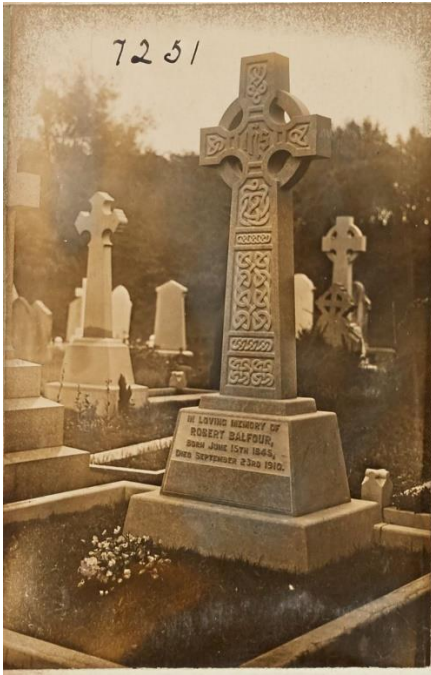


7251 Robert Balfour d 23 September 1910



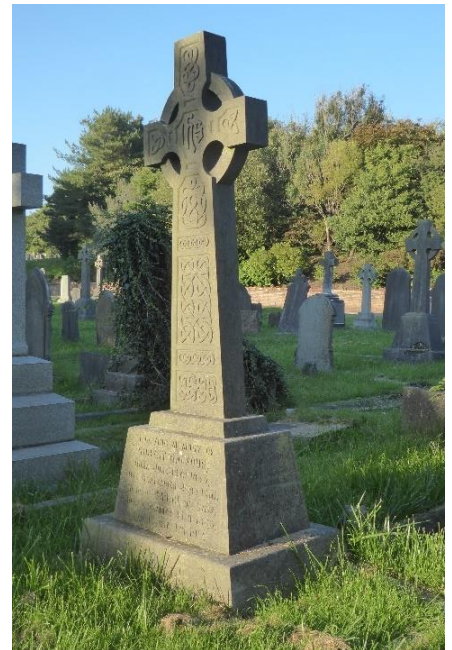
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
ROBERT BALFOUR
BORN JUNE 15TH 1845,
DIED SEPTEMBER 23RD 1910.

To which has been added:

ALSO **SARAH** HIS WIFE,
BORN DECEMBER 25TH 1845,
DIED AUGUST 4TH 1917.

On the right hand side is a commemoration of his son, Major Robert Wilson Balfour, who died in France in 1918 after an operation, and who has a separate page on this website:

<https://furnessstoriesbehindthestones.co.uk/stories/balfour-robert-wilson/>



In the **1851 Census** Robert Balfour was living with his parents and siblings at Highfield House, Pemberton, Lancs. The full household was William Balfour (36) Book Keeper, born Haigh, Lancashire; wife Margaret Balfour (29) born Caton, Lancs; Thomas Balfour (7) Scholar, born Preston, Lancs; Robert Balfour (5) Scholar, born Manchester, Lancs; Mary Balfour (3) born Chorley, Lancs; and William Balfour (1) born Pemberton, Lancs. *Looking at the places of birth, the family seem to have moved frequently, and it is unusual for a family who appear to be living in the "Big House" not to have live-in servants.*

Margaret Wilson née Wilson was born 25 November 1822 and baptised 29 December 1822. Father William Wilson is listed as a Wheelwright. Mother's name Mary Wilson. Wilson became Robert's son's middle name.

Robert has left his birth family by the time of the **1861 Census**. He is living at Ash House, Caton, Lancs with the family of Robert Townson (57) Miller and Landed Proprietor employing 2 men and 1 boy, born Bolton, Lancs. His wife is Nancy Townson (47) born Caton. There are a number of children: Catharine A. Townson (15) Daughter, Scholar, born Caton; Lydia C. Townson (13) Daughter, Scholar, born Caton; James H. C. Townson (11) Son, Scholar, born Caton; Mary Townson (26) Step-daughter, Landed Proprietor, born Caton; Elizabeth J. Townson (22) Step-daughter, Landed Proprietor, born Caton; and Robert Balfour (15) Nephew, Miller, born Manchester. *Nancy Townson was born Nancy Wilson, and was Robert Balfour's mother's older sister, born 14 February 1814.*

As anyone researching family histories will know, there are countless opportunities to dive down rabbit holes. Here I wanted to know who Nancy Townson was, but found a question that I couldn't answer:

Nancy Wilson, father William Wilson, married John Townson at St. Mary's, Lancaster 15 August 1833. John Townson was a widower of 40+ years, and Nancy only 19 at the time of her first marriage. John Townson (59) and Nancy Townson (28) and Mary (7), William (4) and Elizabeth (3) Townson were living at Ash House, Caton, in the **1841 Census**. This would make John Townson's birth year c1782. He was buried on 22 August 1843 aged 61.

John Townson, son of Richard and Elizabeth Townson, was baptised at Caton on 28 December 1781.

The same Nancy Townson, widow, father William Wilson, joiner, married Robert Townson, Yeoman, father James Townson, Yeoman on 12 June 1845 in Caton. Robert Townson, son of James Townson, Farmer, (Bolton – *probably Bolton-le-Sands* - RMW) was born July 27 1803 and baptised at Tatham Fells on 24 August 1803.

Did she marry her brother-in-law when she was widowed? There must be some relationship, since she is living at Ash House in both the 1841 and 1861 Censuses.

WILLIAM BAILIE,
COAL MERCHANT,
LANCASTER AND BARROW-IN-FURNESS.

THE best qualities of Orrell, Pemberton, Inco, Wigan, Hindley, Blackrod, and Welsh COALS, COKE, CANNEL, BURGAY, and SLACK at the lowest prices of the day.

The trade and large consumers contracted with for time or quantity.

Wagon loads delivered at any station at whole-sale prices.

Terms and prices post free on application to Mr. Robert Balfour, Railway Coal Depot, No. 1, Barrow-in-Furness, or to Mr. Bailie, Alfred-street, Coal Office, Lancaster.

In the **1871 Census** Robert Balfour is back living with his birth family on Winstanley Road, Pemberton. The household is William Balfour (54) Book Keeper, born Wigan. Lancs; wife Margaret Balfour (47) born Caton; Robert Balfour (25) Coal Agent, born Manchester; Meary (sic) Balfour (23) no occupation recorded, born Chorley; Dorothea (sic) Balfour (19) no occupation recorded, born Pemberton; Edward Balfour (17) Fitter in Iron Foundry, born Pemberton; John Balfour (13) Scholar, born Pemberton; David Balfour (11) Scholar, born Pemberton; Margaret Balfour (8) Scholar, born Pemberton; Jane Alice Balfour (2), born Pemberton; and Ellen Balfour (2) born Pemberton.

Advert (left) from the *Barrow Herald and Furness Advertiser* 18 January 1869.

Although living in Pemberton he had already established a business in Barrow, selling coal from Wigan, Pemberton and the surrounding coalfield.

Robert Balfour married Sarah Ann Hargreaves in the Parish Church, Kendal on the 22 February 1872.

By the **1881 Census** they are at 52 East Mount, Barrow-in-Furness. Robert Balfour (36) Coal Agent, born Manchester lives with wife Sarah A. Balfour (35) born Kendall (sic), Westmorland; and Sarah A. Howard (26) General Servant (Domestic), born Staffordshire.

They are still at the same address at the **1891 Census**. Robert Balfour (46) is now listed as a Coal Merchant, and there are three children: George B. Balfour (5) Scholar, born Barrow; Dora E. B. Balfour (4) born Barrow; and Robert W. Balfour (3) born Barrow. Cumbria BMD tells us that the B. is Boyd. There are also three servants: Maria Tonks? (30) Nurse, Domestic Servant, born Wellington, Salop; Mary Holmes (20) General Domestic Servant, born Kendal, Westmorland and (presumably) her sister, Margaret Holmes (13) General Domestic Servant, born Kendal, Westmorland.

In the **1901 Census**, still at 52 East Mount, Barrow, are Robert Balfour (55) Coal Merchant, born Manchester; S. A. Balfour (55) born Kendal, Westmorland; Dora Balfour (14) born Barrow; Robert Balfour (13) born Barrow; Norman Balfour (7) born Barrow; Elizabeth Evans (24) Housemaid, born Liverpool, Lancs; and Amelia Evans (16) General Servant (Domestic), born Barrow.

Robert Balfour's death was not only reported locally e.g. *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* 26 September 1910 reported: Mr. R. Balfour, of Chetwynde, Barrow-in-Furness, died very suddenly on Friday night. He had suffered from Angina pectoris, and he was found lying dead in his carriage drive after supper. He was 65 years of age, was for many years a member of the old Barrow School Board, and was also a magistrate.

Locally, the *Barrow News* 1 October 1910 reported:

DEATHS OF PROMINENT BARROVIANS (X3)

MR. R. BALFOUR, J.P.

GOES FOR A WALK AND DROPS DEAD

We very much regret to announce the death of Mr. R. Balfour, J.P., of "Chetwynde", Abbey-road, Barrow, which occurred with painful suddenness on Friday night week (sic)

The deceased gentleman was in his usual health during the day, having attended to his business, and was in very good spirits. About ten on Friday evening went out on to the front of the house for a stroll and he was not seen again alive. He evidently having had a sudden seizure and expired immediately.

He was found lying on the ground by one of his sons, and seemed to be dead then. The deceased gentleman was 66 years of age. He had for many years carried on a successful business as a coal merchant. Mr. Balfour was one of the oldest inhabitants of the borough, and was a member of the Barrow School Board for 21 or 22 years, whilst he had been a member of the Borough Bench since 1893. He leaves a widow, three sons, and one daughter to mourn his loss.

The late Mr. Balfour was a regular attendant at the Christ Church United Methodist, Abbey-road. Of which he has been a trustee from the time it was built, and to the funds of which he was a generous supporter.

Much sympathy from all over the district is expressed with the widow and family in their sudden and very sad bereavement.

We understand that Mr. Balfour has been under medical treatment for about two? years for heart trouble.

There follows a lengthy tribute from the Borough Magistrates, followed by this report of Rev. W. D. Gunstone's tribute at the funeral:

IMPRESSIVE FUNERAL

... (held at the Christ Church Methodist Church, Abbey Road, later destroyed in the Barrow Blitz of 1941 - RMW)

We meet today to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of the late Mr. R. Balfour, known to all present, and intimately related to some in our midst. His removal – so sudden, and therefore so beneficial and painless to him; so sudden, and therefore so startling and heavy to those associated with him, - his removal is a loss to many interests and individuals. I will not dwell upon the loss that the town has sustained. That was fittingly and tastefully expressed by the Mayor on Monday. I will confine my remarks on this occasion to his presence and usefulness in another sphere of activity – that which this service and this building suggest. His removal is a loss to the religious life and enterprises of this town. It is a loss to this church. Almost from its erection he was associated, and for a generation of years he has continued his interest and service. But although a member here, and anxious for the success of this church and taking an interest in connexional (sic) matters, he was not a sectarian, He was a true Catholic, and claimed membership with the Holy Catholic Church, and therefore had an interest in its various sections. He recognised that the parts were smaller than the whole, and that sections need not be antagonistic and contrary, but integral portions; and therefore because interested in the whole, each part claimed and received his aid. When staying in the country far from his own community, he unhesitatingly attended the Anglican Church, worshipping in spirit through its forms, and receiving its benedictions. The Salvation Army Barracks are near enough to this church to appear to some to menace its interests: but Mr. Balfour recognised as we do that we here have no interests but what are embraced within the work of the Salvation Army, and, therefore, he subscribed towards its erection. I was proud and thankful to see his name on the list. It was an evidence of the catholicity which should characterise our conception and attitude. But great as the loss is to this town, it is small compared to what it is to his family. To them was given a concentration of his interest, wisdom and affection. Our loss, therefore, is small compared with theirs. I know somewhat the pain and strain of this day and this service to them, and therefore I will not dwell on this aspect of the event, excepting to remark that it must be some consolation to them to see and know that he that they loved had won a high place in the esteem and affection of others; and that long after these flowers have faded, his memory to us as well as to them will be fragrant and stimulating. All we can do is to pray that a comfort and a direction greater than what we can offer may be given to them from Him whose grace is ever available for the needy and the sorrowing.

There follows a description of the graveside service, and a long list of mourners, starting with the councillors of Barrow, the magistrates and other dignitaries, followed by the family members, and a list of floral tribute donors.

The **Nmational Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1910** had:

BALFOUR Robert of Barrow-in-Furness **Lancashire** coal merchant died 23 September 1910 Probate **Lancaster** 16 November to Sarah Ann Balfour widow and Henry King bank manager. Effects £12951 3s 10d.

Although Robert had died, the family were reunited in the **1911 Census**. Living at Chetwynde, Abbey Road, Barrow were Sarah Ann Balfour (65) Widow, born Kendal, Westmorland; George Boyd Balfour (25) Single, Coal Merchant, born Barrow; Dora Boyd Balfour (24) Single, no occupation recorded, born Barrow; Robert Wilson Balfour (23) Assistant to Borough Engineer and Surveyor, Municipal Engineer, born Barrow; Norman Boyd Balfour (17) Premium? Pupil, Loco Works, Railway Co. born Barrow; Thomas Clement Ormiston Chant (29) Visitor, Superintendent Civil Engineer, born Hampstead, London; Fanny Vernon (21) Single, Housemaid (Domestic), born Barrow; and Annie Willan (20) Single, Cook (General Domestic) born Dalton-in-Furness.

Of the sons, George Balfour became Commanding Officer of the 4th Battn. King's Own Royal Lancaster Regt; and both Robert and Norman Balfour served in the Royal Garrison Artillery in WW1.