

The History of Smith House, Lightcliffe.

Smith House is one of the oldest houses in the Lightcliffe area. It is positioned at the corner of Stoney Lane and Smith House Lane.

The house and adjoining buildings are Grade II listed buildings¹. It is dated as 1672 and has remains of an early C16 timber-framed house. The main house is hammer-dressed stone, ashlar dressings and with a stone slate roof. A full description is given in the listing.

The surrounding buildings which include a long-range stable block and lodge are also listed for their group value.

In addition, there is evidence of a brick-built cavity garden wall designed as part of a heated greenhouse facility.



A partial view of Smith House in 2023

There is doubt about the naming of the house, but it has been claimed to be named after John Smyth who paid 'a groat' as poll tax in 1379. J Horsfall Turner² has other references to members of the Smyth family through to a will of Thomas Smyth in 1562 when he is known as 'of Smyth House'.

By 1692 Henry Gill was assessed for much of Smith House and ownership had passed to John Holmes through his father, Joshua, who bought it in 1699³.

When he died in 1742, John was buried under the old Eastfield Chapel. When the building was rebuilt in 1775, his vault would have been within the new church.

His wife, Elizabeth, lived for many years in Smith House after her husband's death. In James Parker's 'Illustrated Rambles from Hipperholme to Tong' (1904) there are several pages devoted to the house. Parker is not completely reliable but there is no reason to doubt much of which follows about Mrs Holmes.

Parker describes John Wesley's visits to Smith House on four occasions.

His first visit was on June 2nd, 1742 when he was invited by Mrs Holmes, the owner and occupier of Smith house. He rode over from Birstall, 6 miles away, where he'd gone at the invitation of John Nelson. This is the entry in Wesley's journal, 'I was invited to Mrs Holmes' near Halifax where I preached at noon.'

'Ask and ye shall receive.' Then I rode over to Dr Leigh's, the vicar of Halifax, a candid inquirer after truth. I called upon Mrs Holmes on my return when her sister a little surprised me by asking – 'Ought not a minister of Christ do three things, first to preach His Law in order to convince of sin; then to offer free pardon through faith in His Blood to all convinced sinners; and in the third place to preach His Law again, as a rule for those that believe. I think if anyone does otherwise he is no true minister Christ. He divides what God has joined and cannot be said to preach the whole gospel.'

Mrs Holmes in 1744 joined the Methodist body, and opened her house for Methodist preachers and assisted them by her counsel, her prayers and her purse. Mrs Holmes was not so strong with the Moravians as her husband had been and the brethren, anxious to avoid even the appearance of wishing to influence her in their favour, withdrew from Smith House where they had been stationed from their first arrival in Yorkshire in 1742. They left Smith house and took up their abode at German house in Lightcliffe close to the village of Hipperholme and from thence they went to Fulneck.

John Wesley paid his third visit to Smith house, as the entry in his journal shows, on Tuesday April 19th, 1774 'Mrs Holmes, who has been for some years confined to her bed, sent and desired I would preach at her house. As I stood in the passage both she could hear and all that stood in the adjoining rooms. I preached on Revelation xiv,i.5. It was a refreshing season to her and to many.

On his fourth visit on Friday April 19th, 1776, he noted that 'he preached at Smith House for the sake of that lovely woman Mrs Holmes. It does me good to see her, such is her patience or rather thankfulness under continual pain.' John Wesley at one visit to Smith house preached from the old horse steps in the courtyard of Smith House.

She gave William Walker of Crow Nest £40 towards the rebuilding of Lightcliffe Chapel in 1777.

Mrs Holmes made a bequest to Betty Parker, her servant, of £40 together with a bed, bedstead, bedding, some furniture and clothing. This would have been a substantial gift.

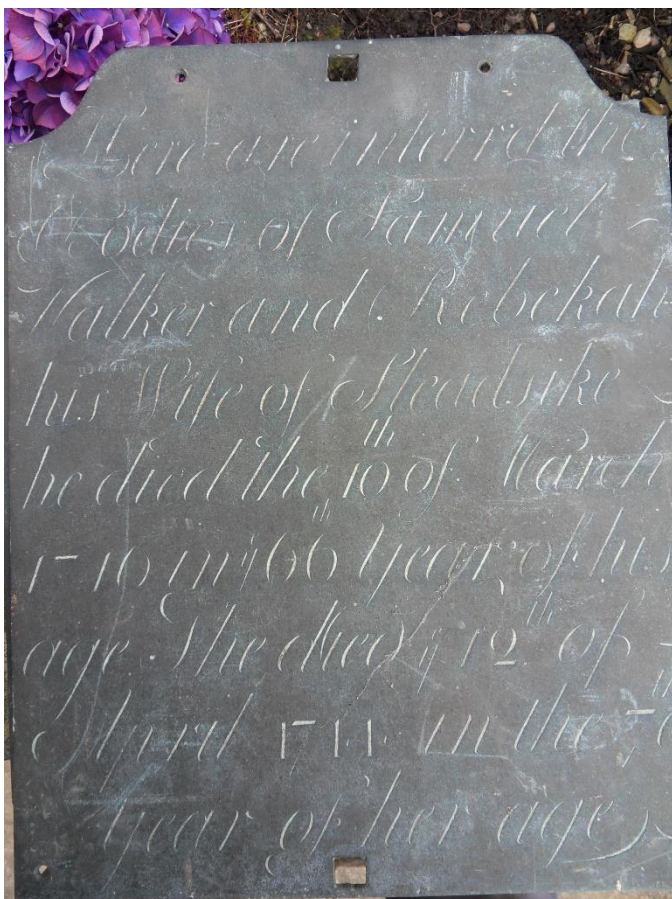
She also gave £50, in trust, to be paid to 'The Right Honourable Frederick, Lord North, the first Lord of The Treasury, Chancellor of His Majesty King George III's Exchequer to be applied and employed in support of the present Government and Constitution and in suppressing the present Rebellion in America or other insurrection or rebellion which may happen in any of His Majesty's dominions, or in any defence of his said dominions and in support of His Majesty's arms by sea or land. Dated June 1782.

Codecil. She bequeathed Smith House on the 14th May 1779 to her cousin [actually nephew] Charles Radcliffe of Manchester, merchant. She also bequeathed Upper Lydgate Farm to Mrs Martha Radcliffe on the same date.

[Mrs Martha Radcliffe was her sister-in-law, the widow of her husband's older brother William Radcliffe.]

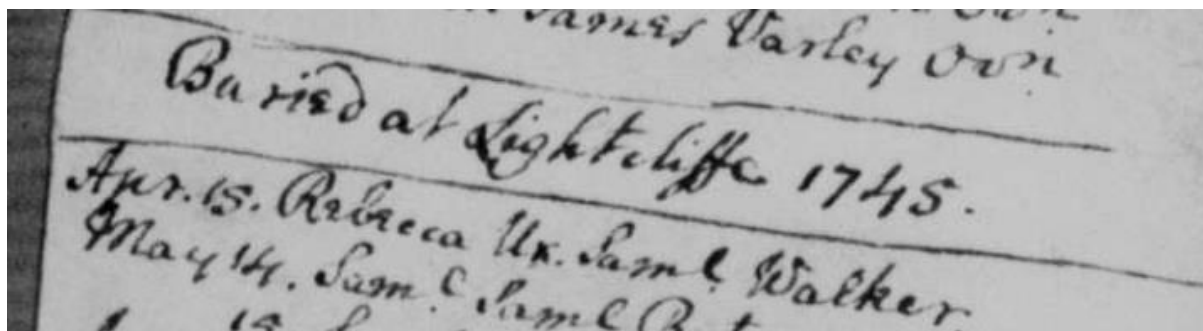
Mrs Holmes sister was probably Mrs Judith Wainhouse née Walker. A Judith Walker married Edward Wainhouse on 28th April 1746, apparently in Lightcliffe so this must have been in Eastfield Chapel. He died very soon after this and his will, dated 29th June 1746, left property to his wife, Judith.

A twenty-two-year-old Elizabeth Walker had previously married John Holmes in York on 7th December 1734. It looks as if these were the daughters of Samuel and Rebekah Walker of Slead Syke who were buried in Eastfield Chapel and have this memorial plaque. As already mentioned, John Holmes died aged 34 years in 1742.



HERE ARE INTERRED THE
 BODIES OF SAMUEL
 WALKER AND REBEKAH
 HIS WIFE OF SLEAD SIKE
 HE DIED THE 10TH OF MARCH
 1746 IN 66TH YEAR OF HIS
 AGE. SHE DIED 12TH OF
 APRIL 1744 IN THE 70TH
 YEAR OF HER AGE

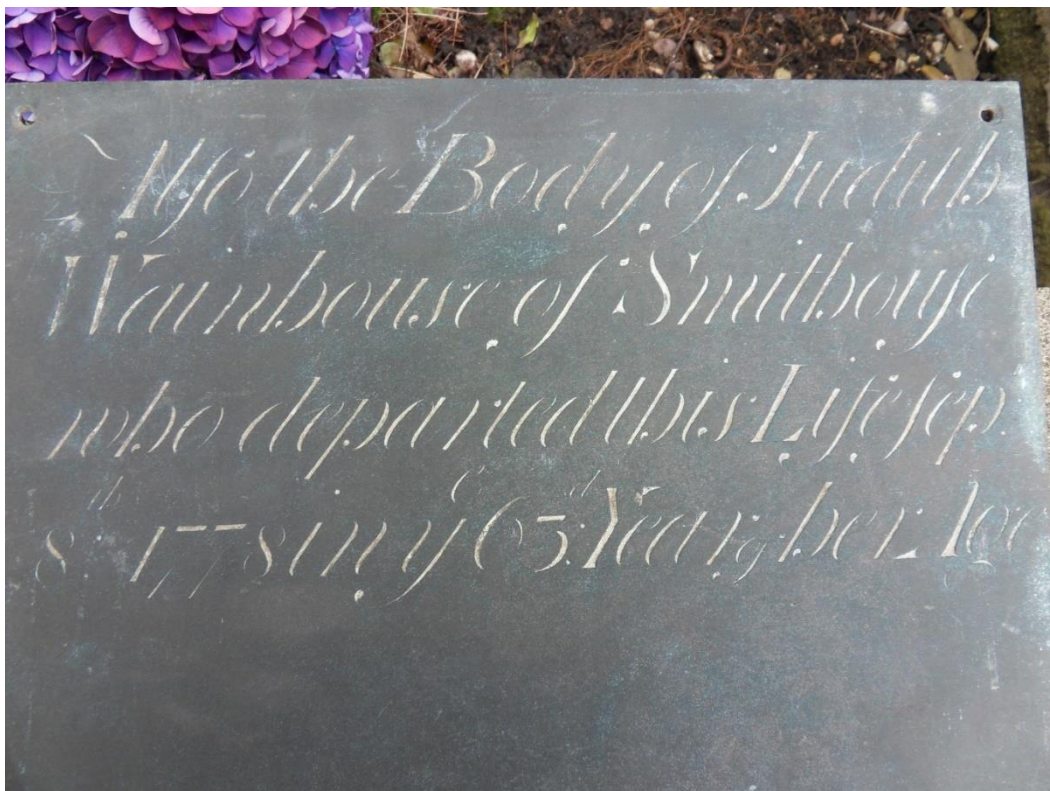
Rebekah Walker was buried within the chapel on 15th April 1744 or it could be 1745. The different year's beginning and ending in parish records could mean this is still 1744.



It looks as if her husband, Samuel Walker, then moved into Smith House with his widowed daughter Elizabeth Holmes. He was 'of Smith House' when he too was buried within Eastfield Chapel on 15th March 1746. This was just before his other daughter, Judith, married Edward Wainhouse and she may well have also been living at Smith House at that time.

March 8 Japhet John Knewel
 15 Samuel Walker of Smithhouse
 21 Jonathan Moreton

Judith Wainhouse died at Smith House on 8th September 1778. She was buried in the new St. Matthew's Church on 12th September 1778 with this plaque which is very similar to the one for Samuel and Rebekah Walker who it seems were the sisters' parents.

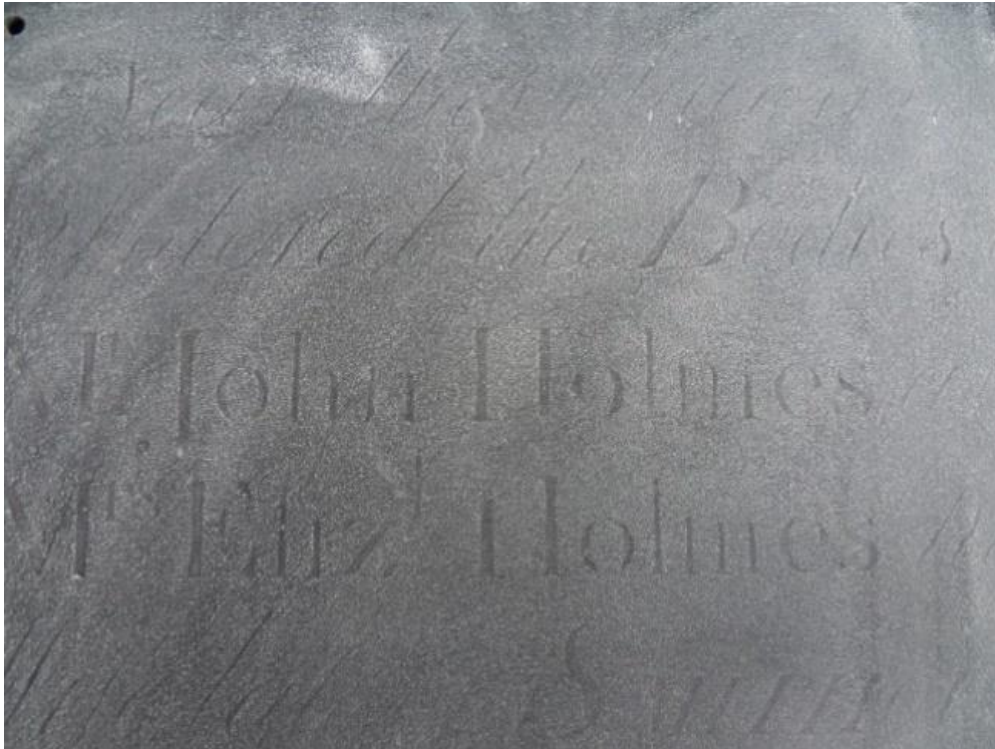


Judith Wainhouse had a 1779 probate record which again confirms that she was 'of Smith House'.

418 Wainhouse Judith of Smithhouse p. Halifax 1779

When the 73-year-old widow, Elizabeth Holmes died in 1785 she was buried with her husband in a vault beneath the church on 2nd March 1785. This difficult to read plaque says:-

..... INTERRED THE BODIES (OF)
MR JOHN HOLMES
MRS ELIZ^B HOLMES
.... SMITH H




The brass plaque is now stored in the vestry of the new St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe.

Elizabeth Holmes also had a probate record dated June 1785.

1 June.
250 Holmes Elizabeth of Smith House P. Halifax Widow. To be paid 40^{/-}

And then this appeared in the *Leeds Intelligencer* 5 July 1785.

 All Persons to whom Mrs. ELIZABETH HOLMES, or Mrs. JUDITH WAINHOUSE, both late of Smith-House, deceased, were indebted at their respective Deaths, and who have not since been paid, are desired to send an Account of their Debts, with the Nature of their Securities, if any, to the said James Gledhill, and Ely Gledhill, the acting Executors of the said Mrs. Holmes, who was Executrix of the said Mrs. Wainhouse. And all Persons indebted to the Estates of the said Mrs. Holmes, or Mrs. Wainhouse, are desired immediately to pay their respective Debts to the said Executors.

Smith House probably passed to Elizabeth Radcliffe (daughter of Joshua Holmes, so sister-in-law to Elizabeth Holmes.). Elizabeth, known as Betty, was married to Abraham Radcliffe. One of their sons, Charles, eventually inherited Smith House and was certainly living there in 1787 at the time of his marriage to his second cousin, Charlotte Radcliffe. Charles died in 1817 and his son, William Towne Radcliffe then inherited. William had been designated 'a lunatic' and continued to live in Smith House.

The story of the Radcliffes is told in :-

The Radcliffes of Smith House.

Presumably because of the terms of the lunacy, the High Court of Chancery gave ownership to William's first cousin, Charles Horncastle. This led to complications when Ann Walker entered into negotiations for purchasing the house.

In 1844, Ann Walker purchased Smith House and Hoyle House from Charles Horncastle for £3,750. There was also an interest payment for late agreement of £395. The story is told in detail in

Ann Walker's acquisitions and investments.

And also in an article at

<https://www.packedwithpotential.org/stories-articles-writeups/ann-walker-versus-horncastle-lawsuit>

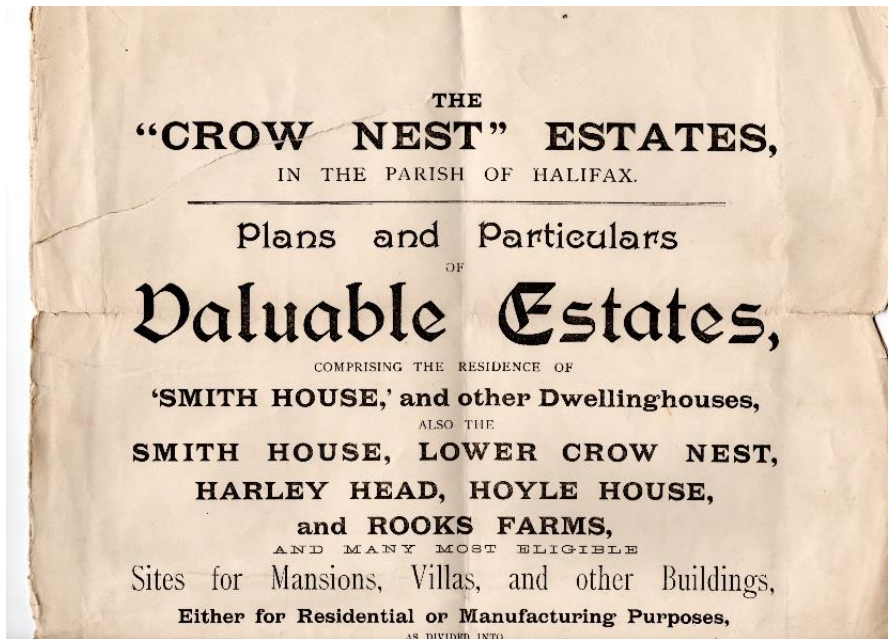
It will be noted that there seemed to be a very good cause for Ann (and her agent, Samuel Washington) to have concerns that Charles Horncastle had a legal right to sell whilst William Towne Radcliffe was still alive and living in the house.

In the Crow Nest Estate sale of 1867 Smith House was advertised as lot 114. It failed to reach its reserve and was withdrawn from sale.



This is a painting by Lumb Stocks R.A. (1812-1892). He was born in nearby Gaubert House and would have known Smith House in his youth. This painting (Calderdale Council) was presumably done from an 'artistic' memory many years later.

In 1890 what remained of the Evan Charles Sutherland (Walker) estate was put up for sale to clear his bankruptcy debts. Smith House was included.



This Lot was withdrawn at £1,675 and subsequently bought by the solicitor who was in charge of the sale, Frederick Walker.



20	Three Closes of Land, Cottage and Garden	Carr Riding and Round Hill	12 1 5	Hoyle House
21	Capital Residence called "Smith House," with Hot-houses, Gardens, Stables, Coach-houses, Servants' Cottage, Outbuildings and Land	Lower Royd, Black Field and Kiln Croft	2 3 0	Hoyle House and Smith House
22	A Close of Land	Carrs and Ridings	3 0 17	Hoyle House
		Heald and Ing	7 0 6	Smith House

An indenture was signed on 30th January, 1900 between Ada Walker, wife of Frederick Walker of Ovenden (solicitor) and Charles Mosley Dawson of Smith House to transfer ownership for the fee of £1,800. The fact that he is described as 'of Smith House' suggests that he was already a tenant living in the house. Charles Dawson had recently married Madeline Longbottom and was a director in her father's Bradford top makers firm of Henry Longbottom.

The property is delineated by reference to the final sale of the Crow Nest Estates as Lot 21 on the sale plan and its relationship to other lots. It measures 2 acres, 3 roods or thereabouts and includes house, servants' cottages, stables, coach-house, outbuildings, gardens, and lands.

However, a condition of purchase includes a payment of the yearly quit rent of six shillings and eight pence payable to the vicar of Lightcliffe.

The document refers to an earlier definition in 1892.

For details of the Dawson family see

Mark Dawson – Mayor of Bradford



The front of Smith House with Anthony Dawson, son of Charles, around 1900.



A distant view in 1910.

Malcolm Bull Calderdale Companion has subsequent owners as:

1925: Charles Hanson (1855-1925) who founded Charles Hanson & Sons, soap manufacturers of Brighouse.

1934: Lieutenant-General George H Aykroyd born 1900

1956: J.Stoddart Pawson

References and acknowledgements.

¹ Calderdale Council Listed Buildings Register:

<https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/environment/conservation/listedbuildings/list-results.jsp>

² J Horsfall Turner, Halifax Antiquarian Society Transaction Smith House in Lightcliffe, 1908

³ Malcolm Bull, Calderdale Companion, Smith House

References in red can be found in People of Interest category in St Matthew's Churchyard website; www.lightcliffchurchyard.org.uk

Thanks to Dorothy Barker for background research into the early Walker family and the Radcliffe family.

Ian Philp
May, 2024