

## The Jarry sisters, les aristocrates, des chiffons aux richesses (rags to riches)

Maria Louisa Jarry, born in 1818, and Alphonsine Sarah Jarry, born in 1822, were the daughters of Frenchman **Etienne Edme** (otherwise known as Stephen) **Jarry** and his wife **Sophia Milbourn**. The family lived in Halifax. Stephen ran a school teaching French language and provided an excellent library of French books for his students. However, this image of middle class contentment gave no inkling of Etienne's incredible past.

Etienne was born at Versailles on 11 December 1775, his dad being an under-steward for **King Louis XVI** [ph1] – yes, incredibly so. Little Etienne performed as a chorister and was educated in the Chapel Royal from the age of five. It was a happy boyhood, *'amid the splendours of Versailles, with almost daily opportunities of seeing the benevolent Louis XVI and his high minded Queen, apparently in the possession of every blessing which an earthly paradise could confer.'*[1] But this lifestyle was to come to an abrupt end. After the royal coffers became empty in 1788, civil unrest and famine resulted in the horror and turmoil of the French Revolution. The Jarry family removed to Paris. Even Etienne's family found themselves queuing for eight hours to get bread for several years. The King was beheaded in 1793. Etienne was known to have remembered those days with sorrow and emotion. People associated with the King were hunted down and often slaughtered but, amazingly, Etienne survived and found work at a printing establishment. When he was 20, being an able young man of good character, Etienne became a secretary to a general, travelling through Europe. When his employer died two years later, Etienne, keen to make his loyalties known, signed up to the French army under **General John Victor Marie Moreau** and saw action in the Black Forest, and in the Battle of Hohenlinden in 1800, defeating **Archduke John of Austria** and resulting in the deaths of 7,000 men. It was regarded as a decisive military victory and so was celebrated in paintings [ph2].



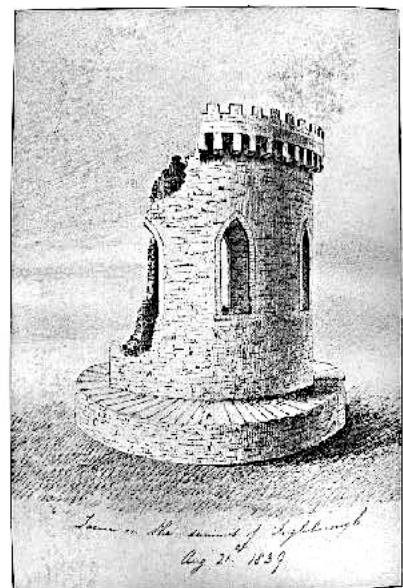
## Settle Graveyard Project

In 1806 Etienne escorted **Louis Bonaparte**, the younger brother of Napoleon, to become King of Holland. Louis's son **Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte** later became Napoleon III, the first President of France and the last monarch to rule in France. In 1809 Etienne's regiment was moved to Sahagun, northern Spain, for an encounter with British troops. Etienne was wounded by a severe sabre cut to his head and was captured as a prisoner of war, incarcerated at Wantage, Oxfordshire, Northampton and then Whitchurch, Shropshire. He was released at the end of hostilities. In Shropshire in 1812, aged 36, he married 20 year old Sophia within the Church of England, having converted from Catholicism. On the wedding documentation Etienne's occupation was given as a *'French Prisoner of War'*. Sophia had been orphaned at the age of six and her siblings were agricultural labourers. Etienne and Sophia settled in Halifax, living at 19, Aked Road, less than a mile from the Piece Hall. This is where the sisters were born. Aked Road was on Halifax's western boundary in those days. In the 1820s, Etienne was listed in Trade Directories working in *'British Lace manufacture, wool shops'*, as well as teaching French.



Sophia died in 1853, aged 61 *'after a long and painful illness'*. In the following years *'Mr Jarry and the Misses Jarry'* made regular donations to Halifax Infirmary, suggesting that was where Sophia was looked after. Despite all his adventures, Etienne lived until 1858 reaching an incredible 82 years of age. *'He secured, and deserved, general respect and esteem being quiet and unobtrusive. He was an early riser and of extremely temperate habits.'* Etienne was *'buried at Halifax Parish Church, at which place of worship he had long been a regular attendant.'*[1] Etienne's library of books was donated to the Halifax Mechanics Institute.

As young ladies of a respectable background the sisters worked as governesses. Maria Louisa worked for **John Birkbeck** at Anley in Settle. On 21 August 1839 she had a trip out to climb Ingleborough and while at the top (it must have been an unusually warm and still day) sketched the remains of a tower which marked the summit. A watch tower on the top was built and thought to have been a means of communication with the Roman garrison of Overborough, near Kirkby Lonsdale, using fires to indicate the approach of enemies. Over time this collapsed but, in 1836, money was raised to build a new tower. Unfortunately, it was not as robust as the Romans' and it didn't last long in the Yorkshire Dales weather. Maria Louisa's sketch shows what it was like in August 1839. The Romans probably destroyed 19 horse-shoe shaped Celtic dwellings which were also on the 15 acres summit surrounded by a strong gritstone wall [A].

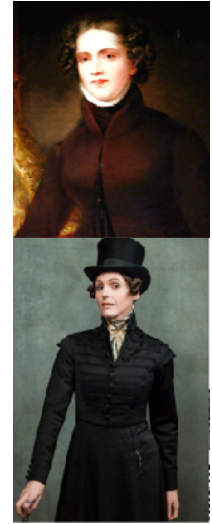


FORMER TOWER ON THE SUMMIT OF INGLEDOROUGH  
From an original drawing by the late Miss Jarry, of Settle,  
in possession of J. W. Zainker, Settle.

Meanwhile, according to **Malcolm Bull's Calderdale Companion**, Alphonsine Sarah's employers were the Lister family of Shibden Hall. Its most famous resident, **Anne Lister**, known as 'Gentleman Jack', wrote the five million word diary of her life, business and lovers in a secret code. Anne died in 1840 and then her partner, **Ann Walker**, lived there for three years before being sent to an asylum. Then, Shibden Hall was taken over by **John Lister** who was Anne Lister's second cousin once removed and also her physician. It was John Lister's son, another **John Lister (Jnr)**, born in 1847 and daughter **Ann Lister**, born in 1851 who would have had the privilege of being educated by Alphonsine Jarry in their early years. John Lister (Jnr) first deciphered the code to Anne Lister's famous diaries but hid them behind panelling in Shibden Hall. John Lister (Jnr), a bachelor, was quite a remarkable character being a barrister, Justice of the Peace for Halifax and a founder of the Labour Party. He was friends with Ramsay McDonald, the first Labour Prime Minister. Upon his



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death, John Lister (Jnr) left Shibden Hall to Halifax Corporation who discovered Anne's diaries and the rest is wonderful history.

In 1862, equipped with a sizeable inheritance of £2000 from Etienne, a fortune in those days, the sisters gave up their work as governesses and moved to the grand Fern Hill on Constitution Hill in Settle with their aged maternal aunt Sarah (Milbourn) Chapman who died in 1863. They had a life of considerable comfort with one or two servants at the time of census returns. Alphonsine Sarah helped with the work of the Church and Sunday school for over 40 years. Vestry records report that when she retired, she was presented with a purse containing more than 50 guineas with letters from over 80 people.

The sisters were remembered in the *Craven Herald* 1923 series *A Veteran's Reminiscences of Settle*. 'I have frequently noticed that there are residents from some foreign shore and they appear to appreciate the peaceful quietude of life in England after, may be, troublous times in their own lands. Such a couple were the Miss Jarrys. They were two elderly French ladies, devoted sisters, truly Cranfordian in aspect, and withal, intellectual, always carrying around with them and air of old fashioned dignity which was a pleasure to witness.' Obviously, the sisters were born in Halifax rather than 'some foreign shore', but after their dad's early years it's no wonder the sisters appreciated the peaceful quietude of life in England.

Maria Louisa died in 1893, aged 75 and left her estate to Alphonsine who died in 1912, aged 89. Alphonsine left the equivalent to £1.1 million today, three-quarters of which went to charity [CH]. That's not bad for the daughters of a Versailles escapee! Alphonsine Sarah generously donated to the Settle church endowment scheme for pew rents, and to a charity set up by Rev'd John Robinson – 'the object of the charity is the benefit of the aged and infirm of the Parish of Giggleswick'.

In country towns like Settle, I have frequently noticed that there are residents from some foreign shore, and they appear to highly appreciate the peaceful quietude of life in England, after, may be, troublous times in their own lands. Such a couple were the Misses Jarry's, who lived for years in a house on Constitution Hill. They were two elderly French ladies, devoted sisters, truly Cranfordian in aspect, and, withal, intellectual, always carrying about with them an air of old-fashioned dignity which was a pleasure to witness. The two sisters were almost inseparable and were seldom seen apart. During the enforced absence of one of them, she was suddenly taken ill, and such was the telepathic connection between the pair that her sister became aware of her illness, although no message had been sent or received. The circumstances were so remarkable that the Psychical Research Society investigated the matter, and the incident is reported in the transactions of the Society.

### A SETTLE LADY'S GIFTS TO CHARITY.

Miss Alphonsine Sarah Jarry, of Fernhill, Settle, daughter of M. Etienne Jarry, left estate of the gross value of £10,073 16s. 5d., of which £9,988 9s. 1d. is net personalty. She gave £150 to the House of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, Berkshire, £50 to the Wigan Branch of the same, £600 to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, £600 to Halifax Infirmary, £500 to the Curates Augmentation Fund, £500 to the fund for the endowment of the Church of the Holy Ascension, Settle, £600 to the Queen Victoria Clergy Sustentation Fund, and £600 to St. John's Foundation Schools for the Sons of Poor Clergy. Subject to various other bequests, she left the residue of her estate upon trust for the endowment of almshouses, or otherwise for the benefit of the aged and infirm poor in the old parish of Giggleswick.

The amount available for charitable purposes under Miss Jarry's will would appear to be about £7,000.



**Thomas Dixon**, a clerk at the Craven Bank in Settle, was an executor of Alphonsine's will. As such, he wrote to the Treasurer of the Royal Halifax Infirmary, 'I have the pleasure to inform you that she has left a legacy of £600 to the funds of Halifax Infirmary which will be paid to you in due course. In connection with this bequest there is a large portrait of her father, M Etienne Edme Jarry, who for many years, was a well known and respected resident of your town. The portrait was painted by Joshua Horner, also of Halifax. As Miss Jarry was the last of her family it would give great pleasure to her many friends if the portrait found a permanent home on the walls of Halifax Infirmary, and it is known her express wish was that it should be so.' [1] Apparently the portrait subsequently went missing. The report contained a full obituary for Etienne for which we are very grateful.

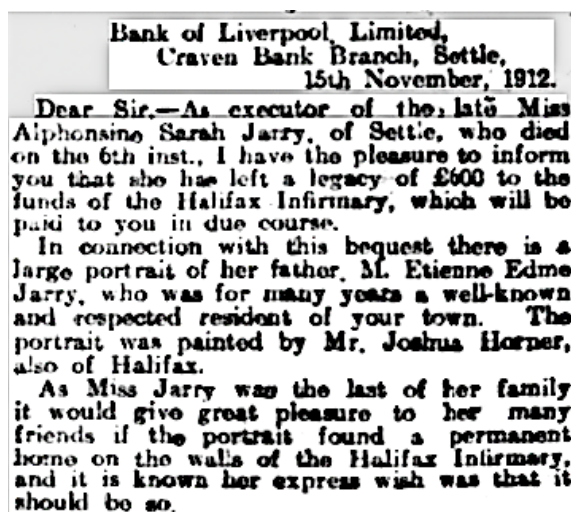
The family wealth was more than would be expected for a teacher of French, although Etienne may still have had links with family in France and clearly moved in high circles. One of the executors of his will was Sir James Stansfeld of Halifax, a neighbour and 'Radical' Liberal MP. Sir James' first cousins, **George** and **Sarah Stansfeld** both married into Settle's **Birkbeck** family and lived in Settle and this is probably why Maria Louisa worked for the Birkbeck family and why the sisters chose Settle for their retirement.

A William Morris stained glass window and plaque in the Church reads: 'To the memory of two sisters devoted to kind and good works. Erected AD 1913 by parishioners and friends.' Their grave and suitably grand tomb is in a prime position, right next to the door of the church.

**Maria Louisa Jarry died April 17th 1893 aged 75 years. Until the day break. Alphonsine Sarah Jarry died 6th Nov 1912 aged 90 years, Sarah Chapman died Jan 30th 1863 aged 75, C2**



A few metres away from the Jarry sisters' grave lie members of the **Kitchener** family who were buried in an unmarked grave. During the 1870s, well after the Jarry sisters had moved to Settle, **Louisa Ann Kitchener** became the first of three women from the family to work in domestic service for the Lister family at Shibden Hall. Louisa Ann was in service there for the best part of



## *Settle Graveyard Project*

50 years. Being from opposite ends of the social scale, what is the likelihood that these two Settle families knew of the Shibden Hall link between them?



*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](http://ancestry.co.uk) includes the families buried in the graveyard. The project is ongoing and welcomes queries and information on [settleresearch@gmail.com](mailto:settleresearch@gmail.com). Latest news and events are on the Facebook page 'Settle Graveyard Project'.*

*Thanks to Pamela Jordan with her help in the compilation of this account.*

*A – The Settle District by Fred Riley, thanks to John and Helen Reid*

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