

The Robinsons, Settle's Suffragette Sisters, by Royal Appointment

Settle has always been a little behind the times. Mechanisation in cotton mills, gas lighting and credit card swipe technology all took ages to arrive. So did Settle really produce women who were suffragettes and were appointed to the queen? Well, yes it did.

In 1897 Miss Anderson read a paper on women's suffrage to the Settle Wesleyan Improvement Society which was a relatively liberal group [LSA]. In 1909, the Conservative Club ran a debate on woman's suffrage. After a 'warm discussion' there was a large majority against giving women the vote [LSA].

23. A Paper on "Woman's Suffrage" was read before the Settle Wesleyan Mutual Improvement Society, by Miss Anderson.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (continued.)

15. A Public Debate on "Woman's Suffrage," at Settle Conservative Club, when a paper in favour of the cause was read by Mrs. Mott, of Giggleswick, and Mr. W. Simpson, of Catterall Hall, opposed. A warm discussion followed, and, on a vote being taken at the close, there was a large majority against granting the Franchise to Women.

C11 In memory of Epsey, wife of Henry Robinson, who died 14th October 1861 aged 44 years. Henry Robinson, solicitor of this town died 27th February 1870, aged 54 years.

Eleanor, who died 30th September 1854, aged 4 months. Fanny who died on the 17th April 1856 aged 7 months. Charlotte who died 13th October 1901 aged 42 years. Epsey, widow of John McClelland who died 6th February 1912 aged 65. George Marshall who died 21st April 1925 aged 74 years. William Augustus, who died 27th May 1896 aged 51 years. Henry Duncan, who died 5th July 1875, aged 31 years.



The people commemorated on this impressive family tomb were academically and artistically gifted, but also passionate about social and political reform. (We must remember that there were many working class residents who may have been just as talented but did not have time or money to demonstrate their talents.)

Henry Robinson, born in 1815, was a cooper's son from Lincolnshire. Somehow he managed to get an education which set him up for a very successful life. In 1842, he married Epsey Dale, the daughter of a successful London piano manufacturer who carried an important artistic gene. Henry found work in Kirkby Lonsdale, articulated to solicitor Francis Pearson and by 1847 had moved to Settle where he would live for the rest of his life, working as a solicitor. They lived on or near Cheapside and then in the large 'Terrace' on Duke Street, bringing up nine children. Settle residents of 1924 remembered a serene picture of innocent family life [CH].

Henry's business included local petty sessions and company law, representing business and mills across the north of England. He had a team of people working for him including *John Jackson* and clerk Thomas Emmanuel Green. As soon as his sons were old enough, Henry included William, Henry and George in the family business, with branches in Skipton and Keighley as well as Settle. The fourth son, Edward was as a land agent and accountant. Henry was a passionate Liberal and often represented Liberal interests in Settle.

Epsey died in 1861 just after the birth of their ninth child, Charlotte. Two other daughters, Eleanor and Fanny had died in infancy. Henry owned a property in Widcombe

In those days kite-flying in Settle reached a high standard of excellence, largely due to the lead given by the Robinsons, who then lived in The Terrace. There were "G. M.," "W. A." and Harry, all keen flyers, whilst the sisters Epsy, Annie and Charlotte seconded their efforts. The kites were home-made, some of them of large size—one, indeed, I remember was over six feet in height, and bore the name of "Porter," in honour of a local curate of that name, a very giant in stature. The kites required careful construction, and the long tails were so adjusted that the kite could be flown without wobbling in the air. A wobbling kite was anathema in those days. The Robinsons occasionally put up half a-dozen kites, one behind the other, on one string; at other times long distance flights were made, and it was no uncommon thing for a kite to sail away until it was invisible to the eye. The pull on the larger kites was so great that it required two or three boys to hold them, and even they were in danger of being lifted into the air. Then there was the excitement of a broken string, and the subsequent hunt to retrieve the kite. I recall one escaped kite, flown from the fields above The Terrace, was found entangled in the tops of trees at Scaleber.

Crescent, one of the massive Georgian Crescents in Bath - very Jane Austen. He was living in that house, perhaps for health reasons, when he died aged just 54. He left an estate worth the equivalent of millions of pounds today. With a legacy like that Henry's children could easily have spent the rest of their lives mixing with high society and enjoying the finer things in life. However, Henry and Epsey's parenting and Liberal politics led most of them into lives as equality activists.

Sons William Augustus, Henry Duncan and George Marshall Robinson continued Henry's business and Richard Lambert worked for them. William's obituary of 1896 told how he worked hard for Keighley Town Council and was a Registrar at Settle County Court, (as was brother George). William played cricket for Settle and Keighley [1]. Another obituary for William explained his 'indefatigable exertions in the Radical cause'. The Radical cause was the Liberal Party campaigning for democratic reform.

Son Henry Duncan [ph1] could also have had a successful life but died of cirrhosis of the liver just four years after marrying. He enjoyed his alcohol, according to his family. However, generations of his descendants were highly successful cotton mill managers in the Barley (Pendle) area, as were another family of Settle Robinsons.

Now, what about Henry and Epsey's three daughters?

Ann Elizabeth married Francis Henry Atherton in 1870. Two years later Francis was on board a ship bound for Australia where he spent the rest of his life working in gold mines. In December 1874 Ann returned to Settle for the 'Cricket Club annual entertainment' [2]. The Robinsons were in fine voice. Mrs Atherton was praised for 'her fine pure voice and highly cultivated style' and performed a duet with brother Edward Gardner Robinson, both of them 'adept in the art of suiting the action to the word'. Henry himself had a 'fine baritone voice'. The show also featured performances from Arthur Brewin, Edmund Handby and Miss Ellis.

Ann Atherton became friends with artist Kate Thornbury, the daughter of a Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Army. They lived together in Hertfordshire for the rest of their lives. When Ann died, in 1913, she left her whole estate to Kate. When Kate died in 1920, a publication of the *National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship* called *Common Cause*

THE LATE MR. ROBINSON, OF KEIGHLEY.

Mr. William Augustus Robinson, solicitor, Keighley,



who died in Leeds last night, is the second son of the late Mr. Henry Robinson, solicitor, Settle. He was a member of the defunct Keighley Local Board for a short time, sat several years on its successor, the Town Council, and last November, after being defeated in the Central Ward, was subsequently returned unopposed for the West Ward for three years. He was admitted a solicitor in 1867. He carried on business with his elder brother, Duncan Robinson, until the latter's death in 1875, and subsequently with his younger brother, Mr. George Marshall Robinson. He had been Registrar of the Settle County Court since 1875. He played cricket with the Settle Club for several years, and appeared in the Keighley first eleven from 1871 to 1875. He was unmarried, and was aged about 50 years.



Mrs. Atherton's reappearance after so long an absence was looked forward to with anticipations of no ordinary pleasure, and her fine pure voice and highly cultivated style stirred the audience to unusually energetic expressions of delight. Miss Ellis's talents are so well known that we need only say that she was in excellent voice and was warmly recalled after each song. Mr. E. G. Robinson took all by surprise by the clever way in which he sustained his part in the Duett "Very Suspicious" and he was equally successful in the encore duett, "Love and Pride." Both he and his sister Miss Atherton proved themselves adepts in the art of "suiting the action to the word." Mr. H. Robinson's fine baritone voice was heard to great advantage in the part songs, and he gained a warm encore by his tasteful rendering of a beautiful moorish serenade. Mr. E. Handby gave a very meritorious performance of Adam's somewhat difficult song, "True to the last." He entered into the spirit of it, with the instinct of a true artist, and was deservedly encored. Mr. Phillis' readings

PERSONAL

The late Miss Louisa Kate Thornbury, of Shire Lane, Chorley Wood, who died on October 27th, 1920, left a legacy of £100 to the National Union. Miss Thornbury was connected with the Suffrage movement from its earliest beginning, and was at one time Hon. Secretary of one of the branch societies in London. She gave up this work to enter into business partnership with Mrs. Atherton, and they founded the Society of Artists in Bond Street, and for many years carried on business as house decorators and experts in furniture. They retired from business shortly before the war, and the death of Mrs. Atherton, a life-long friend, was a blow from which Miss Thornbury never recovered. She continued her interest in the woman's movement to the last, and though no longer engaged in active work for the Cause, shared in the rejoicing when the vote was won. For those of us who are still at work building on the foundations laid by others, there is something at once moving and inspiring in these gifts that reach us from time to time—the last visible mark of the devotion of a lifetime.

printed her obituary, explaining Kate and Ann's part in the Suffragette movement. They founded the Society of Artists to promote the work of women. Settle's *Agnes Burrow* used the Society of Artists to showcase her work. Incidentally, Kate Thornbury's sister **Clara Thornbury** married **Samuel Garrett**, the brother of **Elizabeth Garrett Anderson** who was the first woman to qualify in Britain as a physician and surgeon, the co-founder of the first hospital staffed by women, the first female dean of a British medical school and the first female mayor in Britain, in Alderburgh.

Ann's husband Francis Henry Atherton, having made a fortune from the gold rush, returned to England in the early 1900s, living in Surrey with a new wife, **Julia Walford** and seven children, all born in Queensland in Australia. Frederick and Julia married in Convent Garden in 1907 with Frederick describing himself as a bachelor. But he wasn't – he was a bigamist and it's hard to believe Ann didn't know about it.

Daughter **Epsy** married **John McClelland**, a Scottish accountant who became a salesman. After fathering daughter **Elspeth**, John spent the rest of his life travelling, so Epsy and sister Ann had time on their hands in London. They worked together as interior designers, exceptionally unusual for women in those days. In 1886 Epsy organised a 'Fine Art Exhibition' back in Settle showcasing Mr *Edmund Handby's* work [2].

Youngest daughter **Charlotte**, another incredible artist, was appointed 'Home Art Decorator' to Queen Victoria. The Princess of Wales (Alexandra of Denmark, the wife of Bertie who became Edward VII) was particularly fond of her work [3].

An article in 1887 [4] explained Charlotte's career and provided a sketch portrait, provided by **Miss Emily Faithfull** [ph2].

FINE ART EXHIBITION.—Mr. Edmund Handby's exhibition of oil-paintings, water-colour drawings, hand painted mirrors, and screens and other works of art which was opened in the Assembly Room at the Ashfield Hotel on Tuesday the 2nd instant and continued until Wednesday last has afforded genuine pleasure to the many visitors who have inspected the collection. The display of valuable oil-paintings and water-colour drawings comprise several meritorious works which did infinite credit to the respective artists. The mirrors and screens exhibited deserve more than a passing notice, not only on account of their artistic merit but as being the work of a native of Settle. It is to Mrs. McClelland that we owe the revival of this art, which was formerly practised by the early Italian masters and used simply as a wall decoration. Now however Mrs. McClelland has applied it to a variety of objects which have taken prominent places in artistic English homes.

The Princess of Wales has purchased the original *billet doux* table, designed and registered by Miss Charlotte Robinson, of King-street (home art decorator to her Majesty). Her Royal Highness expressed great admiration for the ingenuity Miss Robinson has displayed. Her stand at the Glasgow Exhibition may safely be pronounced the gem of the woman's industry section.

THE QUEEN'S HOME ART DECORATOR.

Miss Charlotte Robinson, who has been appointed Home Art Decorator to her Majesty the Queen, has been for some time engaged in art decorative work of various kinds. Her exhibits at the famous Manchester Exhibition, and also at Saltaire, have attracted great attention this year, and she has quite established herself in Manchester as adviser in general on matters relating to house decoration and furnishing. Her father was a well-known Yorkshire lawyer. After leaving Queen's College, Harley-street, she expended a great deal of energy on the usual engagements which fall to the lot of an ordinary young lady in society. She was also associated with the entertainments organised by Mr. Titus Salt at Saltaire, and finally determined on a career of honourable work rather than a life of dull inactivity or intermittent charitable enterprises. Regardless of the bugbear which terrifies weaker women—the loss of social status—she opened a shop in King-street, Manchester; and the result

has been eminently satisfactory. She has now won the recognition of her Majesty, who has always been ready to show a kindly interest in ladies who are trying to open up new paths for the remunerative employment of women in appropriate directions. Miss Robinson had at first some difficulty in making people understand that her work was commercial, not charitable; but she feels that until a healthy public sentiment is created, the false pride which keeps ladies afraid of entering on industrial pursuits will never be overcome. Her clever sister, Mrs. McClelland, is the presiding genius of the London studio, in which a number of lady artists are busily at work in various directions.

The Portrait is from a photograph taken while Miss Robinson was travelling in America, and forwarded to us by Miss Emily Faithfull.

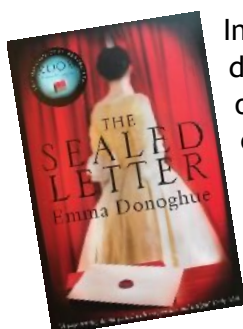
Charlotte had met Emily Faithfull whilst at Queen's College, London, an independent girls' school 'promoting a non-competitive spirit to produce confident, open-minded young women'. It certainly achieved that. Charlotte and Emily travelled together and set up businesses in London and Manchester.

Emily said of Charlotte, 'Her furniture designs are



simple and unique; she has dainty and quaint arrangements for cosy nooks and odd corners, and has good reason to be proud of the work of the artists employed in the studio over which her clever sister, Mrs McClelland is the presiding genius.' Perhaps this last comment was deliberate - there had been family tension because Charlotte became the best know sister, having been appointed to the Queen. However she learnt her skills from her older sisters and even traded under their name before establishing her own business.

Emily, known as Fido, was a vicar's daughter from Bloomsbury, with family links to India, and was well known as a 'petticoat philanthropist'. She was a women's rights activist promoting education for girls, women's employment and suffrage. She published material to support her cause through her 'Victoria Press' publishing company and was appointed publisher to Queen Victoria. In 1888 she received an inscribed portrait from the Queen 'in recognition of 30 years' work on behalf of women'.



In 1863, soon after the divorce laws of 1857, Emily was involved in a high profile divorce case, in which she was suspected of being 'the other woman' to the wife of Royal Naval officer Henry Codrington, after being initially employed as her companion. Emily was known to dress in 'manly clothes'. Outrageous! This case was recently listed number 2 in 'Marriage Scandals that Shocked the 19th Century' and is the basis of the book 'The Sealed Letter' by Emma Donoghue, which is a great read.

In one of her talks, Emily Faithfull said "...True marriage is the crown and glory of a woman's life; but it must be founded on love...nothing can be more deplorable, debasing, and corrupting than the loveless marriages brought about in our upper society by a craving ambition and a longing for a good settlement." Emily's experience in the divorce case and those of Charlotte's siblings may have inspired these thoughts - Epsy, Ann Elizabeth and Edward all found themselves spending their lives estranged from their spouses – a result of arranged marriages no doubt.

When Emily died in 1895, she left her whole estate to Charlotte, "my final love, as some little indication of my gratitude...for the affectionate tenderness and care which made the last five years of my life the happiest I ever spent." When Charlotte died in 1901, Lambert's Settle Almanac highlighted the fact that she was one of the first educated woman to have a business career as an art decorator. It's good to know this was appreciated back home.

18. Death of Miss Charlotte Robinson (youngest daughter of the late Mr. Henry Robinson, Solicitor, Settle), at her home, in Plymouth Grove, Manchester. Miss Robinson was one of the first women of education, in this country, to enter upon a business career as art decorator.

Charlotte left her estate to her niece Elspeth McClelland, a talented and rare female architect [4,5]. Elspeth worked in the style of the 'Arts and

Miss Elspeth McClelland, the girl architect, who sprang into fame among women workers last year, has been rising steadily in her profession. Her latest achievement is a design for a house at Grange-over-Sands, overlooking Morecambe Bay.



WOMEN IN INDUSTRY.
The Woman Architect: Where She Excels.
 We take the following facts from a very interesting interview with Miss Elspeth McClelland, the woman architect, by Mary Mortimer Maxwell, which appeared in *The Daily Chronicle* of February 28, and should be stimulating to other women to follow the excellent example courageously set by Miss McClelland. She was found on a roof, examining certain building materials, to make sure that they were according to her orders for the particular work, for Miss McClelland is not satisfied to be simply a designer; she understands the practical requirements of building. Indeed, a few years ago, when she was "the only woman student amongst 600 men at the Polytechnic who were qualifying for the business of house-erection, she even learnt the proper way to make bricks, and how to lay them," writes Mary Mortimer Maxwell.

Crafts Movement' inspired by John Ruskin and William Morris promoting simple, romantic and traditional craftsmanship. She entered and won a competition to design a workshop for the Society of Artists and was praised for practical, yet stylish features including an indoor toilet [ph2].

MARYLEBONE.—The meetings in Marylebone get more and more enthusiastic as time goes on, and the women especially understand our tactics. We have sold the paper very well, and each week the sale has increased. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of last week we had already sold 438, so we hope to double our previous total. We have been very fortunate in getting speakers who have ungrudgingly given their time for the furtherance of this campaign. We have also brought out several new speakers, all of whom are very promising.

Committee Rooms: 64, Blandford Street.
Elspeth McClelland.

Unsurprisingly, Elspeth was swept into the Edwardian suffragette movement, regularly contributing to 'Votes for Women'.

SUFFRAGETTES' LATEST SCHEME.
"HUMAN LETTERS" TO PREMIER
RETURNED AS "DEAD LETTERS."

Two members of the Women's Social and Political Union ingeniously attempted on Tuesday afternoon, to convey a message personally to the Prime Minister. There is a clause in the Post Office regulations which allows of any individual being "posted" by express messenger, and Mrs. Drummond—accompanied by Miss Christabel Pankhurst, Miss Solomon, and Miss McLellan—presented herself at the counter of the West Strand Post Office, and astonished a lady clerk with the remark: "I want to send a human letter." She duly received an official form, and promptly addressed Miss Solomon and Miss McLellan to "H. H. Asquith, 10, Downing-street, S.W." The threepenny fee having



Elspeth achieved a certain notoriety on 23rd February 1909 when she was a 'Human Letter' along with Christabel Pankhurst. They sent themselves as a letter to 10 Downing Street as a publicity stunt [4], costing three pence. Downing Street would not sign the postman's forms so they had to be returned as a 'dead letter'[ph2]. Coincidentally, this was the same year that the Conservative Club in Settle ran its debate, eventually voting against women suffrage.



Charlotte and Epsey (McClelland) are commemorated on the family tomb, but were buried elsewhere. Daughter Ann and son Edward are not in the grave, nor commemorated.

The extremes of high society life were also prevalent in the lives of the siblings of Henry's wife, Epsey Dale. Her brother **John Duncan Dale** was a Catholic priest working in Manchester and London. Meanwhile her brother **Augustus Dale**, a property valuer in London married **Jane McCulloch**, but spent most of his life living with a 'housekeeper', **Emma Howell** who was a stage singer. Emma bore him at least nine children, many of whom continued to work in the arts.



Settle Graveyard Project

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'.

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

Newspaper cuttings by kind permission of the British Newspaper Archives: 1 – Yorkshire Evening Post, 2 – Lancaster Gazette, 3 – Manchester Courier, 4 – Vote, 5 – Mid Sussex Times

ph1 – photo with the kind permission of descendants of the family, ph2 – credit Wikipedia, public domain

LSA - Lambert's Settle Almanac, with the kind permission of the North Craven Buildings Preservation Trust