Stories from the shed:

The way we were

Bert Savage (2021)

Categories

Life events # *Story-teller's cultural background:* **English-Australian**

Urban/Rural # Sport/Recreation/Work # Migrant # Successes when not expected # Unexpected outcomes # Ad hoc/serendipitous events # Travel

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This set of verses and a story tells stories based on various incidents in the story-teller's life and family. He has researched his family history back to 1046, and the final three stories illustrate changes in values such as slavery, social hierarchy and societal structures more generally over time. The initial set of verses are based on Bert's own experiences and observations of relatives, work colleagues, and community family life and include as well, diverse incidents experienced as a migrant trying to survive in a new environment. They follow the genre of much bush-poetry common in many folk songs and tales.

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MOUNT GRAVATT MEN'S SHED Inc.

P.O Box 239
Mansfield Qld 4122
Phone: 07 3343 2216
Email: secretary@mtgravattmensshed.org.au
Web: www.mtgravattmensshed.org.au
Patrons: Right Rev. Dr Doug Stevens
Professor Grant Devilly
Dr Brian Kable

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Bert’s verses reflecting on the way we were

Whose hat is that?

A bloke in my age group about the same build,
with a quiet disposition and very strong willed,
like a young Humphrey Bogart but squarer of chin,
with a priceless white smile and a quick-witted grin.
A good-natured fellow there is no doubt of that,
but the thing I remember the most was his hat.

His hat was a beauty it was all up and down,
sort of loved yet abandoned, in four shades of brown.
All frayed at the edges with a sag in the brim,
and a tear in the crown where the air would get in.
Sun-faded and worn it was easy to see
by the dark line of sweat where the band used to be.

Fond memories get dimmer as time gets away
and names are the hardest of all I would say,
but I’ll let this elude me I’ve no fear of that,
because I will always remember my friend by his hat.

Magpies

In search of pastures greener was the trio's first intent.
To see the world for sixpence was the go.
Leave the city for the country, to earn a quid where e'er they went,
But the downside of this jaunt they didn't know.

Two days away on the second night they are out upon the track,
Night fell so fast they scarce had time to see
Looking for some place to rest, recover, hit the sack,
When across a right-hand ditch they saw a tree.

They dropped their packs down slowly on the scattered sticks and stones,
The gum trees shady branches covered wide,
their main concern this moment was to rest their weary bones,
unconscious of the danger there inside.

With groundsheets down and blankets on, discomfort mattered not,
Above them, leaves and branches sag and sway,
A score of roosting magpies who were always in this spot,
Would make their message clear by light of day.

Just hours before, our feathered friends had feasted, fit to burst,
They were never quite so fat or so well fed,
That day they dined on mulberry fruit, colour often cursed,
And twenty-four were perched above their bed.

Throughout the night the silent fall of flak from feathered foe
All dreams would end by dawn when they would see,
The message that the magpies left, bombarding all below.
They'd had their soft grey blankets dyed for free.

The years have made great changes to that track down Wagga way,
A highway now is running north and south,
But my memory's always constant, and I'm still as pleased to say,
That a blanket was then covering up my mouth.

The Ghost of Bunty Tom

With moonlight softly shining and country music whining,
Their Thursday Island pidgin made this moment very rare,
Sounds of *'On your pillow dreaming'* through the covered breezeway streaming,
There was no hope of sleeping, so I lay in silence there,
Some were black, some were brindle, some were married, some were single,
And they all worked there together, for a shilling on the rail.

Every Friday was their payday, and since Sat'day was a layday,
They would hold a big corroboree in the hut beside of mine,
With their drink and euca gameplay, and the guitar strummin', daresay
They could keep this magic moving, no matter who was disapproving,
Till the early hours of morning came to stop them with the light.

For hours I lay there thinking, while these fellows did their drinking,
Till the two-chord music faded and sweet slumber came at last.
In a while the bright moon lifted, through the window moonbeams shifted,
On my bed I felt something moving, and my slumber ended fast.
Since half my mind was sleeping, some adjustment here was needed,
So my eyes would get accustomed to the light the moonbeams cast.

With both eyes wide and staring, someone else my bed was sharing,
On the corner he was sitting, and his weight was on my leg.
I could see his white eyes glare glaring, I could hear his strong teeth grinding.
All my instincts now were screaming, and the blood rushed from my head.
But worse was yet to follow, as I lay there numb and hollow.
Thought I'd never see tomorrow, when I saw the knife he held.

Cold moonlit beams were gleaming, on the knife that he was holding,
And a thousand horror stories in a second filled my head.
Was my life's short chapter closing? Was my final scene unfolding?
Was this stranger's knife now to end my life?
In a flash the silence broken, by the words this fella spoken
"Gonna kill 'im. Gonna kill 'im. Ah'm gonna kill that Bunty Tom."

But Bunty's death would have to wait because in this fellow's drunken state,
He didn't know which hut to take, to end poor Bunty's life.
One final growl 'twix gritted teeth, he stood on slow unstable feet,

A staggered step towards the door and he melted in the night
I'm certain Bunty didn't die, against these odds he did survive,
Quiet moments see his ghost alive in the silence in my mind.

Fate smiled on me that starry night, those moonbeams through the shutters bright
Could have saved my skin, some might have said.
Bunty Tom was black and I was white, and this would show that starry night.
He changed his mind, sat on my bed, this movement woke me up instead.
The rest is in the words you've read, a moment set in time.

Sequel to Bunty Tom

If the future ever beckons with a finger hooked and cold,
Should he ask about a black man on the rail,
Just say he never left there, a part of him stayed on,
To wander through the dog spikes and the rails.
You'll find him in the moonlight where the rail huts used to be,
Its the dark and fleeting ghost of Bunty Tom.

Two fingers of Tobruk

Cyril in a railway town
With weathered face, would sit you down
And tell a yarn, he would explain,
That all was true, he'd naught to gain
his fingers couldn't lie.

His hands held out his fingers spread
Where once were 10 were eight instead,
With bitter tone was heard to say,
"I have served in Tobruk and was left this way
Held the grenade just a bit too long
And was lucky I didn't die."

The locals in that railway town
knew Cyril well, would only frown
when this sad tale I did recall, said,
"There's one that saw his fingers fall.
See Dot who owns the grocer's shop
when next you go to buy."

When shadows lengthened late that day,
down dusty street I made my way
past sweating horses loosely tied
outside the pub, the boss inside
was washing down a hard day's ride,
while the sun still held the sky

Just past the pub and to the right
Dot's grocer's shop came into sight.
Tall for a woman, hair touched with

grey,
her face quite lined but strong that way
"Can I help you, son?", what could I say,
the truth I had to find.

She listened while I told the tale
that Cyril told and didn't fail
to keep the facts both clear and sharp
As how Tobruk had left its mark
'neath those stormy foreign skies.

"I'll make my peace," she said at last
"With this man's sad and sordid past.
He never served on land or sea
but chopped up firewood here for me.
When he needed to get by
He never seemed to hold a job,
complained he couldn't save a Bob
and spent the lot on wine and beer,
and like as not would end up here
when e're his throat was dry."

She took me 'round to the gate out back,
where wood chips lay by the tall wood stack,
the block and axe, both stark and grey
Were reminders of a far-off day,
when Cyril learned the price He'd pay
and the loss he would never forget.

"He used to cut the wood for me,"
Explained old Dot, *"I'd give him tea,*
a meal, a bed, a drink when dry,
as long as he made the wood chips fly
but never money, we all knew why.
This lesson I learned for free."

About thirteen years back I recall
the morning that followed the *Country Ball,*
our man emerged from the bottom shed,
And last night's grog still filled his head.
He wanted more, that's what he said.
In Temper, fur would fly.

In rage he stood beside the block,
With axe in hand he screamed at Dot,
"A drink, a drink, I don't care what,
If not, I'll chop this digit off!"
And he held his finger high.
But Dot had heard these threats before,
She'd heard his lies and knew the score.
"You're mad." she said, *"go back to bed."*
She eyed him coldly and shook her head,
then turned to go inside

Cyril wounded by the stare,
with Axe on high, and holding there,
his hand upon the blue gum block
looked cold and white as if to mock
the words that he just said.

Too late to take these words away,
too late for thought, to late to pray,
as with lightning, night was day.
Where a hand had been, a finger lay
and Cyril down on the ground.

Dot rushed inside for the first-aid tin
with zinc and cream and bandage in.
But Cyril's temper killed the pain.
He'd got back on his feet again,
"I don't want help, I just want grog."
Again his hand was on the log.

He swung the axe, his teeth were clenched,
the blue gum block was a butcher's bench
the second one he severed was pale as snow.
Then blackness came to shield the blow
and Cyril buckled down.

A slight pause came 'twixt Dot and I,
And through the back shop window I watched the sky.
Her honest words now filled my head
with honest thoughts and truth, instead of coloured stories, formed through time,
to justify what's done.

The was silence broken when Dot spoke out,
"Was that all you came about?"
I said it was, and wished her well
She'd done him proud as I could tell.
I glanced once more, just one last look,
where Cyril's hand had found Tobruk.

Amato's Tomatoes

Frank Amato was a tomato grower. The business is still there in Leeton, but it wouldn't be Frank now, it would be one of his sons probably. At markets one still sometimes sees 'Amato's Tomatoes' on the side of his trucks.

When finances are slack in the dusty outback
one will do what one does when one's able,
because a buck is a buck when you're down on your luck,
and a job will put bread on the table

Amato's the name and tomatoes his game.
His arrival brought visions of plenty.
Four square meals a day, and a fistful of pay,
at the time would seem like heaven sent him.
"Pick anything red," 'least that's what he said.
"Don't split'em, smash'em or bruise'em,

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If you do it all right, I'm sure by tonight,
you'll be laughin' and eatin' and boozin'.

It had started okay in the cool of the day,
and our future seem perfectly sunny,
through work on the soil and our good honest toil,
we'd live high on the fruit of Frank's money.

By noon as it must, came the heat and the dust,
when each box that we picked just got harder.
Our five quid a day soon seemed oceans away.
Ten-bob might have been a good starter.

That slow-growing stack had no respect for *me* back,
and the sweat from my brow brought no profits,
when we picked up our pay on that hot summer's day
Frank's money fell short of his promise.

There's better I'm sure. One could work in a store.
Even pea-picking wouldn't be wasteful,
but I do it once more if 'me' back weren't so sore
for just two-bob a heaped Bushell case full.

5 boxes gave 10 shillings, 10 boxes a pound, thus 50 boxes would give us 5 pounds – a day's pay, and I thought that physicially impossible. That's picking tomatoes.

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A children's poem - Barney's tail

A storm was coming from the south, we should have seen the signs,
I should have known he might have gone and read between the lines
he barks and cries, makes such a fuss, and hates the Thunder's roar
the Lightning then is just too much, and it makes him bark much more.

The storm arrives, the rain comes down with a thunderous roar,
and Barney pulling on the rope has made his neck quite sore.

A sudden bang, a lightning bolt, the storm raged wild that night.
Old Barney now was terror struck could only think of flight.

He heaved and tugged upon the rope. His frightened cries no use.
But all the pulling on the rope had made the knot quite loose.
One final bang, too much, too loud, that final jerk,
head slipped the noose, and Barney's head was free.

He lept the fence, ran down the street. Loud thunder filled his Brain.
He couldn't see the blinding light, or feel that wind and rain.
All cold and wet, too tired to care old Barney plodded on.
He wondered if he would be missed, or if they'd know he'd gone.

Just then a break between the clouds, bright sunlight streaming through,
the storm had past, the rain was gone and the sky soon changed to blue.
Warm sunshine dried his cold wet coat and Barney's world was new.
He turned around and headed home, like all brave dogs would do.

Sometimes you'll hear this story told. It's a sad but happy tale.
It makes a dog prick up his ears and Barney wags his tail.

Somewhere in Arnhem

No entry in a ledger made to write a loss or pain.
No banner on a hilltop marks the spot that brave have lain.
No record kept, no fanfare played, no soldier's feet mark time.
No book of words, citations made, no reason and no rhyme.

Only one would keep the memory, and one would hear the cries.
One witness saw the stark despair that filled two honest eyes.
No choice, no hope, no logic, condemned without a crime.
No weapon used, just lost, confused, too young to do the time.

In one last treasured moment, no words could ever say
how brave and loyal was the heart beneath the red beret.
No medal struck, no epitaph, no noble words of praise,
just ripples marked the surface of a young man's watery grave.

Time has raised its hooded head, events once sharp and clear,
are dim and softly clouded, through the eyes of yesteryear,
My mother kept a memory in her heart that knows no age,
Her love is a purple flower, pressed in a yellowed page.

2463 words across all verses

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THE HANGING OF ARTHUR HODGE

Arthur William Hodge was a plantation farmer and member of the *British Virgin Island Council and Legislative Assembly*. On the 8th of May,1811 he was hung outside the prison in Road Town (the small town on the island of Tortola), for the murder of a slave from his plantation, named Prosper.

Arthur had been born on Tortola, and as a young man, had gone to England to be educated, studied at Oxford, and then served in the British Army. Later he married the sister-in-law of the *Marquess of Exeter*. After his fathers' death he returned to the Virgin Islands to assume control over the many plantations of his father.

He was born in 1763, so Hodge would have been forty-eight years old when the murder was committed, and he was brought to trial. Evidence at the trial suggested that Hodge had murdered many of his slaves before this one, but Prosper's death had been the first one to be reported.

The evidence presented said that he had previously caused the death of two brothers, Tom and Simon Boiler, who were whipped to death, along with another slave named Jupiter. He had also murdered two female slaves, Else and Margaret, by pouring boiling water down their throats. He also killed several children, thought to be his own offspring, by holding their heads under water until they lost consciousness, then reviving them, and then repeating the process. Hodge had over one hundred slaves on his plantations but after his wife later died there hadn't been enough slaves on his land to dig her grave.

The main evidence was given by a free woman-of-colour named Pereen Georges. She said that she was there when Prosper had picked up and eaten a mango that had dropped from a tree. Mr. Hodge said that Prosper should repay six shillings for stealing the mango, and that he would be flogged if he didn't pay. Six shillings was an enormous amount of money at

the time, and Hodge knew that the slave, Prosper, couldn't pay it. The slave prosper was then laid down on his face and belly, held down by four slaves, one holding each arm and each leg, and then whipped by another slave with a cartwhip for over an hour. After the beating he was carried up the hill to his hut and left there for the night.

The next morning Prosper went to the hut of the free slave woman, Pereen, and asked her if she could give him six shillings. She said that all she had was three shillings which she gave to him. Prosper took the three shillings to his master. Hodge had said it was not enough, and unless he received another three shillings by the morning, he would be flogged again.

The next morning Perreen was watching through the window of her hut while Prospers' weakened body was tied to a tree, and the flogging was repeated. She continued to watch until Prospers head fell back and he was rendered unconscious, at this point she turned away, unable to watch anymore. His unconscious body was cut down from the tree and some slaves carried him back to his hut where he would remain until he died, almost two weeks later.

Chief Justice Robertson was presiding, and it was remarked that Hodge had displayed some sadism in his actions, and a note of predetermination when he had refused to accept Prosper's willingness and attempt to pay.

The trial progressed over several days, George Knibbs (a slave trader, and relative of Bert Savage) and several other Planters from the islands were on the jury. A Richard Hetherington, the President of the Council of the Territory, and a Planter on Tortola, gave these profound closing remarks to the Jury. He said, *"The law makes no distinction between master and servant. God created white and he created black creatures; and as God makes no distinction in administering justice, and to him each is alike, you will not, nor can you, alter your verdict if murder is proved, whether on white persons or on black persons, the crime is equally the same with God*

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and the law."

On the 30th of April 1811, the jury retired at half past six in the morning to consider their verdict. By eight o'clock they returned with a verdict of, *"Guilty as charged",* and Hodge was allowed a week to *"make his peace with God."* He was hung in the street outside the prison in Roadtown, Tortola, on the 8th May 1811. Ironically, his body was buried very close to that of Prosper, the slave that he had murdered.

Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_William_Hodge

765 words

JOHN SAVAGE – the beginnings of nine generations named John

Sometimes, when researching family histories, it is easy to make mistakes when names carry on through generations, often in concurrent generations. This story illustrates the results of a tortuous tracking through records, with the earliest being located in England, in Cheshire, near the Lancashire border in the 14th century.

A satisfying aspect of understanding where one originates is that one also develops a personal link to sometimes memorable and significant events in history, so the stories of individual people carrying your DNA can be seen as having experienced and survived to carry the family heritage forward through tumultuous events still remembered as critical aspects of the past and impacting down through the ages to today.

The following story tracks the first of two Johns of nine of my ancestors named John, and includes the famous *Battle of Agincourt*, where the English changed the face of European warfare with the use of the English long bow as a weapon of war that, used with accurate volley fire against armoured cavalry, could defeat a superior force.

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The first John Savage of the nine

The wedding of John Savage and Margaret Danyers took place at the home of the bride. They were both fourteen years old, and for the first few months the newlyweds lived with Margaret's mother and father at *Cheadle Hall*. Afterwards, they moved temporarily into a large Manor house in Lancashire called *Bradshaw Hall,* while waiting for Margaret's parents to build them a home of their own near Cheadle. The manor house at Bradshaw had been an earlier acquisition by the Savages and a small part of it still survives today, although it is now greatly reduced in size and operates solely as a farm. The couple lived at *Bradshaw Hall* for two or three years, and while they were there, their first two children were born. When the new Manor House in Clifton was close to completion they returned to Chester with their two small children. They named their new home *Clifton Hall*, and it was here that the rest of their fourteen children were born.

The second John Savage of the nine

Their first son, John (who was born at *Bradshaw*) of John and Margaret Savage, became John number two. He was born around 1370, and at the age of twelve he was enlisted into the military. His father, also a military man, wanted his eldest son to do the same as he had done. John was then trained to be a mounted knight in the King's army. He took to his training like a duck to water. He had the correct disposition and character for a lifetime of soldiering, and it would show from the start that he was destined to go a long way.

He graduated from junior, into senior training three years at the age of fifteen and completed full training four years later to become a *Senior Mounted Knight.* He had learned all the skills of horse-riding, warfare and weapons, plus he possessed that natural ability which is sometimes necessary to become a very good soldier. One extremely important skill he

had learned was how to ensure his own self-preservation through chivalric rules of engagement, without this, his seven years of training in combat, like '*lists'* mounted lance *jousting* competition, could have easily become a complete waste of time.

When John was in the latter stages of his training, he became attached to a troop of soldiers that served under the *Earl of Huntingdon*, and a tournament was taking place at this time in France. It was being held during a lull in the fighting in a town named Inglevere, near Calais. The *King of France* was present, and many English knights had crossed the channel to take part in the friendly jousting. A writer was present at the tournament, and he wrote quite a vivid account of the games. It was written in old English and went something like this….

Ref:

"It was on a Wednesday, a day as fine as the previous one. The English had crossed the sea on that day with their horses and rode into the lists at the appointed time, much to the delight of the French who rejoiced to see them. It was not long after their arrival that an English squire, a good tilter called John Savage, a squire of honour and one of the body of the Earl of Huntingdon*, was sent to touch the shield of* Sir Reginald de Roye*. The knight answered him and was ready and willing to satisfy him.*

When he had mounted his horse, buckled on his helmet, and his lance had been given to him, they both set off at full gallop, and gave such blows on the targets that, had their lances not broken, one, or both, must have fallen to the ground. The course was both handsome and dangerous, but the knights received no hurt. The points of their lances were clear through the targets and had slipped off the side of their armour. The spears had broken almost a foot from the shaft; the points remaining in the targets, and the shafts were left lying on the ground."

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John had been born in the reign of *Richard-the-second*, and he and his brothers and sisters spent their childhood and youth in Cheshire at their new home of Clifton Hall. He was one of sixteen children, two died in infancy, and fourteen survived. Families with the Savage surname were now becoming increasingly numerous, not just in England, but also in Ireland, where the families of Geoffrey de Sauvage had settled over two hundred years before. Although until now, most of the offspring from the Savages had grown up in the counties of Derbyshire, Cheshire and Lancashire, but in the near future, the family tree would send down strong roots a little further north, in the Yorkshire Dales.

Following his graduation to *Senior Knight,* John was to marry an eighteen-year-old girl named Maude Swynnerton, and whilst they were still living at *Clifton Hall* in Cheshire, their family of seven children were born.

His wife Maude (sometimes called Matilda) had quite an interesting childhood. When she was about eight years old her father and a man named *Sir Humphrey Peshale* were charged with the crime of *'the underage marriage of little Matilda*' for their personal monetary gain. By the time their crime was discovered, and the two men were charged, the dowry had already been arranged and ratified, and the exchange of property and land had been signed and sanctioned by both parties. In due course the courts found Swynnerton and Peshale guilty as charged and they both paid a hefty fine. Afterwards the case was closed.

Despite the illegality of their actions, the guilty verdict given, and the fines that followed, eight-year-old Maude apparently, still belonged to Humphrey Peshale as per the previous agreement and signed contract, and she had continued to live with Peshale for the next ten years. She would only be released from this marriage bond when she turned eighteen. When she was eventually released, she married John Savage and they had their seven children, five boys and two girls, their names were, John, William,

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George, Arnold, Rodger, Maude and Margaret.

When John was around the age of forty-six, his long successful military career was nearing its end. Every new day was appearing to be a day closer to his retirement. He had decided that his next battle, whenever or wherever it was, would be his last. John later discovered that his next battle would not only be his last, but it would be the most memorable and decisive battle of his entire military career, the *Battle of Agincourt*.

BATTLE OF AGINCOURT

On the 25th of October 1415 two armies faced each other on the meadows and farmland of France, about a mile from the town of Agincourt. The two opposing armies of England and France were nervously waiting for the start of the battle. *King Henry V* was on horseback moving through his troops, giving encouragement and support wherever he could. From what he could see at this point, his small army appeared to be, hopelessly, outnumbered by the French.

Not only were the French troops greater in number, they also had considerably more power and strength in their armoured divisions. Their foot soldiers were protected with half armour, and carried pikes, swords and shields. The French Horse soldiers, both man and horse, also were wearing part armour. Their mounted Knights were totally armoured from head to toe, even their horses were covered with steel plate and chain mail for their protection.

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King Henry's army of English soldiers never had the benefits of heavy armour or modern weaponry, although it could be seen that he did have a good strong troop of bowmen. The bowmen only carried a longbow, a quiver full of arrows, and a sword, most of them didn't even have uniforms, or shoes on their feet. His other divisions were also lightly clad, his foot soldiers wore only basic leather armour, and carried pikes and swords. The mounted Knights were dressed in half armour or chain mail for protection. Just a few of the more outstanding Knights having the protection of full armour.

Unbeknown to *King Henry* at the time, this weight imbalance would prove later prove to be a huge advantage to the English troops later. But right now, despite these obvious setbacks, the two armies faced each other some five-hundred metres apart, waiting for the flags of war to be raised.

The battlefield had been chosen by the French, and consisted mainly of low-lying fields and meadows, its location was just outside the town of Agincourt in central France. The farmer from a nearby farm had recently ploughed some of his fields in preparation for the coming spring, and it appeared to the King that one of the nearby meadows could have been just a little swampy.

Four mounted Knights were sitting astride their horses and quietly contemplating the scene before them, no doubt pondering the ultimate outcome of the battle. Possibly drawing courage of sorts, from the nearness of their comrades. The knights were: *Sir John Southworth*, who came from the town of Rufford in Lancashire, *Sir John Pilkington,* from Haughton Hall near Preston in Lancashire, *Sir John Markenfield*, from Markenfield castle near Otley in the Yorkshire Dales, and John Savage from Clifton in Cheshire. All these men had been loyal friends for many years, and each of them would play a major role in the coming battle.

The winter rains had come early that year, beginning some five weeks

before, first as light showers, but later becoming heavier and more persistent. A week or so before the battle the weather had further deteriorated, and since then, it had rained day and night. The 25th of October dawned, and the morning sky was cold and grey, more storms had developed promising more rain and conditions didn't look like improving any time soon.

Above the battlefield the sky was becoming dark and threatening, and intermittent heavy rain began to fall. Battle lines were drawn, horses and men were ready. A flag was raised high at the front of the French lines and the English army responded. The two enemy forces began to move toward each other.

During the first hours of fighting, the armies seemed hopelessly locked in battle, see-sawing backwards and forwards across a saturated and swampy battlefield. Soon, the newly ploughed fields turned to mud. The heavy torrential rain continued to fall, as squally storms swept across the meadows.

The feet of thousands of soldiers, and the hooves of a thousand heavily laden horses, soon had a very negative effect on the unstable battlefield. It became a quagmire, the mud becoming ever deeper. Ankle deep, knee deep, and in the swampy parts, waist deep. The tide of war, which at the start was in favour of the French, began to turn in favour of the lighter clad English army.

The heavily laden French knights began sinking into the mud, and the armoured foot soldiers fared no better, they couldn't make any headway at all. If a French knight became dismounted, he stayed where he fell, hopelessly stuck, and unable to get back onto his feet to remount, and even if he did, his horse still remained stuck in the mud beside him.

Without the armour to weigh them down, the English troops remained

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more buoyant, their horses had more manoeuvrability, and the bowmen literally had a field day. Arrows rained down upon what was an almost stationary French army. For the bowmen of Kendall and the Yorkshire Dales who at the time had the reputation of being the best in the country, victory was not far away. Mother nature had been on the side of the English troops, and with her help on the day, the soldiers of *Henry V* defeated a French army four times its size. The English troops also wreaked havoc on wounded French, and it was said that chivalry died that day.

Undoubtedly, this was a victory for England that would never be forgotten. When the flag of victory was raised, and the soldiers still on the battlefield, John Savage was personally knighted by the sword of *King Henry V*, for the bravery that he had shown during the battle. Afterwards John quietly rode from the battlefield accompanied by his three knightly friends. He was now their equal with the title of *Sir*.

Reference: http//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Savage_(soldier)

2077 words

A tragic accident

In the first six years of her marriage to Robert Savage, Celia Grace gave birth to three little boys, their names were, James Burnham Savage, Joseph Nibbs Savage and the youngest was Robert William Savage. They had given the boys some of the names of their forbearers. After the wedding they lived at 37 Russell St. Preston. Very soon Robert changed his job from a mechanic to a rear-guardsman on the Railways. After this, Celia's mother Elizabeth, now a widow, had left their house in Lancaster and moved in with them at No 37.

Robert's father, John, who had also started his working life as a mechanic at thirteen years old was working in the mills around Goosenagh near Preston. In later years he would progress somewhat and by the time he was fifty he was living in a brand-new house in Caton near Kendal, now a Bobbin Manufacturing

Agent and employing four men.

Living with John at his Caton address was his wife Mary Monks, her nephew William Monks, who was an eighteen-year-old apprentice bobbin setter employed by John, as well as another apprentice and two servants.

Five years later John was still managing his bobbin making business but had now moved on even further. He was now dabbling in the buying and selling of second-hand cotton mills around the district of Caton and Littledale.

Six months after the death of Betsy Harrison, on 5th December 1866, John had purchased a small cotton mill named *'Bobbin Mill'*. It was at Cross Gill in Littledale near Kendal. It would require a bit of tidying up and some cleaning, and the loom machinery needed a bit of maintenance, apart from this it was good enough to go up for sale.

A few weeks later, on a Saturday morning John had arranged for his son Robert, and two others, to come along to the mill to give him a hand with the clean-up. Robert's wife Celia hadn't long given birth to their youngest child Robert Nibbs Savage, even so was more than happy for her husband to assist his father. Robert had mechanical experience from when he was younger, and this of course would be a big advantage. Everything was good, John had his willing helpers, and they were all set to start work.

Everything went well throughout the morning, John and Robert and the two men were working in various parts of the mill. When lunch was finished, everyone was again busy once more in the preparations of the mill. The two men were in a side room cleaning and tidying. Robert's father, John, was somewhere in the back of the mill, taking care of other things, and Robert was in the main body of the mill, servicing and checking out the machinery and the many rows of looms (machines with hundreds of spinning 'bobbins' of cotton on top of them).

The power of the mill came from a waterwheel which was beside the mill. This wheel turned at a controlled speed by the flow of water in the water race which ran beneath it. This was then passed through a series of gears, belts and levers until eventually it turned a large drive shaft which ran above the looms. The drive shaft was at a height of approximately nine feet above the looms. The

belts and pulleys ran from it and worked the looms.

On the inside of the mill, beside the waterwheel was a large lever that controlled the power, taking it 'off' and putting it 'on' as necessary. Under normal circumstances when the mill was in operation, a man would have the position of 'power operator'. He would remain fairly close to this lever and all the power that came into the mill would be his responsibility.

The wooden drive shaft was about thirteen inches across, and when it was linked to the water wheel it turned at one revolution per second, or sixty times per minute. Every twelve feet along the entire length of the shaft was a series of large metal bushes. Robert was currently on a gantry walkway greasing these bushes. As he worked along the shaft, he came across one of the bushes that wouldn't accept the grease. Currently the power lever was in the 'on' position and the shaft was spinning whilst he was putting the grease into the bushes (normal procedure). He soon realized that part of the faulty bush would have to be removed, cleaned and replaced.

Unbeknown to Robert at the time, during previous years a wooden peg had been driven into the drive-shaft close to the location of this particular bush. During later years, the peg had broken off and most of it was now gone, but there was still a piece of the peg, probably about one and a half inches long, protruding from the shaft. To remove the faulty bush, it was necessary for Robert to reach across the spinning shaft.

It was the month of December, close to Christmas, and a very cold Winter's day. Robert was dressed accordingly and was wearing his heavy topcoat inside the mill to keep out the cold. As Robert reached across the spinning shaft the inevitable happened, the broken peg caught onto his overcoat and within seconds Robert was dead.

The two men in the other room heard his initial cry and then silence. They quickly rushed into the main part of the mill to see what was going on. What they saw when they entered the machine room would remain in their memory for the rest of their lives. Roberts' body was being flung around at a terrible speed; his entire body was smashed to pieces. Nothing could have saved him once the peg had hooked onto his coat.

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One of the men rushed across to disengage the power lever while the other one ran to find Robert's father John, to tell him the heartbreaking news. He eventually found John on the other side of the mill, and told him as carefully as anyone could, that there had been a terrible accident and that his son Robert was involved. The two of them then ran across to the machine room in the interior of the mill.

The room was now eerily silent, the water wheel was disconnected, and the large wooden drive shaft was now very still. John saw his son's broken body hanging from the drive shaft. Within seconds he was overcome with shock. He tried to speak but not a sound came through his lips, then gave a terrible scream of desperation, which said much more than he could have ever said in words. A moment later John became unsteady on his feet, his legs began to buckle, and he collapsed in a heap on the floor of the mill. The men that were with him desperately looked for help. They also were in severe shock. One said that he would go outside to find help, the other one watched over John and waited until he recovered.

That 1866 early December day of the accident, Robert's father, John, had a complete mental and physical breakdown, the sudden loss of his son was more than his mind would accept, and he never recovered by the day he died. Some weeks after the event, the *Lancaster Gazette* produced a full written report on the inquest and the compensation claim.

The court had concluded that the evidence as it was presented, *"pointed towards shared negligence on the part of both parties. John Savage, the father, for not showing due care to the welfare of those working on his behalf, and negligence on the part of the previous owner of the mill where the unfortunate accident had taken place. Because of this, they said that there wasn't a case for compensation of any kind."*

Robert's father was never the same man again and he was to carry the blame for his son's death to his grave. Celia Grace had lost her husband and only support (she never married again) and was left without a penny to her name, without a home to live in, and she with three little boys to feed and clothe.

If it hadn't been for other family members, Celia Grace and her children would

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have gone the way Robert Savage in Blackburn had gone some years before and she would have died in the workhouse. Celia Grace was my great grandmother, and her husband Robert, was my great grandfather.

Surely the phrase, *"perseverance in the face of adversity,"* was coined in those terrible years of poverty, hunger and hardship that had occurred in Britain throughout most of the late Georgian and the Victorian era. The hopeless lives of the millions of children that Robert Baden Powell had spoken of, when speaking to Frederick Russell Burnham in the 1890's, was certainly a terrible indictment of the times.

Reference source: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/search/results/1866-01-06?NewspaperTitle=Lancaster%2BGazette&IssueId=BL%2F0000488%2F18660106%2F&County=Lancashire%2C%20England

Various census documents of the time were also accessed to show ancestral relationships.

1482 words

Total 7442 words in this publication.

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