

Ann Walker, Anne Lister and St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe

Although the Rev Wilkinson and his surviving daughters resided in Halifax they were presumably frequent visitors to Lightcliffe and so acquainted with the Walker family. Is this how Lydia Wilkinson became one of Ann Walker's companions?

In her book *Nature's Domain, Anne Lister and the Landscape of Desire* Jill Liddington notes on page 95 that: -

“She [Anne Lister] tried to peel Ann [Walker] from her troublesome female companions”.

Then from the diary entries for: -

Friday 7th December 1832 page 96

“She goes on Monday & Miss Lydia Wilkinson then comes to Lidgate, of which I said I should be glad”

Tuesday 11th December 1832 page 97

“ – a little tete-a-tete with Miss Wilkinson – very civil to her – “

Ann Walker's cousin William Priestley took a dim view of clergyman who had more than one job and consequently Rev. Robert Wilkinson was in the firing line as this extract from Jill Liddington's *Female Fortunes* describes.

William Priestley had touched on one of the bitter controversies of the 1830s. In Musgrave's sprawling parish, other clergy remained ill-paid. The Reverend Wilkinson had for fifty years combined being curate of Lightcliffe with being headmaster of Heath Grammar School in Halifax. Musgrave might be more concerned to preserve his vicarial privileges than to respond to accusations of neglected clerical duties; but nationally Anglicans were stirring to defend 'the church in danger' from attacks by non-conformists and radicals.

Anne Lister does not seem to have had similar qualms about Rev. Wilkinson.

From her diary of Tuesday 9th September 1834, she recorded: -

Wrote compliments to Mr Wilkinson and to enquire whether there was a front gallery pew at liberty in Lightcliffe [church] and what would be the annual rent – if not, begged to know what pews were at liberty, as, during my stay at home, should be glad to be one of Mr W-'s congregation if I could get a good pew.

Jill Liddington comments:-

Significantly, they [Anne Lister and Ann Walker] chose to attend the Reverend Wilkinson's rural church rather than Musgrave's parish church in Halifax itself: this would provide an easier setting for them and fitted with Ann's local landed status.

Part of Anne Lister's diary entry for Monday 15th September 1834

To have the Mytholm pew in Lightcliffe church lined with dark green, ready for us next Sunday.

And then on Sunday 21st September 1834

A- & I off to church at 2 35/'' – George followed (1st time) with the books & brought them back, there being as yet no drawer in the pew – that belonging to the Stag's head, Mytholm – just lined with green cloth – 1st time our sitting in it – I determined to sit in a pew of our own, since Miss Cliff-hill's taking her books away the Sunday before last - but Miss Cliff-hill wondered we did not go to Halifax, it was nearer – said I had 4 pews of my own in the chapel [of Halifax parish church]

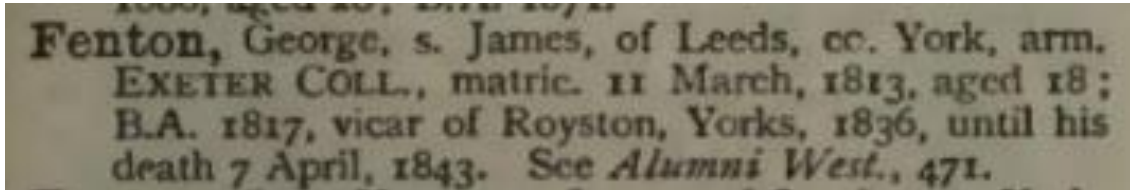


The interior of St Matthew's old Church before it was demolished. Perhaps the Mytholm pew was one of those in the picture.

From Anne Lister diary Sunday 9th November 1834

A- & I off (in the carriage as ever since the first Sunday [of] last month) to Lightcliffe church at 2 – there in 20 minutes – waited 18 minutes – Mr Wilkinson did all the duty The most interesting sermon I have heard from Mr W- .

On 29th May 1833 37-year-old Lydia Wilkinson of Skircoat had married 38-year-old Reverend George Fenton. He was an Oxford University Alumni.



Although he was the Vicar of Royston near Barnsley he sometimes took the services at his father in law's church at Lightcliffe as Anne Lister's diary notes :-

From Anne Lister diary Sunday 23rd August 1835

- Mr George Fenton did all the duty – preached 23 minutes tolerably but, unfortunately as to subject, from Psalms 133 verse 1 on the blessedness of unity & brotherly love – not much of either between A- & the Priestleys.

From Anne Lister diary Sunday 27th September 1835

Drove along the lower Brea road & at Lightcliffe church (in about 25 minutes) at 3 The Sutherlands came into church after us – Mr Wilkinson did all the duty – preached 16 minutes from Ecclesiastes v 4 – the S-s were very cordial after church.

From Anne Lister diary Sunday 17th February 1836

... Mr Fenton did all the duty – preached 22 minutes

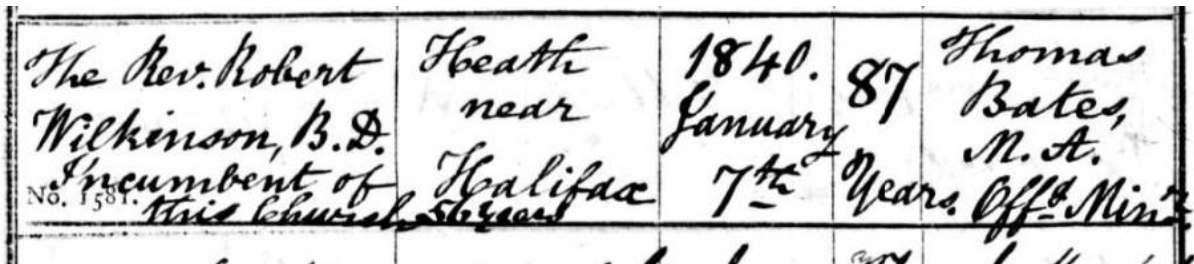
As the account below records the Reverend Robert Wilkinson continued to take services and performed baptisms (up until 1838) and burials (up to 22nd November 1839). Although as we have read a number were taken by his son in law Reverend George Fenton.

He was Master of the Grammar School at Heath, Halifax, where he resided, coming in his latter years to Lightcliffe Chapel on horseback, attired in the olden style with knee-breeches, buckles &c. Many complained that he was too old to preach, though

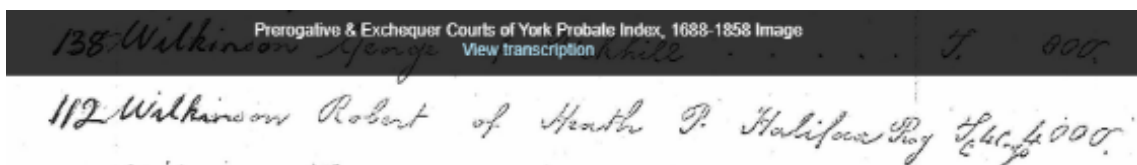
pronounced to be a good preacher of morals, but he persisted in his purpose until his death in December 1839.

The “Halifax Guardian” of 21st Dec, 1839 gives an account of a public dinner to his honour.

Reverend Robert Wilkinson died late December 1839 and was buried within St. Matthew’s Church on 7th January 1840.

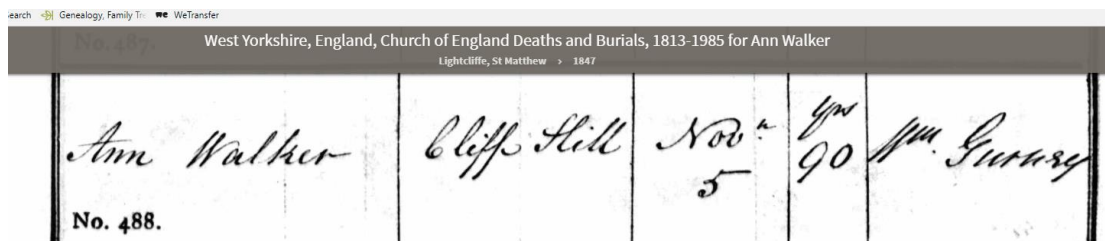


Mr Wilkinson is interred in the central aisle of the church.



Previous to this, in June 1839, Ann Walker and Anne Lister had set off for Moscow to go travelling. It was whilst they were in the Russian province of Western Georgia that Anne Lister was bitten by a tick. She died from the resulting fever on 22nd September 1840. Ann Walker brought her friend’s body home for burial in Halifax Parish Church six months later.

In Anne Lister’s will she gave Ann Walker life tenancy of Shibden Hall which was where Ann Walker resided with servants on census night 6th June 1841. Her elderly aunt Ann Walker – Miss Cliff Hill – was still living at Cliffe Hill in 1841. She would die there on 29th October 1847 and be buried, as all the Lightcliffe Walkers, were in St Matthew’s churchyard.



After her aunt's death and a stay in a York asylum Ann Walker was back in her childhood home, Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe, in 1851.

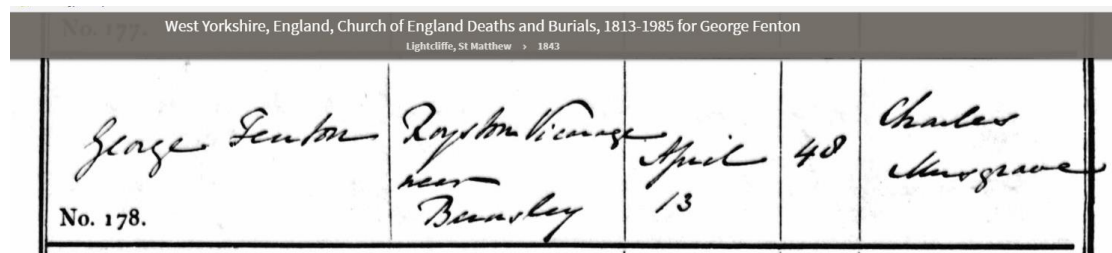
1841 census

Ann Walker Head 35 Ind
 Susan Oddy 35
 Susan Woodhead 25
 Jane Metcalf 20
 Henrietta Pomoud 25
 Joseph Buyst 25
 Francis Knight 20
 John Booth 50
 Address **Shibden Hall, Southowram**

1851 census

Ann Walker Head 48 Landed Proprietor
 Lydia Fenton Widow 55 Housekeeper
 Johanna Obrien Servant 31
 Attendant on Ann Walker
 Ann Downham Servant 36
 Edna Hargreaves Servant 21
 Harriet Fawcet Servant 22
 John Kelly Servant 44 Coachman
 John H Greenwood 25 Servant
 Address **Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe**

It is interesting to observe that the widow Lydia Fenton nee Wilkinson became Ann Walker's housekeeper having previously been one of her companions. The Reverend George Fenton had died at Royston Vicarage near Barnsley on 7th April 1843 but he was buried on 13th April 1843 at St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe where he had often preached.



But where were the Fentons and the other surviving Wilkinson sisters, including Sarah who had married John Roughton on 4th January 1813, in 1841 and 1851?

1841 census

George Fenton 45
 Lydia Fenton 45
 Ann Brooke 20 F.S
 Ann Townsend 20 F.S
 Address **Royston Vicarage, Yorkshire**

1841 census

John Roughton 60 Silk
 Merchant
 Sarah Roughton 50
 John Roughton 20 Silk
 Merchant
 Cristopher Roughton 10
 Sarah Ball 20 F.S.
 William Perkins 10 M.S.
 Address **Berkeswell, Warwickshire**

1841 census

Mary Wilkinson 55 Ind
 Catherina Wilkinson 50 Ind
 Susan Maude 20 F.S
 Ann Pritchard 20 F.S
 Address **Savile Row, Halifax**

1851 census

Mary Wilkinson	Head	67	Proprietor of Houses & Land
Catherine Wilkinson	Sister	65	Proprietor of Houses & Land
Lydia Ann Roughton	Niece	31	Proprietor of Houses & Land
Ruth Wilson	Servant	33	House Servant
Mary Beaumont	Servant	15	General Servant

Address **5 Savile Row, Halifax**

1851 census

John Roughton	Head	71	Silk & Cotton Agent
Sarah Roughton	Wife	63	
John Roughton	Son	33	Commission Agent
Ann Neath	Servant	16	House Servant

Address **Little Park St., Coventry**

Ann Walker died on 25th February 1854 and was buried under the pulpit of St. Matthew's Church on 3rd March 1854. The funeral service was again conducted by Rev. Charles Musgrave of Halifax.

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-1985 for Ann Walker				
Lightcliffe, St Matthew - 1854				
1854	Ann Walker	Cliff Hill in Lightcliffe	March 50 3 ^d	Charles Musgrave
No. 881.				



This difficult to read plaque was found in the Tower of St. Matthew's old Church confirming that Ann Walker was buried in the church. It reads :-

IN MEMORY OF ANN WALKER
OF CLIFFE HILL
WHO WAS BORN MAY 20TH 1803 AND
DIED FEBRUARY 25TH 1854
AND IS BURIED UNDERNEATH THE PULPIT IN THIS CHURCH.

The plaque also remembers some of Ann Walker's younger relatives, namely a niece and two nephews, the children of her sister, Elizabeth Sutherland nee Walker.

AND OF HER NIECE MARY WHO DIED JUNE 6TH 1845
AND IS BURIED IN THIS CHURCHYARD
AND OF HER NEPHEWS GEORGE SACKVILLE
WHO DIED IN 1843 AGED 12,
JOHN WALKER WHO DIED IN 1836 AGED 1 YEAR
AND ARE BURIED IN KIRKMICHAEL ROSSHIRE
THE CHILDREN OF GEORGE MACKAY & ELIZABETH SUTHERLAND.

This portrait below appears on the Find a Grave website entry for Ann Walker. It says the photograph was added by Elisa Rolle. It may or may not be Ann Walker.



Ann Walker's will was listed on the Prerogative & Exchequer Courts of York Probate Index in May 1854. Her nephew Evan Charles Sutherland inherited all Ann Walker's Lightcliffe estates on the condition that he and his family take the surname Sutherland Walker.

May 275 Walker Ann of Thibden Hill & of Cliff Hill both in P. Halifax Prop. J. 2000

In a final link with St Matthew's Church, the poor of Lightcliffe were provided for in Ann Walker's will as detailed below.

1854. Miss Ann Walker, by will, ordered her executor, William Gray, Esq., to invest so much money in the 3 per cent. consolidated annuities as would produce annually £10 to be given to the poor of the township of Lightcliffe, at Lightcliffe Chapel, on Christmas Day. This was made as a substitute for that made by her uncle, William Walker, Esq. If Upper Crow Nest pass out of the family the said capital stock be transferred to the minister and churchwardens of the chapelry of Lightcliffe.

D.M.Barker
March 2018

Now read the Sutherland Walker write up.