

Elizabeth Priestley née Walker and family and their Lightcliffe connections

Elizabeth Walker was the third child and second daughter of William Walker and his second wife Elizabeth Caygill. His first wife Mary Wainhouse died within weeks of their marriage early in 1739. Seven years later William Walker married Elizabeth Caygill on 6th November 1746 in Halifax. She was the sister of John Caygill who donated the land that Halifax's Piece Hall was built on.

They had five children baptised at St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe: namely Mary on 17th September 1747, William on 3rd March 1748, Elizabeth on 31st January 1751, John on 26th April 1753 and Ann on 2nd September 1757. Only Elizabeth and John would marry.

Elizabeth Walker married John Priestley, a gentleman of Sowerby on 19th September 1776. They had seven children, two of whom died as tiny babies, William on 19th March 1778 aged sixteen days and Ann who was baptised on the day she died, 20th April 1793 aged seven weeks. The surviving children were baptised at St. Peter's Church, Sowerby; namely William - born on 8th October 1779 - on 24th November 1779, Mary on 5th September 1781, John on 30th July 1784, Walker on 30th March 1787, and finally Edward on 16th February 1791.

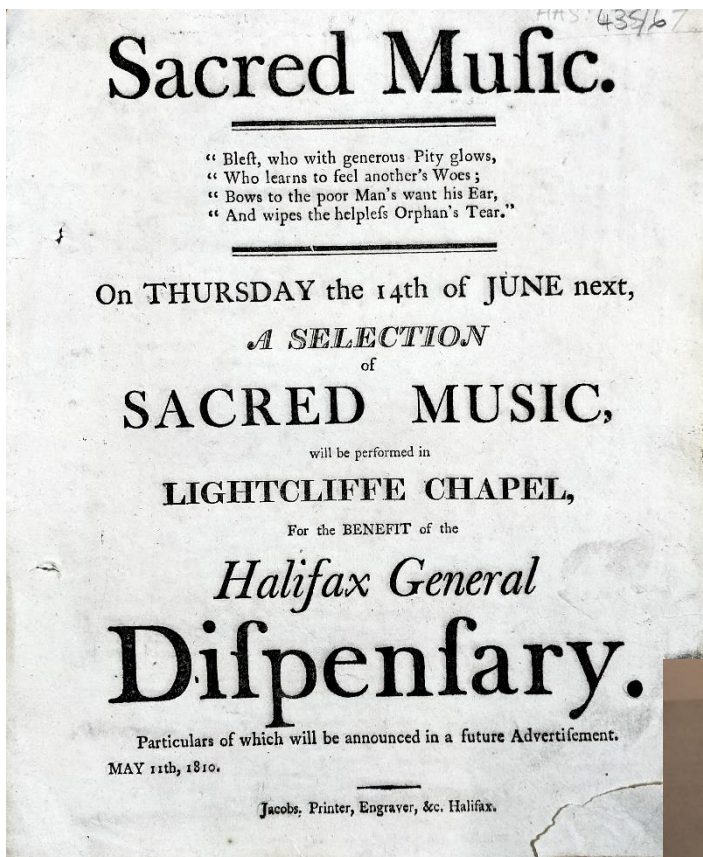
John Priestley was a cloth merchant and the family lived at The Lodge, Triangle. Forty-six-year-old John Priestley died on 21st January 1801 leaving five children fatherless. Even before his death their bachelor uncle William Walker, Elizabeth's older brother, and their maiden aunts Mary and Ann Walker appear to have helped bring up these children, particularly the eldest two William and Mary. William Priestley certainly lived with his relatives at the Crow Nest mansion whilst he attended the nearby Hipperholme Grammar School. Perhaps the other nephews did the same.

Uncle William Walker was very interested in music as was his sister. They were reputed to have had music lessons with William, Herschel, the astronomer who discovered Uranus, when he was the organist at Halifax Parish Church. William Priestley inherited this love of music. He became an eminent amateur musician playing the oboe and clarinet. He married Eliza(beth) Paley on 1st December 1808 in Carlisle. She was the daughter of the clergyman Dr. William Paley who had been the Archdeacon of Carlisle.

Less than a year later, on 2nd September bachelor uncle William Walker died. The Priestley nephews and niece were left generous legacies in their uncle's will, it appears that he viewed them as adoptive children.

William and Eliza Priestley took up residence at New House, Lightcliffe and he became churchwarden at St. Matthew's Church. The Priestleys cultured interests were similar to those of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall and she visited and consulted with them regularly. They held musical and literary evenings at their Lightcliffe home and at St. Matthew's Church.

Meanwhile, in 1806, William's sister Mary Priestley married William Henry Rawson, brother of Christopher and Jeremiah Rawson. They had ten children and lived at Mill House, Triangle, Sowerby with this large family.

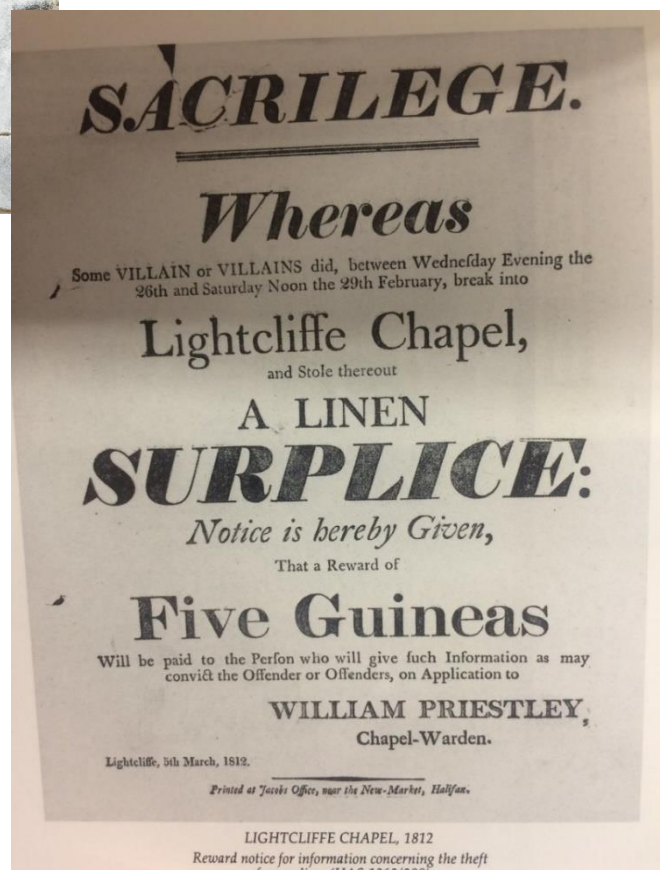


William Priestley may well have been involved in organising this charitable concert in Lightcliffe Chapel in 1810. There are many newspaper references noting William Priestley's donations to West Riding charities and Yorkshire hospitals. He also subscribed to a portrait of Sir John Radcliffe in 1813.

As churchwarden of St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe William Priestley had to deal, amongst other matters, with the theft of a linen surplice in 1812, offering a five-guinea reward.

Meanwhile in 1809, on the death of his uncle, William Walker, the residents of Cliff Hill and Crow Nest swapped mansions. The unmarried sisters Mary and Ann Walker moved into Cliff Hill allowing John Walker, who inherited the estate, to move into Crow Nest with his wife Mary and young children Mary, Elizabeth, Ann and John.

[Repeating the same first names does cause confusion – apologies. The naming of any daughters Mary, Elizabeth and Ann in that order seems to have been as traditional in this family as naming the eldest son William and then the next son John; after that they had to think of other names for the sons!]



In 1817 William Priestley invited guests to his home, New House, Lightcliffe for a musical evening. From this gathering the Halifax Choral Society was founded. Their first performance was Hayden's *Creation* on 9th February 1818.

The Walker children's Priestley cousins continued to visit Lightcliffe, sometimes residing with their maiden aunts. Anne Lister's diaries have some interesting references to Edward Priestley who was residing at Cliff Hill in February 1818. The following diary quotes tell some of his sad story.

6th May 1818

Miss Walkers of Cliff hill and their nephew Mr. Edward Priestley drank tea with us.

1st June 1821

Miss Ann Walker walked back with me along the fields as far as Lidget and with her Mr. Edward Priestley who met us by the way — I wished him at Jerusalem.

12th March 1822

... and that Mr. Edward Priestley is to marry his cousin Miss [Elizabeth] Walker of Crownest.

10th June 1822

— drove to Cliffhill, and staid 50 minutes with Mrs. Mary Walker She said Mr. Edward Priestley left them a fortnight ago and was in lodgings in Huddersfield on account of his having just entered into partnership with Mr. Sidney Norris and a Mr. Sykes (20 years trusty clerk to the Horsfalls) in the business which Messrs Horsfall have just given up to them — Mrs. Mary Walker seemed very low at her nephew's leaving them, spoke of it in tears but said it was best for him — I mentioned his marrying Elizabeth Walker Mrs Mary opened out said he had been ill used Mrs Walker thought she abetted the thing and seldom went there that she took it very high and thought it no match for Elizabeth etc. etc. yet we both agreed the young people understood each other that it would be a match and I said I would and see Mrs Mary and help her to eat bride cake etc.

18th June 1822

Mrs. Mary Walker fell (not in a fit) but accidentally yesterday evening in the hall at Cliff hill, and broke a little bone or 2 in her thigh — Mr. Sunderland thinks she will never be able to walk again without crutches or a stick —

8th July 1822

— Mrs. Mary Walker of Cliff hill a little better this evening the mortification seems to be stopt, but she is losing her strength and there not to be much hope of recovery —

9th July 1822

— Mr. Edward Priestley came in just before I left — Bad account of Mrs. Mary Walker in spite of her being rather better —

19th August 1822

... met Mr. Edward Priestley (now of Huddersfield) in my return — Mrs. Mary Walker of Cliff-hill surprisingly better — but has not yet been persuaded to the exertion of sitting up in bed.

Seventy-six-year-old Mary Walker never recovered. She died on 13th September 1822 and was buried in a vault in the church her father built on 20th September 1822.

31st March 1823

Mr Edward Priestley came just as were sitting down to tea — Speaking of the bursting of our lead-pipes they (Mr William Priestley in particular) recommended earthen ware pipes and to have Bradley and 2 or 3 of his navigation men to lay and puddle them well — Fancied Mr Edward Priestley sorry at my being there and that he might want a [illegible] tete a tete with Mrs Priestley so resolved to come away directly after tea —

John Walker suffered from gout and died on 22nd April 1823 aged 70. He was buried with his baby son and teenage daughter in the family plot just outside Lightcliffe church.

30th May 1823

Mr. Edward Priestley (late of Cliff) called just before tea went out, and staid about or near an hour — Poor fellow! he was quite beside himself — quite mad — never heard a man talk more wildly — Had just bought Horley Green for £10500 and another estate for £5,000 — had so much money he did not know what to do with it — did not know how it came — but he had got it — got it honestly — was for buying estates — would give my father £15,000 for his — had offered £150 per annum for General Bernard's house near Huddersfield on lease for 11 years — 65 acres of land to it — going to London would order a carriage — then going to Scotland — he had cleared £1000 by his business last year — his uncle Walker had left him £10000 — that was his nest egg — for the last 4 or 5 years he had saved £500 a year — should have £6,000 at his mother's death something handsome at his aunt Anne's death — he should marry his cousin he had 3 ladies on the list but she should be first — her father had left her and sister £1000 a year — a wildness of wild nonsense besides all this — we were all quite shocked, and for some time after he went could think or talk of nothing else — George evidently thought him tipsy — His great success in business and the speedy prospect of his marrying Miss Walker seem to have been more of good fortune than he could bear — Poor fellow! How is thy reason darkened — thy prospects thus shadowed with despair!

15th June 1823

Mr. Edward Priestley was better yesterday — a bad account of him today — he has been bled again and is to have a blister at the back of his head or neck — still violent — his mother has hitherto borne up the best of any of them but is very low today.

29th June 1823

Mr. William Priestley met his brother at the White lion on Saturday morning — got him away to Kebroyde, on the plea of his mother's being unwell, — had Dr. Paley in the chaise with them and he bled Mr Edward Priestley profusely (opened the temporal artery) immediately — still the poor fellow was so violent that night, he required seven strong men to hold him — the artery burst open in the night and bled again profusely — today's account not arrived Mr. William Priestley not returned; but yesterday and Sunday rather quieter — Mrs. Priestley, the mother, bears it quite as well or better than could be expected — On Thursday and Friday his friends had thought him labouring under the effects of intoxication — They thought so at Crownest on Friday evening after he had been here, and were exceedingly distressed — he returned to Huddersfield that night — He had really agreed with Mr. Briggs to give £10,500 for Horley Green..

9th June 1823

Edward Priestley] no better on the whole the fever still high pulse a hundred he is sstill violent —

Mary Walker née Edwards, Elizabeth's and Ann's mother, died on 13th November 1823. She was buried at Lightcliffe with her husband and children on 20th November 1823.

15th November 1823

The match quite off between Miss Walker and Mr. Edward Priestley she seems inclined to order everything and not to be likely to die of regret and feeling on this occasion of her mother's death.

6th March 1824

Mr. Edward Priestley who was not expected to survive yesterday — in convulsions all Thursday night — rather better.

8th March 1824

Mr. Edward Priestley much as usual again

3rd April 1824

... then walked to Lightcliffe — waited 25 minutes before Mrs. William Priestley came down — she was bilious and not very well — fidgetted about the state of her husband's brother Mr. Edward Priestley whose death (at Kebroyde with his mother) she minutely expected hearing of — afraid her husband would not get back from York assizes in time to see him again alive. — she feels very much about poor Edward but hides it as well as she can she often thinks of his complaint almost with fear

5th April 1824

Mr. Edward Priestley in a state of insensibility but from the strength of his pulse may continue some time longer.

29th April 1824

— Sat 35 minutes with Mrs. William Henry Rawson — She seemed very glad to see me — her brother Mr. Edward Priestley, still lingering on at Kebroyde —

29th May 1824

— called to inquire after Mrs. Priestley (Mr. Edward Priestley died at Kebroyde about 4 a.m. on Wednesday or Thursday) She was gone to Kebroyde —

The troubled young man died on 27th May 1824 aged 33 years. He was buried at Sowerby on 1st June 1824 and is remembered on the family memorial there.

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-1985 for Edward Priestley			
Sowerby, St Peter and Others > 1824			
Edward Priestley Esq.	Kebroyde, late of Cliff Hill	died 27 May age 33	1 st June J. Heatall
No. 1325.			

18th June 1824

... my aunt set off in the gig to call at Kebroyde (after the death of Mr. Edward Priestley)

With grateful thanks to David Glover of the Halifax Antiquarian Society and the Anne Lister diary transcribers organised by West Yorkshire Archives for these extracts. Not forgetting Anne Lister herself who because of the details in her diary gave a unique incite into the daily lives of some Lightcliffe individuals living two hundred years or so ago.

The Priestleys and Anne Lister continued to call regularly on one another. Anne Lister often sort advice from William Priestley on running the Shibden Hall estate including the letting of her properties. She also consulted Eliza Priestley about managing a household on an annual budget.

18th February 1824

— *Spoke to Mr. William Priestley about Jonathan Mallinson's nephew wanting to take Yew trees* —

— *Sat talking a good while to Mrs. Priestley she shewed me their offices, and above all her store-room* —

8th September 1828

— *Mr. and Mrs. William Priestley of Lightcliffe and her niece Miss Paley then called for about 20 minutes or 1/2 hour* —

9th January 1829

— *Lightcliffe in 3/4 hour* — *sat with Mr. and Mrs. William Priestley*

Four years after her first suitor's death Elizabeth Walker did marry. Her husband was a Scotsman, Captain George MacKay Sutherland of the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders. The marriage took place on 29th October 1828 at St. John's Church, Halifax with her sister Ann Walker as a witness.

In December 1828 William Priestley of Lightcliffe was listed as 'one of his Majesty's deputy lieutenants' in a list of names headed by Christopher Rawson who was a 'Magistrate for the West Riding of Yorkshire'. There were other Rawsons and Priestleys on this list as well as John Walker (junior) of Crow Nest; some of the powerful families in the area.

Elizabeth Priestley née Walker, Elizabeth and Ann Walker's aunt, died on 27th July 1829 aged 78 years. She too was buried at Sowerby and is named on the family memorial there.

A day later her nephew John Walker married Frances Esther Penfold on 28th July 1829 in Steyning, Sussex. After the wedding John and Fanny set off for a honeymoon in Italy. But on 19th January 1830 twenty-five-year-old John Walker died in Naples. John Walker junior died intestate and so there had to be much consulting of the wills of both his father and grandfather. William Priestley was very much involved in this process. As a trustee of the Crow Nest estate he was involved in settling John Walker junior's honeymoon bills and in administering the complicated hand over of the Crow Nest estate to Elizabeth Sutherland and Ann Walker who became very wealthy coheiresses. This process took years to sort out.

When William Priestley's cousin, Ann Walker, began her relationship with Anne Lister and then subsequently moved into Shibden Hall there was a cooling off of Anne Lister's long-standing friendship with the Priestleys. Anne Lister noted that '*the spell of 17 years is broken*'. Although William Priestley was initially named as an executor in Anne Lister's will he was '*struck out*' in 1835.

During the 1830s William Priestley continued to be involved with the Halifax Choral Society both as a soloist as well as a member of the chorus. He was particularly fond of works by German composers, translating them into English for the society. Also, as a Vice President of the West Riding Charitable Society, he was involved in setting up schools and raising funds for hospitals including institutions for the deaf and blind. He also produced manuscript notes for the Yorkshire Philosophical Society as the following newspaper article explains.

YORKSHIRE PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

At the last meeting of this Society the donations of books, prints, and specimens of natural history and antiquities were extremely numerous;

Donations of books, &etc were received from the British Association, the Natural History Society of Manchester, the Geological Society, the Statistical Society of Manchester, the

But the most interesting of these additions to the Library of the Institution, was a copy of Carr's Glossary of the Craven Dialect, presented by Wm. Priestley, Esq., of Lightcliffe near Halifax who had added valuable MS notes, containing the etymology of the words; a work of which the great labours and merit were acknowledged by a special vote of thanks.

One of William Priestley's interests was local dialect. He seems to have been particularly intrigued by the pronunciation of the word *Halifax* which was apparently said differently depending on which direction from Halifax folk lived in!

In July 1837 his home address as Vice President of the West Riding Charitable Society changed from Lightcliffe to Thorpe Arch as the Priestleys left their Lightcliffe home.

Halifax Express 13 May 1837

NEW HOUSE, LIGHTCLIFFE NEAR HALIFAX

To be held on the Premises lately occupied by William Priestley, Esquire, New House, Lightcliffe near Halifax, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday the 16th, 17th and 18th Days of May, 1837, the Valuable HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE comprising
.....

New House was very old by this time which might have been why the move was made. The Grange was built later, possibly a reconstruction of New House, possibly a new build on the same site.

1841 census

William Priestley 60 Ind
Elizabeth Priestley 55
4 servants
Address Boston, Bramham

They were at the same place in 1851 although the address had changed.

1851 census

William Priestley Head 71
Landed Proprietor & Deputy Lieutenant
?Commissioner? of the Peace W.R.C^o York
Eliza Priestley Wife 69
4 servants
Address Clifford cum Boston

Both the Priestleys died and were buried at Thorp Arch; Eliza on 13th June 1856 and then William on 5th April 1860. She was 76 years old and he was 80.

The Will of William Priestley late of Boston Spa in the County of York Esquire deceased who died 1 April 1860 at Boston Spa aforesaid was proved at Wakefield by the oaths of John Rawson of Brockwell in Sowerby in the Parish of Halifax in the said County Esquire and Frederic Edward Rawson of Thorpe in Sowerby aforesaid Esquire the Nephews and Executors. Effects under £5,000

Leeds Intelligencer 12 May 1860

BEQUEST TO THE LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL INSTITUTION. --- The valuable library of research bequeathed by William Priestley, Esq., to this institution, has been received this week. His divinity library has been bequeathed to the Halifax Parish Church. Bequest of music, manuscripts, &c., have been made to various individuals and institutions.

About half of William Priestley's extensive music collection was also bequeathed by will to Halifax Parish church.



D.M.Barker
May 2023