

## **Arsenic Poisoning in Hampsthwaite - The Execution of Hannah Whitley**

In 1789, Hannah Whitley of Hampsthwaite used a pie as the delivery medium for a fatal dose of arsenic, with the poison concentrated in the crust. She claimed She had been coerced into the act of poisoning by her employer, a local linen weaver named Horseman, who was involved in an on-going feud with the intended victim.

Hannah claimed that Horseman had threatened to kill her if she did not kill Thomas Rhodes, who lived in Hampsthwaite and also had a rival weaving business. Hannah Whitley's culinary efforts had the desired effect as the pastry made the entire family ill, but instead of killing Thomas, it just resulted in the death of his five-year-old son Joseph Rhodes. Joseph is buried in Hampsthwaite St Thomas a Becket church.

Even though she pointed the finger at Horseman, he was not prosecuted as there was no evidence. Hannah was sent to York prison and tried for the murder of Joseph Rhodes and hanged at Tyburn, York on 7th August 1789. Her body was sent to be used for dissection and research.

The people at the dinner table in the Rhodes family were Thomas, the father and intended victim; Sarah, his wife, and their children Dinnah, Joseph (who died from the arsenic), and Hannah Rhodes.

**On Saturday last the assizes for this county closed, when Hannah Whitley, found guilty of poisoning Joseph Rhodes, received sentence of death, and was, agreeably thereto, executed on Monday. She behaved very penitently: her body after hanging the usual time, was sent to the County Hospital for dissection.—John Baker, for grand larceny, also re-**

Hannah Whitley (Whiteley) (Nee: Hirst? Broadhead?) Executed on 7th August 1789

John Whitley (Whiteley) - Hannah Whitley Husband

Thomas Rhodes 1705 - 1784 (Married to Sarah 20 oct 1727) - Grandad

Sarah Rhodes (Nee Hudson) - Grandma

Thomas Rhodes B:1737 - Dad

Sarah Rhodes - Mum

Dinah Rhodes 1781

Joseph Rhodes 1784 -1789

Hannah Rhodes 1786

William Horseman - Weaver

Ann 8.02.1777