

The Wilkinson sisters

As noted in the article about their father.

Reverend Robert Wilkinson and family

one of whose three occupations was as the perpetual curate of St. Matthew's Church, the Wilkinsons had four surviving daughters. The eldest three, namely Mary, Catherine and Sarah were baptised at St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe on 1st July 1783, 28th June 1785 and 19th April 1787 respectively. A fourth daughter Lydia Wilkinson was also baptised there on 25th January 1796.

In January 1813 various newspapers including the *Leicester Journal* and the *Cambridge Chronicle* had this announcement.

On Monday the 4th instant, at Halifax, Mr. John Roughton, of Coventry, to
Sarah, third daughter of the Rev. Robert Wilkinson, B.D. of Heath, near Halifax.

The Roughtons had five children, two daughters – Lydia Ann was baptised on 21st Jul 1819 - and three sons, all baptised in Coventry when their father was recorded as being a 'Silkman'. Although the Roughtons lived in Coventry they must have visited their Wilkinson grandparents and aunts in Halifax as these two diary entries suggest.

1832-11-25 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — at 1 1/4 off along my walk to Lidgate and there in 1/2 hour — found Miss Walker and Miss Harriet Parkhill and the reverend Mr. Wilkinson and his grandson (Wroughton) sitting after dinner — they soon went away and Miss Parkhill went into the other room leaving Miss Walker and me to go to church —

1835-03-25 (journal; WYAS)

(...) Off with A- [Ann] at 11 35/.. — 1/2 hour at Crownest looking over A- 's [Ann 's] plan of the H-x [Halifax] property — then 1 1/4 hour at Cliff hill till 2 10/.. — Miss Kitty Wilkinson and her niece Miss Wroughton there the 1st. 1/2 hour of our visit —

With grateful thanks to West Yorkshire Archive Services (WYAS)
and all the Anne Lister diary transcribers for these extracts.

The youngest Wilkinson daughter, Lydia, married Rev. George Fenton on 30th May 1833. Again, various newspapers including the *York Herald* and the *Leeds Times* both on 1st June 1833 reported the event.

On Thursday, at Halifax parish church, by the Rev. Henry Torre, M.A. rector of Thornhill, the Rev. Geo. Fenton B.A., of Ilkley, to Lydia, youngest daughter of the Rev. Robert Wilkinson, B.D. of Skircoat, near Halifax.

George Fenton was fourth son of the many children of James Fenton and his wife Thomasina née Ibbetson. He was born at Rothwell Leeds on 10th February 1795 and baptised there on 27th February 1795. It seems likely that George and some of his five surviving brothers attended the Heath School where his future father-in-law was the head master. The eldest brother, Reverend William Carr Fenton, who founded a Yorkshire school for deaf and dumb children, certainly attended the 19th December 1839 Heath School dinner. The Reverend Henry Fenton may also have been an old boy of Heath School.

Two Yorkshire charities were set up by two Fenton brothers

What became known as the Yorkshire Institution for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Children resulted from the efforts of the Rev William Carr Fenton, the Rector of Cawthorpe, North Yorkshire. Fenton discovered that some deaf children in a poor Yorkshire family were having to travel to the [London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb](#) to be educated because of the absence of any such facility in their home area. After visiting several existing establishments for teaching deaf children, he became convinced of the need to open one in Yorkshire. After much perseverance, he gained the support of such eminent figures as the Archbishop of York and the Earl of Harewood for the venture, and a public meeting was held at Doncaster on 10 March 1829 to take the matter forward. The meeting resolved that such an institution, to be located in the town, was desirable and rules were proposed for its government, which was to be by a committee of sixteen gentlemen. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Institution often referred to as the Doncaster School for the Deaf and Dumb.

Leeds Mercury 21st November 1829

Leeds Intelligencer 29th March 1834

ILKLEY BATH CHARITABLE INSTITUTION.—A Meeting of the Superintending Committee of this Institution was held this Day at Ilkley, to Audit the Accounts of the Secretary and to examine the state of the Funds; when the following statement was Audited and Approved:—

RECEIPTS.	£. s. d.	PAYMENTS.	£. s. d.
Subscriptions and Donations	167 8 7	Pecuniary Relief Administered to Patients	79 7 1
Interest of Note	5 0 0	Paid Joseph Beanlands for Bathing 174 Patients in the New Poor Baths ..	34 16 0
Dividend of Stock ..	7 0 0	Cost of Power of Attorney, Postage, & Additional Stock ..	3 8 6
		Postage & incidental Expenses attending establishing Institution	9 16 0
		Printing and Advertising	4 4 6
		Cash in the Bank of Messrs. Beckett & Co.	48 7 6
Balance due to Secretary	0 11 0		
	£179 19 7		£179 19 7

PRESENT STATE OF THE FUNDS.

Three per Cent. Consols	233 6 8
Cash in Bank	48 7 6
Subscriptions unpaid	3 3 0
Subscriptions due for the ensuing Year	73 16 5

184 Patients relieved during the Season.

A Meeting of the Subscribers will be held at the Court-House, Leeds, in the Month of January, 1830, of which due Notice will be given.

JOSHUA DIXON, } Members of the Superintending Committee.
 GEORGE O. GREENWOOD, }
 GEORGE FENTON, Secretary.

Ilkley, November 14th, 1829.

ILKLEY CHARITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE INTELLIGENCER.

SIR,—Previous to the commencement of the bathing season at this place, allow me, through the medium of your paper, to draw the attention of Subscribers to the Ilkley Charity to a resolution adopted at the annual general meeting of that institution, on the 8th of January last, viz: "That there be not more than 60 patients on the Charity at one time;" and to a former resolution, that "Hereafter before any patient be sent to Ilkley, an application (post-paid) be made to the Secretary, and that the patient be informed by him when he can be admitted, and that patients be admitted exactly in the order of their application."

Reasonable objections having been made to the great influx of patients at the season of the year when this place is most frequented by visitors, and very injurious effects resulting from the crowded lodging houses for the poor and infirm, where patients of all ages and both sexes are congregated indiscriminately in the smallest apartments, it is earnestly requested that subscribers of the institution would avail themselves of the power of recommending patients at an early or late period of the season, either before or after the months of *July* and *August*.

A regard to the comforts and accommodation of the patients, and a desire to divide more equally the labours of the medical and other officers of the institution, and some consideration for the feelings of the affluent portion of the community who resort to this place during the summer months, have dictated these suggestions, and

I remain, Sir, your faithful and obedient servant,
 GEORGE FENTON, Hon. Sec.

Ilkley, March 20th, 1834.

From <https://ilkleyhistoryhub.co.uk/>

The Ilkley Bath Charity was established in 1829, to enable the poor to benefit from treatment at the Ilkley White Wells spring and baths. At this time the spring and baths were leased from Mr. Middleton by Joseph Beanland, of Ilkley. Mr. Beanland charged First bath, 3s. each person per week; shower bath, 3s.; second bath, 2s.; third (or poor) bath, half the above charges.

Rev. George Fenton, who in 1829 was curate-in-charge of the Ilkley parish, was instrumental in establishing the Charity. Rev. Fenton was also the originator of the "canker," or soft water wells in Green Lane (now The Grove), and collected the water in tanks. The canker water was much resorted to for ailments of the eyes, and it was also drunk for its tonic properties.

But back to 1833, just days after her wedding Lydia Fenton lost her mother Sarah Wilkinson née Robinson on 19th June 1833. She was buried at Lightcliffe almost certainly within the church where her husband was the perpetual curate. After that their unmarried daughters Mary and Catherine presumably continued to live with and look after their ageing father at Heath School.

The Fentons did not move into Lydgate House as was 'talked of'. However, they remained on visiting terms with Ann Walker at Lydgate House and then at Shibden Hall presumably when they visited Lydia's family in Halifax. Rev. George Fenton took some of the Lightcliffe Sunday services for his ageing father-in-law.

1832-12-15 (journal; WYAS)

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

1834-04-27 (journal; WYAS)

(...) — both of us at church at 3 — Mr. George Fenton preached 1/4 hour from psalm 68. 18th verse — read very fast and did the duty very ill — an occasional tone of familiarity ill suited to the pulpit

When Lydia Fenton was pregnant Ann Walker sent her baby clothes.

1835-02-19 (AW's journal; WYAS)

Sent Cap & frock to Mrs. Fenton

1835-02-26 (journal; WYAS)

(...) Letter from Mr. George Fenton of thanks in the name of his wife for the baby's frock and cap A- [Ann] sent her last week (...)

Halifax Express 19th March 1835

BIRTHS

On the 9th inst the lady of the Rev. George Fenton, B.A. of Ilkley, of a daughter still born.

Hull Packet 29th January 1836

BIRTHS

On the 19th inst., at Otley, the lady of the Rev. George Fenton, B.A. of Ilkley, of a son still born

The infants were buried at Ilkley where there is this headstone with a memorial inscription.



HERE ARE DEPOSITED THE
REMAINS OF TWO STILL BORN
INFANTS, MALE AND FEMALE,
OF LYDIA, THE WIFE OF THE REV.
GEORGE FENTON, B.A., VICAR OF
ROYSTON, YORKS, AND MANY
YEARS OFFICIATING MINISTER
OF ILKLEY AND DENTON.

Image from
FindaGrave courtesy of All Saints Church,
Ilkley Heritage Team 2021

As the memorial inscription implies, Rev. George Fenton became the vicar of Roystone near Barnsley in March 1836. From there he sometimes took services at the nearby Darton parish where his father-in-law, Rev. Robert Wilkinson, was still the vicar.

Both the Rev. Wilkinson and Anne Lister died before the 1841 census. The Wilkinson sisters were at these addresses on 6th June 1841.

1841 census

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

1841 census

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

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 Berkswell, Warwickshire

Lydia Roughton aged 20 was staying with a Ribbon Manufacturer and his family in Warwickshire

The Reverend George Fenton died on 7th April 1843 as announced in various newspapers including :-

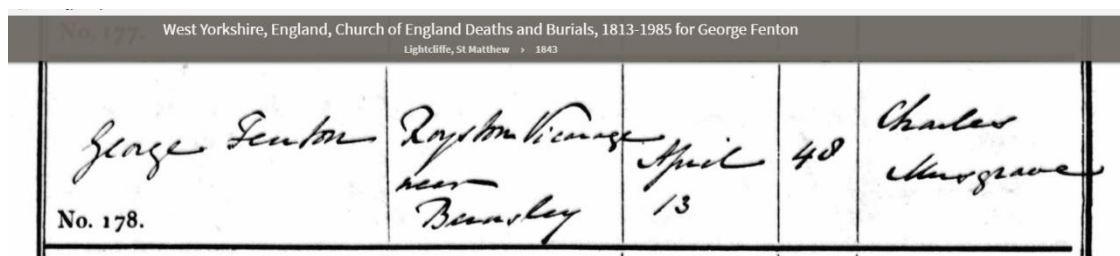
Leeds Times 15th April 1843

Yesterday week, at Halifax, the Rev. George Fenton B.A. vicar of Roystone, near Barnsley. He had been confined by illness a few weeks, at the house of Mr. Cass, of Wood's End.

Halifax Guardian 15th April 1843

Same day, aged 48, in this town, the Rev. George Fenton, vicar of Royston, and fourth son of the late James Fenton, Esq., of Loversall, in this county. As founder of the Ilkley Charity for the Relief of the Indigent Sick he will ever be remembered with gratitude by those who through this unwearied exertions were restored to health. For nearly twenty years he undertook the laborious office of honorary secretary, and never thought any exertion too great when the interests of the Charity required his services, He was, indeed, the good Samaritan, in every sense of the word, and it is hoped the blessings and prayers of his once afflicted but no happy fellow creatures, will be heard at that shrine of mercy where joy and peace reign for ever.

He was buried in plot HH*7 on 13th April 1843 in the churchyard around St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe where he had often preached.



In September 1843 Ann Walker moved from Shibden Hall to Terrace House in Osbaldwick, York under the care of Dr. Belcombe. By November 1844 she had joined her sister Elizabeth Sutherland and family at Abbey Lodge, Merton, Surrey. This was where her friend, the widow Lydia Fenton, and a cousin visited her. Not long after this Ann Walker was admitted to another private asylum, Sussex House, in Hammersmith.

Elizabeth Sutherland née Walker, died of tuberculosis at Abbey Lodge, Merton, Surrey on 28th December 1844. Her family's story is told in two articles

George Mackay Sutherland and family

Evan Charles Sutherland and family

After Elizabeth's death Captain Sutherland brought his young family and his sister-in-law, Ann Walker, back to Shibden Hall. Apparently, Lydia Fenton volunteered to act as one of the committee for Ann Walker but a family member took on the role instead. After the deaths of a teenage niece, "Little Mary" Sutherland, brother-in-law George Mackay Sutherland and then the very elderly aunt Ann Walker of Cliffe Hill Lydia Fenton did become Ann Walker's housekeeper back at Cliffe Hill according to the 1851 census.

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

1851 census

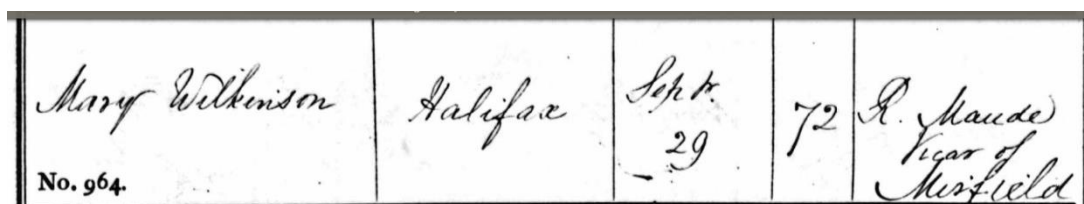
Mary Wilkinson Head 67
 Proprietor of Houses & Land
 Catherine Wilkinson Sister 65 ditto
 Lydia Ann Roughton Niece 31 ditto
 Ruth Wilson Servant 33 House Servant
 Mary Beaumont Servant 15 General Servant
 Address 5 Savile Row, Halifax

1851 census

John Roughton Head 71 Silk & Cotton Agent
 Sarah Roughton Wife 63
 John Roughton Son 33 Commission Agent
 Ann Neath Servant 16 Servant
 Address Little Park St., Coventry

Sarah Roughton née Wilkinson died on 21st May 1853. She was buried in the London Road Civic Cemetery, Coventry on 26th May 1853. Her husband was also interred there on 19th September 1855, he died on 12th September. Both had probate granted years later.

A few days later on 25th September 1855 Sarah's eldest sister Mary Wilkinson died in Halifax. But she was brought back to the church where her parents were interred for burial on 29th September 1855 in the plot now given the code HH*8.



Her name appears of the *Prerogative & Exchequer Courts of York Probate Index* for 1855.

By 7th April 1861 the two surviving Wilkinson sisters were living together with their Roughton niece in Halifax. The widow Lydia Fenton must have moved to the Savile Row house sometime after Ann Walker's death at Cliffe Hill in February 1854.

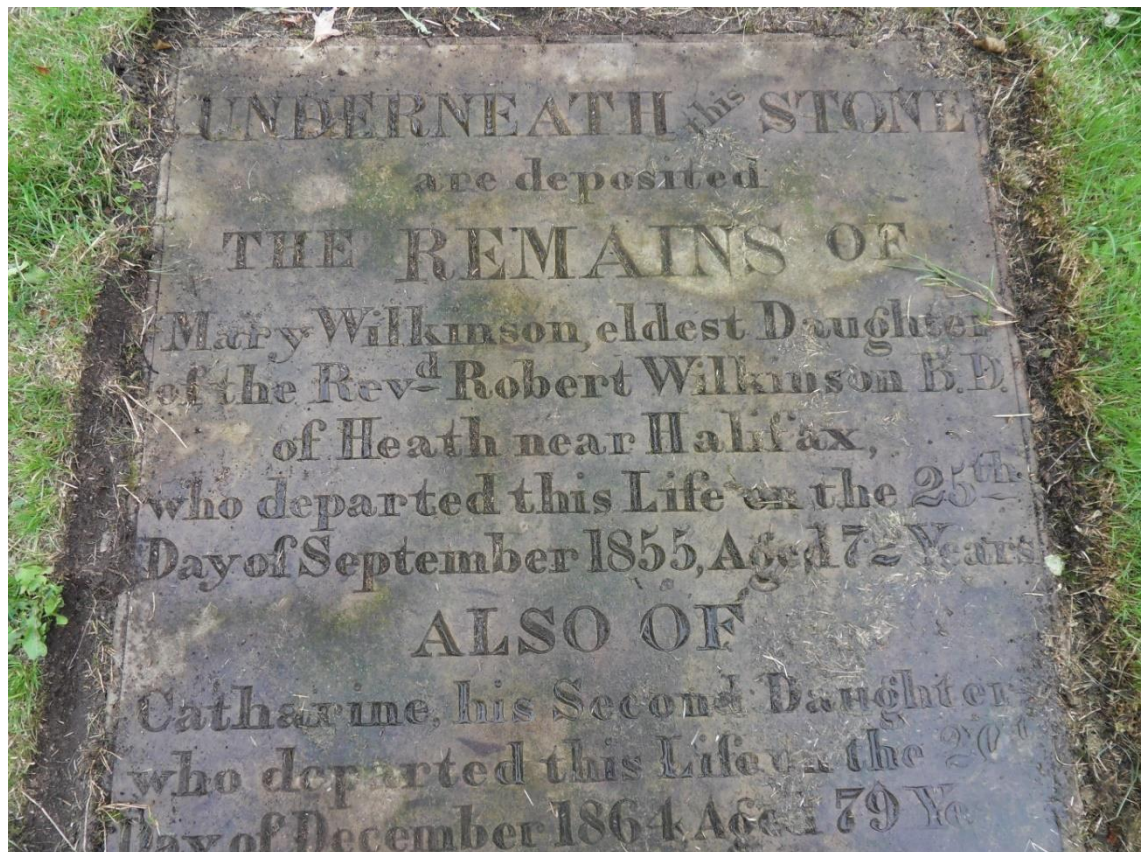
1861 census

Catherine Wilkinson	Head	75	Landed Proprietor
Lydia Fenton	Sister	65	Widow Annuitant & Land Holder
Lydia A Roughton	Niece	41	Landed Proprietor
Sarah A Milner	Servant	50	Cook
Sophia Forner	Servant	23	House Maid
Address 2 Savile Row, Halifax			

Catharine Wilkinson died aged 79 on 20th December 1864 and was buried in St. Matthew's churchyard on 27th December 1864 alongside her older sister Mary in plot HH*8. The funeral service was conducted by Charles Musgrave.

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-1985 for Catharine Wilkinson				
Lightcliffe, St Matthew > 1865				
Catharine Wilkinson No. 1525.	Halifax	Dec: 27	79	Charles Musgrave
	1865			

The easy-to-read inscription on the Wilkinson grave, plot HH*8.



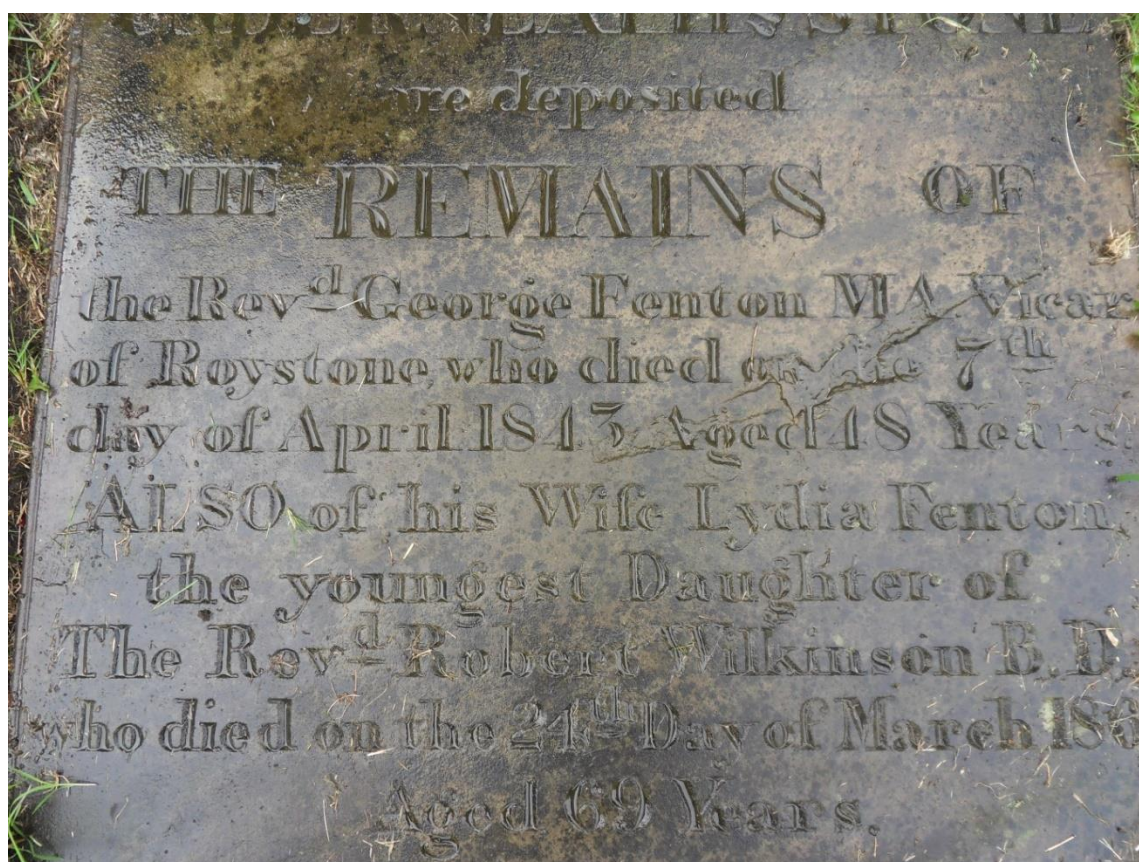
Catharine Wilkinson's probate record dated 2nd March 1865 reads: -

The Will with a Codicil of Catharine otherwise Catherine Wilkinson late of Halifax in the County of York Spinster deceased who died 20 December [1864] proved at Wakefield by the oath of Lydia Fenton of Halifax aforesaid Widow the Sister One of the Executor. Effects under £1500. *Resworn at the Stamp Office January 1872 under £3000*

Lydia Fenton nee Wilkinson, friend to Ann Walker and then her Housekeeper, died on 24th March 1865 at Halifax. She was buried alongside her husband Reverend George Fenton on 30th March 1865 in St. Matthew's churchyard in the plot now given the code HH*7. Again, Charles Musgrave took the funeral service.

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-1985 for Lydia Fenton				
Lightcliffe, St Matthew > 1865				
Lydia Fenton	Halifax	March 30	69	Charles Musgrave
No. 1535.				

The matching inscription on the adjacent Fenton grave, plot HH*7



Lydia Fenton's probate record was dated 15th June 1865 but then, as for her sister Catherine, it was resworn in 1872.

The Will with a Codicil of Lydia Fenton late of Halifax in the County of York Widow deceased who died 24 March 1865 at Halifax aforesaid was proved at Wakefield by the oath of Lydia Ann Roughton of Halifax aforesaid Spinster the Niece one of the Executors. Effects under £800. *Resworn at the Stamp office, January 1872, under £3000*

Niece Lydia Ann Roughton died on 31st August 1868 in Coventry where she was buried. Her probate record reads :-

The Will with a Codicil of Lydia Ann Roughton formerly of Halifax in the County of York but late of Coventry in the County of Warwick Spinster deceased who died 31 August 1868 at Coventry aforesaid was proved at the Principal Registry by the oaths of Thomas Adam of Halifax aforesaid Gentleman and Charles Emmett of Halifax aforesaid Gentleman the Executors. Effects under £3000 *Resworn at the Stamp Office January 1872 under £4000*

The Executors Thomas Adam and Charles Emmett would appear to be attorneys. Thomas Adam and his family had also been neighbours of the Wilkinson sisters in Savile Row, Halifax.

Again, her probate record originally dated 17th November 1868 was also resworn in January 1872 so presumably this was because the wills were all interconnected. Presumably Reverend Robert Wilkinson left his estate to his daughters who in turn granted probate to each other and then this niece Lydia Ann Roughton. She also figured in her father, John Roughton's probate which remained unadministered until June 1871. This might explain why the three probate records were all resworn in January 1872.

The Wilkinson family may not have lived in Lightcliffe but ten of them - both parents, four young children, three adult daughters and a son in law - were buried there in St. Matthew's churchyard.

D.M.Barker
March 2018
Updated June 2025