

The Birkbecks and Stansfelds, bankers, barristers, JPs

The 'gentlemen', businessmen and clergy ran Victorian Settle, making a good living from their inheritance, investments, foreign trade and property. They employed workers, were the workers' landlords and held all the positions of responsibility in the town. Without local authorities, the wealthy were responsible for the collection of taxes to spend on infrastructure including drainage, lighting, education, a justice system of sorts and some provision for the poor. The wealthy were also generous benefactors to the town. Upper class women occupied themselves with leisure and a variety of philanthropic societies often linked to the church, fulfilling their self-appointed duty to teach the less fortunate about Christian morality. Whilst it is easy to criticise their actions, these women had a real impact supporting the poor and reducing cruelty to women, children and animals.

Many of Settle's wealthy were born-and-bred, often with several additional residences around the country. In our Ancient graveyard, many of the wealthy were buried behind the south east corner of the church behind the altar, believed to be the best place for a good resurrection. The Birkbecks and Stansfelds were two such families.



The Birkbecks had been in Settle since the 17th century. Their lives have been well documented by The North Craven Heritage Trust. The Birkbecks were Quakers who came to Settle in the early 1700s. They were held in high repute as trustworthy businessmen and magistrates. They made the equivalent of millions today from textiles, cotton and the Craven Bank, which they had established. The Birkbecks were founder shareholders in the Leeds to Liverpool Canal in the 1770s, and may have been disappointed that the planned branch to Settle was never completed.

George Birkbeck, the son of **William Birkbeck** and **Sarah Braithwaite**, was the best known member of this family and his life is well documented on Wikipedia and other sites. He was a well regarded physician, academic and philanthropist and the founder of Birkbeck College, University of London. He pioneered the national 'Mechanics Institute' movement addressing the need for adult education for working men [ph1]. There is a huge memorial to him in Giggleswick church [ph2]. It was originally planned to be erected in Settle church but technical difficulties and delays resulted in the move. The Birkbecks built and/or lived in several of Settle's most extravagant houses including Anley, Ashfield, Marshfield, Ingfield Hall and Bankwell in Giggleswick.



John Birkbeck, born in 1817, had been educated at Giggleswick School and Cambridge. As a Quaker he was not eligible to take a degree but made some useful contacts. He made a fortune through his association with the Craven Bank and through his investments in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. He was a Justice of the Peace, an active Conservative and Trustee of Giggleswick School. Business links in Halifax introduced John to **Lydia Stansfeld**. The Stansfelds were Anglicans, which may have led this branch of the Birkbecks to defect from the Quakers and so find themselves here in this graveyard. They married in 1841 and lived at Anley just south of Settle. They had four children including twins **George** and **Robert** who are buried with them. The reports of John's death, aged 73 and funeral in 1890 [1] give an indication of the influence and respect the family commanded. At



number of local tradesmen. A large number of wreaths and crosses were forwarded, one being furnished by the staff of the Craven Bank at Keighley. At Settle the shops were closed, and the blinds of private houses were drawn during the funeral service, and at least 1,000 persons gathered at the churchyard, most of them taking a last look at the coffin at the close of the service at the graveside.

**DEATH OF
MR. JOHN BIRKBECK, J.P.**

We deeply regret to record the death of Mr. John Birkbeck, of Anley, Settle, which took place on Thursday morning, at the age of 73 years. The deceased gentleman was

streets of Settle. An old maiden-lady from Skipton, taking a walk over Racy Hill, saw a gaunt figure approaching, dressed in a threadbare suit, and taking him for a dangerous-looking tramp, she rushed back to The Terrace in a fright, but she was re-assured when she was told that it was only "old Mr. John Birkbeck, the Banker."

An amusing story of the Victoria Cave excavations is told around Mr. John Birkbeck, of Anley, Settle, the pioneer Craven potholer. Mr. Birkbeck took an active interest in the excavation, and when work had reached the point when search was being made for evidence of human habitation below the glacial deposit, Mr. Birkbeck hid one of his own teeth, extracted just before, in the glacial drift. Until the hoax was discovered, the human tooth caused immense excitement!

least 1,000 people gathered at the churchyard. True to his values the ceremony was 'devoid of all pomp and display'.

Reports also present a rather eccentric side to his character, 'dressed in a threadbare suit, looking like a dangerous tramp' [CH]. His antics included hiding one of his own teeth in archaeological excavations [A]. When the Settle and Carlisle railway was being built past his home at Anley John was apparently very concerned about his favourite bridge being destroyed and so an 'emergency' at the bank was created and the bridge taken down whilst he was away.

In his spare time John was a mountaineer. In 1842 John was the first man to descend into Gaping Gill on the slopes of Ingleborough, reaching a ledge 55 metres down. The full descent of 98 metres wasn't undertaken until much later in 1895 by Edouard-Alfred Martel.



John and his son, also John Birkbeck, were mountaineering pioneers in the Swiss Alps during the Golden Age of the 1850s. A fall of over 1500 feet in the Alps may have contributed to son John's death at the age of 49 in 1892.



This huge family tomb *Ancient B6* commemorates the lives of John and Lydia Birkbeck of Anley, their infant children Lydia Margaret and George, Robert Stansfeld Birkbeck aged 35. Also their son John, John's wife Rachel Wilhelmina (Stansfeld), and their three children Victor John, Hylbert John, Mary Inez. The deaths of infants Lydia Margaret and George were commemorated on one of the stained glass windows at Holy Ascension

The Birkbecks' servants included groom *William Grime*, housemaid *Mary Procter*, cook (widow) *Susannah Forrester* before her marriage to *George Ambler*, gardener/land agent *James Thomson* and head gamekeeper *James Whipp*

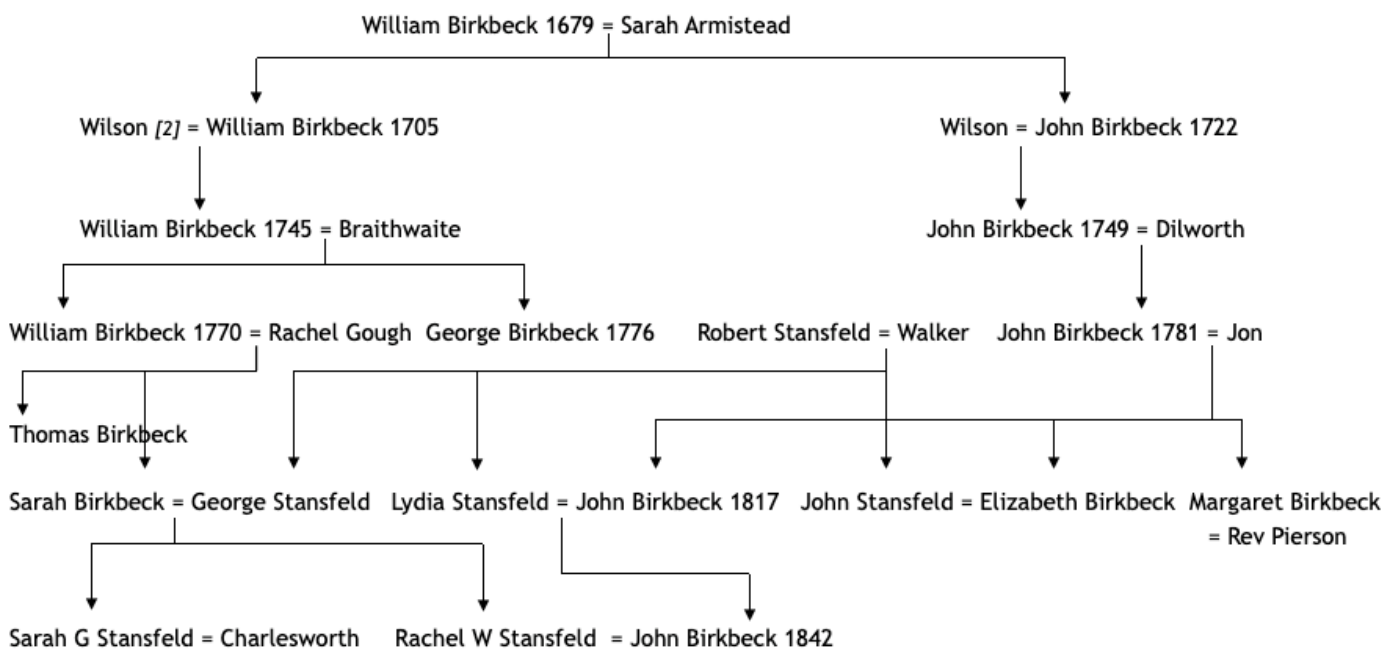


The Stansfelds

Several members of the Stansfeld family married into the Birkbeck family. The Stansfeld family of Stansfield (confusingly) had built in the 17th century Field House, Sowerby on the site of a 13th century building. A Georgian renovation replaces it now [ph3]. The Stansfelds' money came from the Calderdale mills. At



Birkbeck Stansfeld Families



the beginning of the 19th century **Robert Stansfeld** and **Lydia Walker** were at Field House and had four children. Daughter **Jane Stansfeld** remained a spinster, but the remaining two sons and daughter all married into the Birkbeck family. Son **John Stansfeld** and daughter **Lydia Stansfeld** married siblings **Elizabeth Birkbeck** and **John Birkbeck** (above). John Stansfeld became the vicar at St Michael's church, Coniston Cold which had been built by the Garforth/Tottie family. Upon Elizabeth's death he married Peter Garforth's widow, Frances Hammerton. John and Elizabeth's grandson **Colonel John Raymond Evelyn Stansfeld** of the 2nd Gordon Highlanders, pictured with a relation [ph4] served in the Boer war but died from his wounds, aged 35, on 28th September 1915 in the Battle of Loos on the Western Front.



Robert and Lydia Stansfeld's eldest son **George Stansfeld** married **Sarah Birkbeck**, a third cousin of Lydia and John. Sarah Birkbeck was the niece of George Birkbeck (above). Her parents, **William Birkbeck** and **Rachel Gough** lived at Ashfield (now Settle Social Club), one of the residences built by the Birkbecks and this is also where George and Sarah lived with their family of seven children [ph5]. They had another residence, also called 'Ashfield' in Burnley.



Unsurprisingly, George was also a barrister, banker and JP and George's sons followed him into the business. George died in 1869, aged 65 and was buried in a large tomb in a quiet corner of Settle graveyard and joined later by his wife and three unmarried children.

In memory of George Stansfeld of Ashfield, Settle who died March 3rd 1869 aged 65 years. Also of Sarah his wife who died July 18th 1869 aged 63 years. In memory of Elizabeth Stansfeld who died October 13th 1931 aged 93 years. In memory of Kenneth Adrian Stansfeld who died March 24th 1881, aged 35 years. Also Harold Eugene Stansfeld, Barrister in law who died August 10th 1894, aged 50 years, E30.

George died at an interesting stage of Settle's development. 1869 marked the beginning of the building of the Settle to Carlisle Railway, the first sod being cut near Anley in the November. The railway ran straight through the Ashfield land separating it from its Lodge just below the station.

Settle town provided a base for operations and housed numerous temporary buildings, stables and (primitive) machinery located within the Ashfield estate – for which the Stansfelds would

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have received generous compensation. In addition the land was used for a settlement of 15 navy huts. The settlement was known as 'Ashfield Square' or 'Stansfeld Square' for around 100 navvies and their families. There were also settlements of navy huts at Runley Bridge, Goldielands and many others further along the valley. Unsurprisingly the building of the railway caused major disruption to life in the quiet town of Settle. The use of the land was probably negotiated by son-in-law **Charles Henry Charlesworth** who had married George and Sarah's daughter **Sarah Georgina Stansfeld** in 1863. Charles was from Leeds but ran the wealthy firm of solicitors, 'Geldard and Charlesworth' in Settle and, later, Skipton. Ashfield was not used as a private residence after this, becoming The Ashfield Hotel and later becoming a Temperance Hotel. The Charlesworths lived at Marshfield before moving to BankWell, Giggleswick. They are buried in *Old grave E67/8*.

George and Sarah Stansfeld's daughter **Rachel Wilhelmina Stansfeld** married her cousin **John Birkbeck** (above) and is buried in the Birkbeck family tomb. George and Sarah's son George was an excellent violinist and the conductor of Settle Choral Society. There are frequent reports of him providing hilarious entertainment together with friend **Arthur Brewin**, a schoolmaster at Giggleswick School. Arthur Brewin's twin sons are buried very close to the Stansfeld grave, in *grave E25*. In the 1860s George visited the Conservatoire in Leipzig with the church organist **William Barnett** 'and gave the Settle folk their first taste of theatrical venture on a grand scale'. They raised a 'handsome sum for the benefit of the Lancashire sufferers during the great cotton famine'. The Conservatoire had been founded by the composer Felix Mendelssohn [CH].

Mr. Barnett and Mr. George Stansfeld (just returned from the Conservatoire of Music, Leipsic) organised an Orchestra and gave the Settle folk their first taste of theatrical venture on a grand scale, which provided a handsome sum for the benefit of the Lancashire sufferers during the great cotton famine.

George left Settle during the 1860s to work as a JP and Banker in Keighley in the 1860s [SC]. Even though he moved away, George remained Chair of the Craven Bank for many years. He was paid a fine tribute before heading off. He had 'for several years been the life and soul of our musical entertainment' with 'unwearying and cheerful services'. Arthur Brewin gave a humorous speech and presented George with a silver tankard. By the time of the 1891 census George lived back at Field House in Sowerby with his wife, Hannah Foster and two surviving children.

PRESENTATION.—Our readers will all have heard with regret of the coming departure of Mr. Geo. Stansfeld, jun., who for several years has been the life and soul of our musical entertainments. The working members of the Settle Choral Society have seized this opportunity of presenting to one who has contributed so largely to their musical pleasures, some acknowledgment of his unwearying and cheerful services, and accordingly on



A NEW LIFEBOAT, the cost of which has been defrayed by subscriptions raised by the Settle branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, was yesterday presented at that town, with befitting ceremony, to Captain Robertson, R. N., the representative of the society. The boat, which is to be stationed at Penmon, on the coast of Anglesea, is named "The Christopher Brown," out of compliment to the secretary and treasurer of the Settle branch, was "christened" by Miss Stansfeld, and presented by Mr. Walter Morrison, M.P.

present, of the Giggleswick Grammar School. On Sunday the new organ, the money for which has been collected by Miss Stansfield and other ladies was opened. Many willing workers have

George and Sarah's daughter Elizabeth Stansfeld remained a spinster and lived next door to sister Sarah Georgina (Stansfeld)

Charlesworth and family, but still had her own household of several servants. In 1868, Elizabeth had the honour of christening the first of the lifeboats 'Christopher Brown' paid for by fundraising by the Settle RNLI [2,ph6]. *Christopher Brown*, a wealthy Stainforth landowner, was the driving force behind the group (see *Gifford, Long Preston*)

In 1892 Elizabeth coordinated the collection of funds for the new organ which was installed in the newly renovated Giggleswick Church [3].

Elizabeth had a housemaid called Agnes Ann Arkwright. In 1881, aged 39 she married the Giggleswick postmaster, *David Taylor*. When David died in 1898, Agnes took over the Post Office. Elizabeth induced the wrath of the rather controversial vicar, *Rev Theodore Percy Brocklehurst* because she refused to let him visit Agnes Ann in the final months of her life.

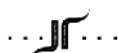
PUZZLE—TO FIND THE CHRISTIANITY!!!

... simply astounding state of affairs was cunningly engineered by a certain spinster who gave strict orders to the nurse-attendant who was too frightened to disobey the stern injunctions of this domineering individual, that when the Vicar or his wife called to see the lonesome widow (whom for two years was kept 'in coventry' by this splenetic person because she had dared to marry contrary to an old maid's whim) they were on no account to be allowed to go up and see her!! Yet we live in the 20th Century and the Inquisition and

He wrote in the Parish Magazine under the title 'Puzzle—to find the Christianity' that this state of affairs was 'cunningly engineered by a spinster who gave strict order to the nurse-attendant who was too frightened to disobey the stern injunctions of this domineering individual, that when the Vicar or his wife called to see the lonesome widow (whom for two years was kept 'in coventry' by this splenetic person because she dared to marry against an old maid's whim) they were on no account to be allowed to see her!' In the following Parish Magazine Rev Brocklehurst had to 'unreservedly withdraw all the charges contained therein' and apologised after being threatened with libel by Elizabeth via her brother-in-law Charles Henry Charlesworth [ph1]. Rev Brocklehurst also had to pay all her costs! Elizabeth was 93 when she died in 1931.

A THREATENED LIBEL ACTION

One of George Stansfeld's servants was Annie Grime, daughter of *William Grime*, John Birkbeck's groom. George's gardener was *Robert Weymes*, also buried in the graveyard.



Settle Graveyard Project

Sir James Stansfeld [ph7], born in 1820 was a distant cousin to the Stansfelds in Settle. He was a British Radical and Liberal politician who represented Halifax for over 36 years. His prime interests were the promotion of Italian unity and the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act which permitted the arrest of suspected prostitutes for compulsory internal checks for venereal disease. The Act was repealed eventually in 1886. James was qualified to work as a barrister but made most of his money from a brewery. James was knighted in 1895 upon his retirement as an MP and three years before his death, aged 78. Sir James' father, another James Stansfeld was a solicitor and established 'Stansfeld & Craven' with William Craven. Despite not being a barrister he served as a county-court judge in the wider Halifax district.

Sir James Stansfeld provided numerous links to Settle folk. His sister **Mary Stansfeld** married **George Dixon** who served as an MP for Birmingham and Edgbaston. It's likely (though as yet unproved) that George Dixon was a distant relation of **Thomas Dixon** of Halifax who married **Sophia Towler** and had a career in the bank in Settle. Thomas was an active and influential figure in the Methodist church in Settle.

Sir James was baptised on 11th September 1820, six months after his birth. His parents lived at that time in Aked Road, the same address as **Etienne Jarry**. Upon Etienne's death James' father served as the executor of his Will.

1820	James, born September 11 th March to the 1820	James and Emma	Stansfeld	Aked Road Halifax	Solicitor	Richard Astley
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...JR...

This account has been compiled by Sarah Lister as part of the Settle Graveyard Project which has recorded gravestone inscriptions, updated church records and researched the lives of those buried. It has been written in good faith with no offence intended. If I have inadvertently included errors or breached any copyright I apologise and would welcome corrections.

The life stories of people with italicised names have been researched as part of the graveyard project and can be found on [dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle graveyard project](http://dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/settle-graveyard-project). The 'Old Settle' family tree on ancestry.co.uk includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on settleresearch@gmail.com. Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.

Many thanks to Pamela Jordan with the compilation of this account.

A – Yorkshire Caves and Potholes, North Ribblesdale, Albert Mitchell

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CH – with the kind permission of the Craven Herald and Pioneer

ph1 – Brayshaw's scrapbook with the kind permission of Giggleswick church, ph2 – with the kind permission of Nigel Mussett, ph3 – credited [green how-hill.org.uk](http://green-how-hill.org.uk), ph4 – with kind permission of the Long Preston Heritage Group, ph5 – with kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust, ph6 – with thanks to John Reid, ph7 – credited to Wikipedia, ph8 – username pauly1952

SC – Settle Chronicle, with kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust