



Early Life

William Pickering was born in Newhall, Derbyshire, he was baptised at St Peter's church, Stapenhill on the 13th December 1818. His parents were William (a collier) and Sarah.

William married Sarah Gooch, daughter of collier Samuel Gooch, on the 17th September 1837 at St John the Baptist church, Whitwick. It has not been possible to find out more about the Gooch family. Some researchers believe the marriage certificate was wrong and that William actually married Sarah Goacher, daughter of collier Samuel Goacher, it has not been possible to prove this one way or the other. William and Sarah had six children:

- Francis 1838-1914 (coal miner moved to Nottinghamshire then Donington le Heath)
- William 1840-1915 (also present at the Califat flooding incident, see separate life story).
- Ann 1843-1924 (married Swannington coal miner Charles Henry Kirk, moved to Church Gresley, as a widow moved to Hugglescote).
- John 1848-1912 (married Caroline Clay in Coalville, coal miner living Swannington and Coleorton until 1880, moved to Hucknall Torkard).
- Mary 1850 (not traced yet)
- Samuel 1855-1926 (coal miner, living in Belmont Terrace (next to the Bull's Head), Main Street, Swannington and grandfather of Swannington Wesleyan Sunday School Teacher Kath James (nee Pickering)).

Death of wife Sarah Gooch 1857

Sarah died aged 38 and was buried at Coalville on the 22nd October 1857. William was thus left to bring up six children aged two to 19 years. Ann, the oldest daughter was 14 years old, an age when she would have been helping her mother. But running the house and looking after the youngest children would have been too much for her. William would have arranged for some form of domestic support from a relative, neighbour or hired servant.

Marriage To Charlotte Ward (nee Brooks) 1858

William married Charlotte Ward about a year after Sarah's death. Charlotte had a young son, Benjamin Ward 1853-1890 (became a cabinet maker then furniture dealer in Church Gresley).

In 1841 Charlotte Brooks was lodging with Whitwick publican Ann Howe. In February 1842 Charlotte married her host's son, Richard Howe an innkeeper. Richard became landlord of the Bull's Head in Ashby de la Zouch. He was there in September 1848 and died there, being buried at Whitwick on the 6th April 1849.

Charlotte moved back to Whitwick and on the 5th May became landlady of the Waggon and Horses at Whitwick. In October 1849 Charlotte married butcher Charles Ward and the licence transferred to him. Charles was buried at Whitwick on the 31st July 1857.

In the autumn of 1858 Charlotte married William Pickering, which accounts for William being described as a coal miner and licensed victualler at the Waggon and Horses, Whitwick on the 1861 census. The license was transferred to a Mrs Benson in May 1862.



Califat Flooding 1863

The Loughborough Monitor Thursday 19th November 1863 reported on the resumed inquest:

Josiah After the jury had been sworn the first witness called was William Pickering, who said: I am bailiff at the Califat and California Pits, and have been so for four months. I was on duty on the morning of the accident, the 8th ult. I was in the stall No 8 at three o'clock in the morning of the 7th of October. All the men were then at work. There was not any perceptible issue of water; the pit was just the same as before - in good working order. I did not hear of anything during that day.

On the morning of the 8th ult., about three o'clock, I again went on duty in the pit, and at half-past four o'clock, in the course of my duty, I went into No 8 stall. I met William Wilton, late deputy, who said "I want you to go in No 8 stall." I said, "What's the matter?" He said "There is a little water." I asked him "How much?" He replied, "Not a vast deal."

We went together to the stall. When we got there there were Newbury and Harvey holeing at the far end. I asked them what they were doing, and they said they were finishing a "stint." I told them to "knock off" (give over) because the water was coming in at the bottom, from the back of the hole. It was coming in at the nigh ends and fast heads. There was not a deal of water coming in then; it was trickling down. I told them to set some spraggs against the wall, and they did so, and I brought the man away with me, and went and fetched the master, Mr Lewis. It was about half-past six o'clock when I got to Mr. Lewis's house, which is about a mile from the colliery; Mr. Lewis is the manager. I told him that water had come into the stall, and that I should like him to go with me to look at it.

He went with me, and when we got there we met Thomas Bird (the corporal), a little distance before we got to the stall. He turned back with us. When we got there we agreed to have the crevice packed up with timber. The water was then coming through rather faster. Bird said "We have had worse jobs than this, if you send me two or three shift men we shall soon make it right." So we all left, and Bird said, "I'll take the two men out of this stall (No 2). They have no coals to go on with." Those men were Josiah Hibbert and George Wright. Bird then said, "I'll go and begin it if you and the master will send me two or three more men."

I went up to Mr. Lewis about a quarter-past 7 o'clock, and sent for some men from their homes. I met them at the pit, and went down with them about a quarter-past eight o'clock. We (three others beside myself, Wm. Misson, Wm Wilton, and Parkinson) went to the stall together, followed by Mr. Lewis who overtook me just before I got to the stall.

We walked up to the head or stall, and found the men carrying out our orders, Jeremiah Rose was also there. Mr. Lewis and I had sent him from the carpenter's shop to assist in sawing spraggs. We then began to help the men in packing timber and stone against the wall. We had been at it about a quarter of an hour, and Bird said, "We'll have two or three longer spraggs, and set them to the top." He set them, and said "We shall soon get master of it now." The water had abated for a few minutes, but it increased to its original rapidity.



Mr. Lewis left us there at about half-past nine o'clock; he did not return again as he had not time. Then we thought we had got the stall secure, we had finished what we intended doing with the exception of setting up two or three spraggs. While they were setting those, at about half-past nine o'clock the water broke through where it had previously been trickling through.

Bird, who was in the gate road hastened to me and told me it was breaking. I told all to make haste out. They all got towards the way head, and all lights went out at once. I don't know what made them go out. When I got six or seven yards from the way head I fell down, and Bird passed me. Rose was down the gate road the last time I saw him. After I fell I passed a horse and got to the bottom and was brought up by Mr. Hadley.

I have been connected with collieries for 39 years. I have assisted in the management of the Whitwick pits for five years, and came from there four months ago. They are more extensive than these pits. I act under the instructions of Mr. Lewis. I have two deputies, one for day and one for night, at the Califat pit. I have the same number for the California pit. The pits are not left either day or night without some one in charge. I go on between three and four o'clock in the morning. I then go round the waggons and stalls in both pits. We have twelve stalls in the Califat pit, and four in the California.

I have seen water coming into several of the stalls in the Califat pit. The water always came through the breaks, - in the same way as it did in No 8. I knew there were old workings about there, and that we were driving towards them.

We had put bore holes in several stalls, in No 2 for one. We put them in as far as twenty yards in advance. We bored a hole in No 2 and that stall was "knocked off" (the working of it stopped) with a bore hole twelve yards in advance. It was about nine or ten weeks before the accident that we knocked off at that stall.

We had No 14 stall adjoining and following up No 2. The face of that was 52 yards from the back of the bore hole in No 2. No 8 stall was five yards and a half behind No 14 stall that made the stall 48 yards further back than the bore hold in No 2, The hole was bored in No 2 when I went to the colliery. We carried the stall a dozen or fourteen yards further before we stopped.

We have not had a bore hole in either No 14 or No 8 stalls. I did not know that one was required, as I thought No 2 stall having gone 58 yards further with the bore hole, that we had 58 yards of coal before us for the present, in both No 8 and 14 stalls. I had not had any talk to Mr. Lewis or any one about putting in bore holes.

The Tuesday before the accident happened I asked Mr. Lewis if the two stalls were all right. He said they were. Old Clements never did ask me, a fortnight before the accident, whether I was going to put a bore hole in; he did speak about one on the morning of the accident, when he said, "I thought of asking you about a bore hole before, but it slipped my memory." I am not restricted about material of any kind; I have what I want.



By a Juror: The boy Clements was with Bird and Rose; he was holding a candle there. There was nothing the matter with the stall on the morning before the accident to cause the least suspicion. By Mr. Hedley (the Inspector): - It always has been a wet stall, and we frequently had water there. It was no worse than No 2 and No 14 stalls. The reason we set the spraggs to in the crevice in No 8 was because it seemed to be a break. We did not decide upon doing that until Mr. Lewis came. The water that came through the crevice did not smell, but seemed stagnant or old. I never hear Walton express any alarm about the state of the stall.

Move from Whitwick Colliery to Coleorton Colliery

William Pickering's inquest evidence included

- *I am bailiff at the Califat and California Pits, and have been so for four months.*
- *I have assisted in the management of the Whitwick pits for five years, and came from there four months ago.*

The previous bailiff or overman, Robert Lakin, had left after operating the winding engine to raise two men in May, which led to the death of John Hutchinson. William was thus appointed bailiff around July 1863.

Although the distance from Whitwick to the two Coleorton Colliery pits would have been acceptable for coal miners, it would probably have been too far for the bailiff who would have needed to live closer at hand.

Later Life

At some stage William moved to Peggs Green. His daughter Ann was married at St George's church in 1865 and her residence was Thringstone, which almost certainly means Peggs Green.

William, his wife Charlotte and youngest son, 16 year old Samuel, were at Peggs Green in 1871. Three of his other children were living nearby:

- William lived in Peggs Green in 1871 and continued living there until moving to Olga Terrace on Loughborough Road (now Swannington) where he died 1915.
- John lived in Main Street, Swannington in 1871.
- Ann was living in Peggs Green with her husband Charles Henry Kirk.

In 1871 William Pickering was described as a coal miner, it is possible that he was still the bailiff of Coleorton Colliery, it is believed limited production continued at the Califat coal mine until 1873.

In 1881 Charlotte was living in Hugglescote, but William was missing from the census and has yet to be traced. William was buried at Hugglescote on the 22nd April 1884 and Charlotte on the 29th November 1887.