. This was a large parish, so it is difficult to know his exact birthplace. A very faded census document suggests that, in 1851, he was working as an agricultural labourer at Chipchase Castle. With him were his wife, Elizabeth, and daughter, Jane, both of whom were born at Belford. The 1861 census shows Joseph in Humshaugh, working as the gardener to Mrs Evans at Simonburn Cottage. The Scotts will have lived in the house now known as Simonburn Lodge. Joseph and Elizabeth's only daughter, Jane, was now aged 12.

Little has been found about Elizabeth Scott, apart from the fact that her maiden name is likely to have been Wilkinson. She died on 29th January 1871, shortly before the census was taken. The family were still at Simonburn Lodge and the 22-year old Jane was now described as housekeeper. With them was a sister-in-law, Isabella Hall. By that time, Mrs Evans had died and Joseph had obviously been kept in post by the new occupants of Simonburn Cottage.

On 20th November 1875, Jane Scott married Gawen Reed, a farmer's son from Low Teppermoor, near Simonburn. The couple moved to Blackhill, in the Benfieldside district of Consett, although it is not clear when they did so. One presumes that Joseph Scott went with them. It has not been possible to find their entry on the 1881 census, possibly due to poor transcription, although the circumstances of Joseph Scott's death suggest that the family were already in the Consett area in 1881. Gawen appears to have worked for the Consett Iron Company in a clerical capacity and his move may have been prompted by two of his brothers having already moved to Blackhill. Because of the expansion of the ironworks, a huge community was growing up and the Reed brothers had seen the potential for the grocery trade. They ran grocery and greengrocery shops.

The burial book states that Joseph Scott died at Benfieldside, which would be the parish, and the text on the grave says that he died at Consett Station. Without further detail, we cannot take the latter statement literally. The small station at Blackhill was on the Derwent Valley line. Over the years, its name was changed several times, but, in 1883, it was known as Consett Station. The house occupied by Jane and Gawen Reed in 1891 was in Dixon Street, directly opposite the station. If they had lived in the vicinity in 1883, it is more than likely that Joseph Scott died at home, Consett Station being a descriptive term for that small area. Joseph's probate record confirms that he lived and died in the Benfieldside district.

