

Ann Walker and Anne Lister at Lightcliffe

As explained in the article about the Reverend Robert Wilkinson he would know the Walkers of Crow Nest and Cliffe Hill given that he was the perpetual curate of St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe. This was the church that Ann Walker's grandfather had built in 1775. Although early baptisms and burials were not signed by the officiating minister until later it is likely that he baptised all the Walker children including Ann Walker on 1st July 1804. He also almost certainly conducted the service when three-week-old William Walker was buried in 1798. By 1815 his signature is clear on teenager Mary Walker's parish burial record.

The Wilkinson family lived in Skircoat, Halifax because he was the headmaster of Heath School. His wife Sarah née Robinson helped with the boys at the Free Grammar School. Their four surviving daughters Mary, Catherine, Sarah and Lydia knew Anne Lister. They also knew the Miss Walkers of Crow Nest and the Priestleys of New House, Lightcliffe.

With grateful thanks to West Yorkshire Archives services (WYAS)

and all the Anne Lister diary transcribers for the following useful extracts

1818-07-21 (journal; WYAS)

– met the 2 Miss Walkers of Crow-nest and with them 2 Miss Wilkinsons of Heath at the library.

1822-10-30 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — Miss and Miss Lydia Wilkinson of Heath-school staying at the Priestleys'

Long before Anne Lister and Ann Walker became regular members of the Lightcliffe congregation Anne Lister sometimes worshipped at St. Matthew's Church.

1822-03-17 (journal; WYAS)

Not liking to meet Norcliffe at the new church — Went to Lightcliffe church — walked leisurely, in 40 minutes, and got there at the beginning of the 1st. lesson and sat with the Walkers of Crownest — Mr. Wilkinson preached 18 minutes from Matthew XX.1 — He has a sleepy idle sort of manner and I could not attend much

Anne Lister also had dealings with Rev. Robert Wilkinson, as the surrogate, when sorting out the will of her uncle, James Lister.

1826-04-19 (journal; WYAS)

(...) secured on the road — Messrs. Wiglesworth and Parker had sent up John Williams the appraiser to value the furniture plate etc. etc. previous to making out the residuary account belonging to my uncle's will — Mr. Wilkinson of Heath, surrogate, will meet me here respecting the probate —

1826-04-25 (journal; WYAS)

(...) at home — thence direct to the Saltmarshes not at home — staid 1/2 hour at Northgate — got to the office of Messrs. Wiglesworth and Parker a minute or 2 before one — the reverend Mr. Wilkinson there — took two oaths — Swore that my uncle's will was the true and last one, and swore that the personalty was under £4000 — Gave Mr. Wilkinson a check on the bank for £62.5.8 (£60 for the probate 15/8 for his own fee, and the rest (1/2 guinea of it) for 'additional length' of the will and the remainder for postage etc. (...)

In the early 1830s Ann Walker resided at Lydgate House in Lightcliffe before she moved to live at Shibden Hall with Anne Lister. Various companions stayed with her there.

1832-12-07 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — she goes on Monday and Miss Lydia Wilkinson then comes to Lidgate of which I said I should be glad

1832-12-10 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — off to Lidgate at 5 3/4 and there in 25 minutes — found Miss Walker and her friend Miss Lydia Wilkinson at tea —

1832-12-15 (journal; WYAS)

(...) we had talked of letting Lydia Wilkinson and Mr. Fenton have Lidgate —

1833-01-03 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — at Lidgate at 3 1/4 — Miserable again both in tears and owned ourselves wretched she not knowing what to do would let the Fentons (Lydia Wilkinson to marry Mr. Fenton) have Lidgate I advised not throwing herself on the pave if she thought she could make me happy .

By September 1834 Anne Lister and Ann Walker were hoping to acquire a pew at Lightcliffe church where they intended to worship rather than at the parish church in Halifax.

1834-09-09 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — wrote compliments to Mr. Wilkinson and to inquire if there was a front gallery-pew at liberty in Lightcliffe and what would be the annual rent (...) as, during my stay at home, should be glad to be one of Mr. Wilkinson's congregation if I could get a good pew — /.. — dinner at 7 10/.. — coffee — civil note compliments etc. from Mr. Wilkinson — could give no positive answer — would inquire — thinks there is one pew at liberty in the north or south gallery (could not make out which)

1834-09-15 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — to have the Mytholm pew in Lightcliffe church lined with dark green, ready for us next Sunday

1834-09-16 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — note from Mr. Wilkinson Heath to say the front pew in the north gallery nearest to the west gallery is at liberty rent 1 guinea a year

1834-09-21 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — A- [Ann] and I off to church at 2 35/.. George followed 1st time with the books and 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 of our sitting in it — determined to sit in a pew of our own since Miss Cliffhill's taking her books away the Sunday before last — — had opportunity to mention our sitting in our new pew — it seemed all right — but Miss Cliffhill wondered we did not go to H-x [Halifax], it was nearer — said I had 4 pews of my own in the chapel besides the Sutcliffe-wood pew belonging to John Lister in Wales

To get to their Lightcliffe pew Ann Walker and Anne Lister would have used the left-hand door to enter the church; then left again to climb the steps to the gallery level. These steps are accessible now in the tower the only part of the St. Matthew's Church still standing.



At the gallery level there would be another left turn to access the Mytholm pew on the northwest corner of the north gallery. Their view across to the south gallery would look something like this without the stained-glass window. This was presented later by Ann Walker's nephew and heir in memory of his parents George Mackay Sutherland and Elizabeth née Walker, Ann's sister, a young son, William Sutherland Walker, and his aunt Ann Walker. Read more in the articles

George Mackay Sutherland and family

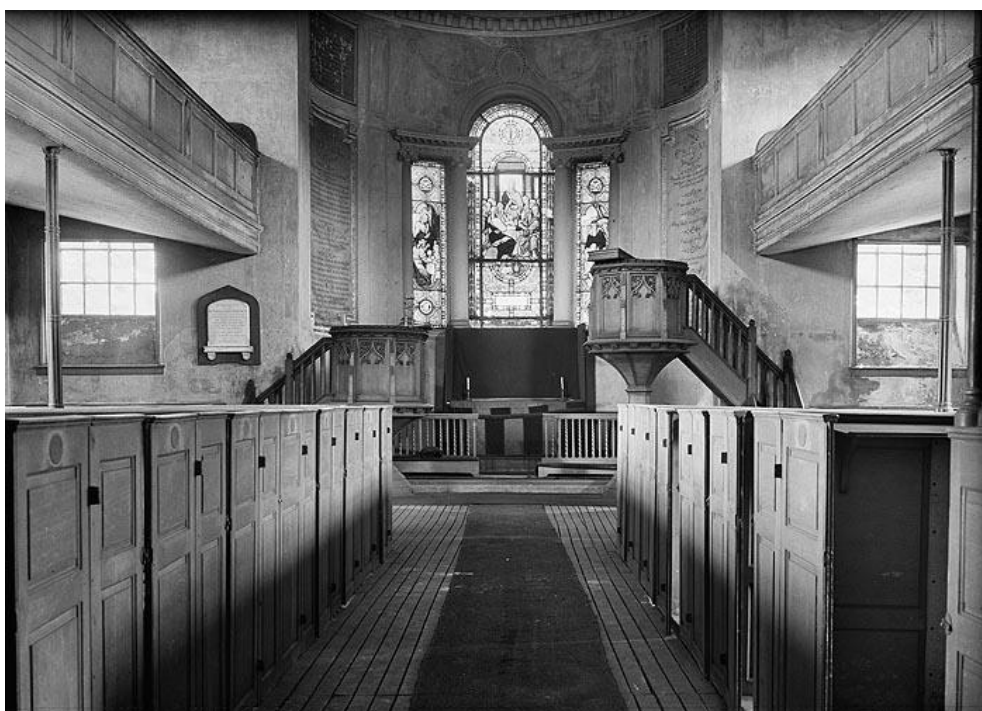
Evan Charles Sutherland and famiy



The benefactors' board now stands vertically on its end blocking what would have been the doorway to the gallery. But before the demolition it was hung horizontally on a long wall of the gallery either in front or behind the Mytholm pew. On the board Ann Walker would be able to read the name of her uncle, William Walker, and the bequest, in his 1810 will, which she would later continue.



The view towards the altar - again, without the east window and the reading pulpit added in 1862 by Evan Charles Sutherland Walker - would have been similar to the one below but from an elevated position on the left-hand side.



For the next five years Anne Lister recorded in her diary whenever she and Ann Walker joined the Lightcliffe congregation. They usually called at a Lightcliffe Sunday School beforehand, allowing Ann Walker to meet the children and sometimes to hear them say the psalms. Did this occasionally made them arrive late at the church, after the service had started?! Afterwards they would often go to Cliffe Hill to call on Aunt Ann Walker senior aka Miss Cliff Hill.

1834-11-09 (journal; WYAS)

(...) 1/4 — A- [Ann] and I off (in the carriage as ever since the 1st Sunday in last month) to Lightcliffe church at 2 — there in 20 minutes — waited 12 minutes — Mr. Wilkinson did all the duty — dined at Newhouse — preached 26 minutes from Ecclesiastes xi. 3. (...) whose hands this is committed — the most interesting sermon I have heard from Mr. Wilkinson home in 25 minutes at 4 25/.. —

1835-11-29 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — At the school in 16 minutes (fast going compared with 25 minutes) at 2 10/.. — I waited in the carriage 1/2 hour reading the few 1st. ppages of Rennie's alphabet of medical botany — Mr. Wilkinson all the duty

1835-06-07 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — at the school at 2 35/.. — A- [Ann] staid in the carriage while I spoke to Mr. Washington — to call here tomorrow morning Mr. Wilkinson did all the duty — preached uninterestingly 25 minutes from John v. 40. — we sat 1/2 hour at Cliff hill —

1836-11-20 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — she went to the boy's school to give 3 Wharton bibles — I waited for her in the house below — Mr. Wilkinson did all the duty —

1837-08-13 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — Mr. Wilkinson did all the duty — had nearly done the 2nd lesson when we arrived — preached 22 minutes from Matthew xxiv. 48 and 3 following verses — 1/2 hour at Cliff hill

1837-12-10 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — so A- [Ann] and I sat 10 minutes longer and were still in church before the service began — Mr. Fenton did all the duty — preached 22 minutes from Jonah i.2 a good sermon and well adapted — sat 3/4 hour at Cliff hill

1838-12-02 (journal; WYAS)

(...) Had been off to Lightcliffe church this afternoon (in the carriage with A- [Ann]) about 1 1/2 — A- [Ann] 40 minutes in the school, and I waited in her room upstairs — Mr. Wilkinson's curate did all the duty

More diary entries are quoted in the article

Reverend Robert Wilkinson and family

giving an insight into Rev. Robert Wilkinson's declining health . He died at the end of 1839.

Before then in June 1839, Ann Walker and Anne Lister 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. Her body was brought back to Halifax for burial in St. John's Church now Halifax Minster.

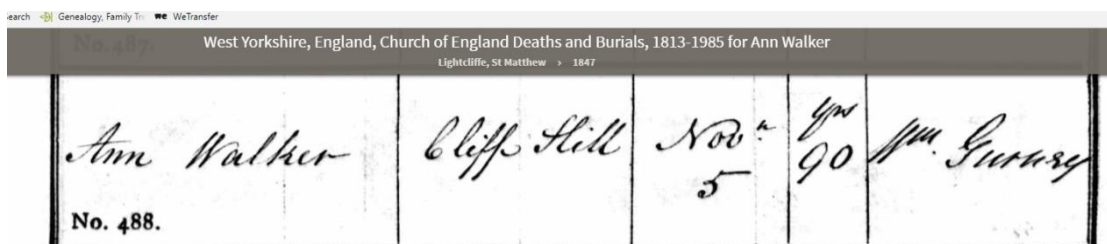
Ann Walker's brother-in-law George Mackay Sutherland went to Russia to escort her back home. Ann Walker returned to live at Shibden Hall having been given the life tenancy of the Hall in Anne Lister's will. This was where Ann Walker was on census night 6th June 1841.

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**

Her elderly aunt, Ann Walker senior, – *Miss Cliff Hill* – was still living at Cliffe Hill in 1841. She would die there on 29th October 1847 and be buried in a vault in St. Matthew's Church with her older sister Mary Walker who had died in 1822.



After the death of her aunt, Ann Walker moved from Shibden Hall back to Cliff Hill, the house she was born in. She was there on census night 30th March 1851 with her friend Lydia Fenton née Wilkinson as her housekeeper.

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 Fawcett	Servant	22	
John Kelly	Servant	44	Coachman
John H Greenwood	Servant	25	Servant

Address Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe

More about Lydia's and her sisters' connections with Ann Walker and Anne Lister can be found by reading

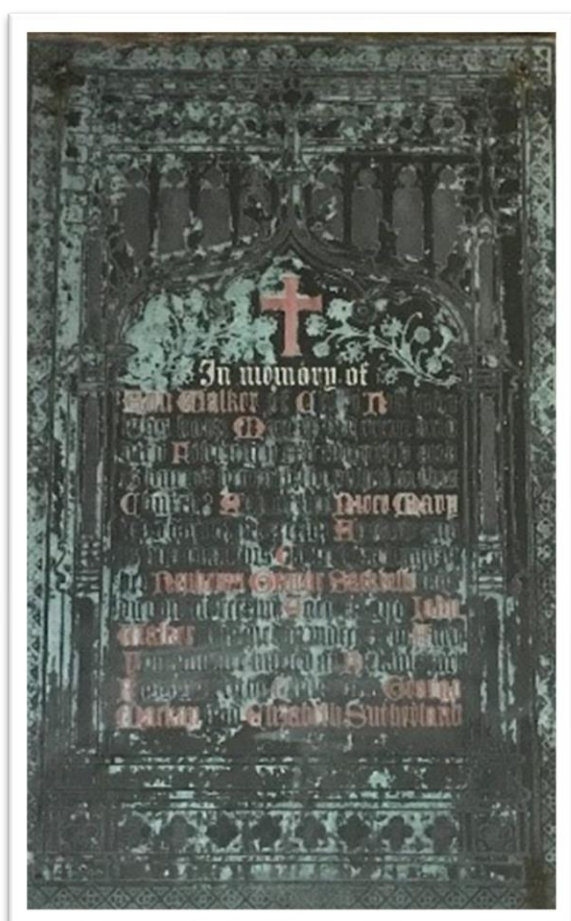
The Wilkinson sisters

Ann Walker died at Cliffe Hill on 25th February 1854 of 'Congestion of the Brain Effusion'. She was buried with her maiden aunts in a vault within St. Matthew's Church on 3rd March 1854. The funeral service was conducted by the Reverend 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	Cliffe Hill in Lightcliffe	Musgrave 3 rd	50
No. 881.				

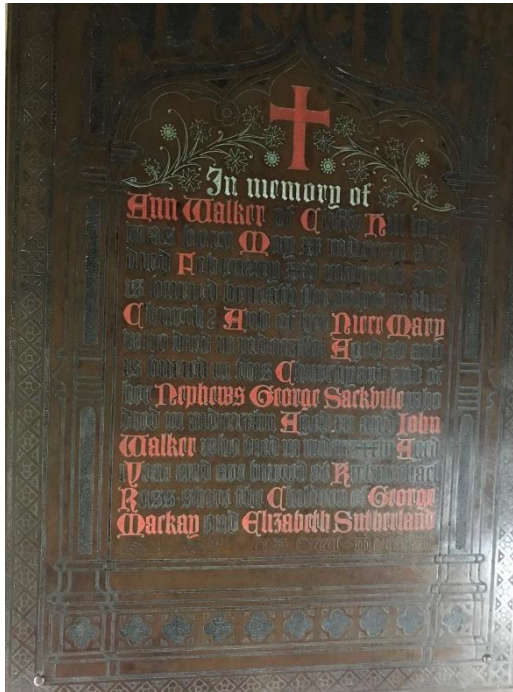
Whether a plaque similar to those for her aunts Mary and Ann Walker was placed near the vault is unknown. Images of her aunts' plaques, which are now in St. Matthew's new church, can be seen in the article [The Walkers of Crow Nest updated v2.pdf](#)

As already explained her nephew and heir, Evan Charles Sutherland, who had to add the name Walker in order to inherit, had the east window installed and dedicated to some of his immediate family including his aunt Ann Walker. This was during the 1860s when he had the church refurbished. A reading pulpit was put above the Walker vault and a brass plaque installed in the window recess near it. During the demolition of the old church this brass plaque was removed and placed in the tower in the 1970s. The tower was the only part of the old church that was left standing after its rescue by the organisation Friends of Friendless Churches. Years later the brass plaque was found in a rather sorry, but just readable, state.



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.
 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
 ECASW 1862

After the BBC's *Gentleman Jack* series there was great interest in Ann Walker and her final resting place. Thanks to generous donations from many people, Friends of Friendless churches were able to commission the restoration and remounting of this brass plaque by Skillingtons of Grantham, historic building repairers and restorers. It now looks like this and can be viewed just inside the door of the tower.



Further fund raising in 2024 organised by Pat Esgate, in the U.S.A., and the *In Search of Ann Walker* group – for which we are more than grateful – resulted in a local master stone mason, Jonathan Albutt of Elland, sourcing and carving the ledger stone below. In May 2024 it was placed in the footprint of the demolished church above where the Walker vault would have been.



D.M.Barker

June 2025