

Remembered in the old Church but buried elsewhere

As explained in the article **Burials within the Church**, old St. Matthew's Church, finished in 1775, replaced an even older Eastfield Chapel which dated back to 1529. The buildings were on virtually the same site. Some of the earlier burials within vaults in the Chapel ended up in the Church. The 1775 church was replaced by a fine Victorian church further up Wakefield Road in 1875. After that there were only annual services in the church which was used as a mortuary chapel. Storm damage and then vandalism resulted in its demolition in spring 1971.

Fortunately, before then, Historic England took some images from which you can get an idea of what the inside of the church looked like. The image below shows the east window, presented by Evan Charles Sutherland Walker in memory of his parents when he had the church refurbished in the 1860s. There appears to be two panels of inscriptions either side of it extending to the ceiling. These were lost when the church was demolished. Perhaps they were embedded into the curved wall, not separate tablets, and so could not easily be removed. As with some others, perhaps these memorials were just too badly damaged to be saved.



aa60_03892

SOURCE: Historic England Archive

Four memorials were rescued and these were placed in the tower which was saved by Friends of Friendless Churches and is all that is left of the old church.

From the writings of earlier local historians, J. Horsfall Turner and G. Hepworth, there are records listing some of the memorials.

J. Horsfall Turner suggests the dedication to the Sutherland parents read as follows:-

In memory of George Mackay Sutherland of Aberarder, Inverness-shire, Captain of His Majesty's 13th Regiment of Light Dragoons who was born November 10th 1798, died April 22nd 1847 and is buried in the churchyard; and of Elizabeth, his wife, daughter of John Walker of Crow Nest, who was born November 10th 1801, died December 29th 1844 and is buried in Wimbledon, Surrey.

G. Hepworth notes that there was a memorial to Rev. W. Gurney M.A. who died in 1869.

In the interior of the Church are to be seen many monuments, principally to the Walker family, of Crow Nest; amongst others, one erected by the congregation to the memory of the Rev. W. Gurney, M.A., over 20 years incumbent, who died the 28th of August, 1869, aged 73 years. At present the Church is used only as a Mortuary for burials, since the erection of the New Church, the gift of the late Major Foster, of Lightcliffe.

This memorial is the white tablet with the dark frame on the east wall in the image above. The inscription says :-

In remembrance of the Rev. W. Gurney, M.A., for 29 years and 6 months incumbent of this chapelry, who departed this life on the 28th of August, 1869, aged 73 years. His end was peace. This tablet is erected by the congregation.

The Reverend William Gurney became the incumbent at Lightcliffe after the death of the Reverend Robert Wilkinson whose 1840 burial took place within the old St. Matthew's Church. Apparently, there was a Wilkinson plaque, but this has not survived. It might have said something similar to the one in Halifax Minster. By the time William Gurney and his wife Harriet died, burials within churches were no longer permitted following various Burial Acts during the 1850s. The Gurneys were buried in the churchyard to the west of the tower wall and have this headstone.



Another Historic England image shows the south side of the church. Halfway along the south wall is a memorial with an elaborate top. It is missing and we have no idea who it was dedicated to. And then just visible on the foremost box pew is another plaque. Perhaps this was to a relative of the pew owners or more likely a dedication to someone buried in a nearby vault. But we will never know.



aa60_03894

SOURCE: Historic England Archive

Partially obscured by the main pulpit – top left – is the memorial to John Walker junior. His widow, Frances (Fanny) née Penfold gave the distinctive classical memorial which may have been carved by Richard Westmacott RA, a distinguished sculptor.

John Walker junior was Ann Walker's younger brother; they were grandchildren of the William Walker who had the church built in 1775. The death of the young man on his honeymoon in Naples made Ann and her sister Elizabeth Sutherland very wealthy heiresses.

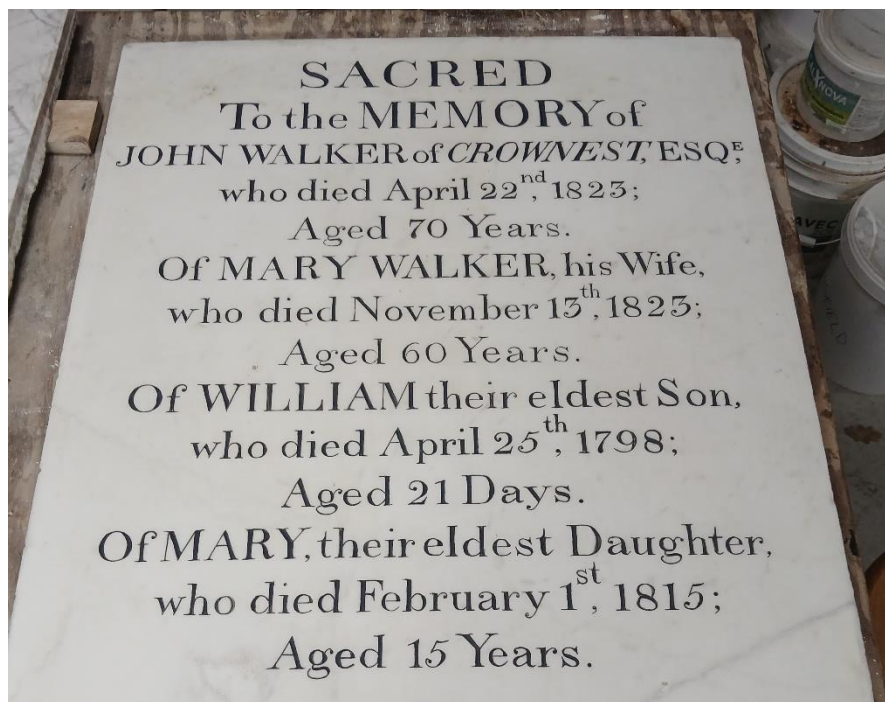
This memorial was one of those rescued and placed in the tower. For years the two parts were separated, with the dedication at the bottom being positioned above the doorway of the tower whilst the 'lady' resided in the 'well' of the tower on a north wall. After the restoration by Skillingtons of Grantham the two parts are due to be reunited again. They will then be replaced on the same north wall.



IN MEMORY OF
JOHN WALKER ESQ^R
OF CROWNEST IN THIS PARISH,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE AT NAPLES
ON THE 19TH JANUARY 1830, AGED 25 YEARS.

THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED BY HIS WIDOW.

Another rescued memorial was the tablet remembering John Walker senior, his wife Mary née Edwards, their three-week-old first born son and their teenage daughter.



This family of four were buried in a plot in the churchyard just outside the eastern apse of the old church. When baby William was buried, in 1798, his family lived at Cliffe Hill as John Walker, being the second son of the church builder William Walker, had an older brother, called William – of course - , who resided with his unmarried sisters at the Crow Nest mansion. After bachelor William died in 1809, John's family moved to Crow Nest. The detailed memorial inscription on the ledger stone over their plot also remembers Mary Sutherland, the teenage daughter of George Mackay Sutherland and his wife Elizabeth née Walker. More information about them can be found in the article.

George Mackay Sutherland and family



The death of Mary Sutherland occurred at Shibden Hall in 1845 when her widower father was looking after his sister-in-law, Ann Walker. Mary along with two young brothers, George Sackville and John who both died in Scotland, were remembered on the brass plaque, another memorial that was rescued and has already been restored. It is in the tower now.

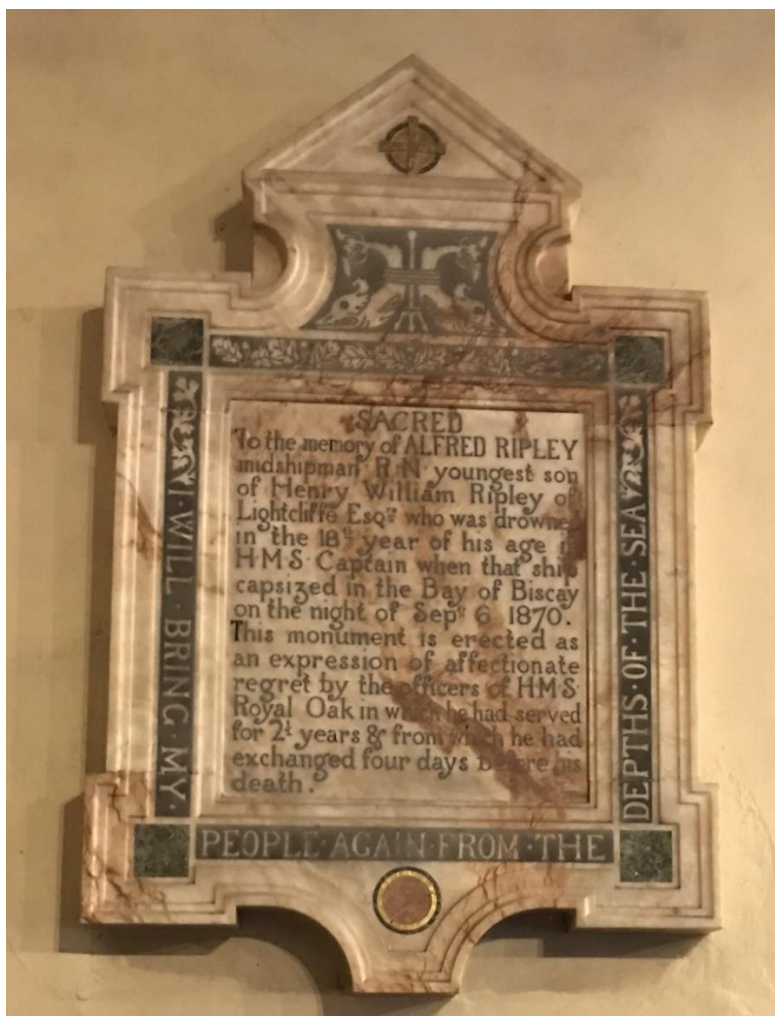
Just where the Walker family memorial was in the church is not known. It and the fourth rescued memorial, the one to the Sutcliffes, would be in position long before the grandson of John Walker senior, Evan Charles Sutherland Walker refurbished the church in the 1860s. And well before Historic England took images a century later. They might have been on the north wall for which we do not have a Historic England image or even higher up on the Gallery level.



The fourth rescued memorial was the one to the first incumbent at old St. Matthew's Church, the Reverend Richard Sutcliffe and his wife Martha.

As explained in the article **Burials within the church** they were buried in a vault in the church.

One tablet that was originally in the old church but escaped being damaged, because it had been moved elsewhere long before the church was demolished, was this elaborate memorial dedicated to Midshipman Alfred Ripley.



As the memorial says Alfred Ripley was the youngest son of Sir Henry William Ripley of Holme House, Lightcliffe. Alfred died in one of the worst peacetime naval disasters, having only transferred to HMS Captain from HMS Royal Oak four days before the tragic capsizing of the ship in a gale in 1870. His former shipmates had the above tablet erected on the south wall of St. Matthew's Church. However, after the Ripley family moved to Bedstone, near Ludlow in Shropshire permission was given, in 1888, to move the memorial to St Mary's the village church in Bedstone where it remains to this day.

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For further information, go to the [People of Interest](#) section of our website [Lightcliffe Churchyard](#). Look for the articles about **Very early pre 1704 burials, Incumbents, Midshipman Alfred Ripley RN, The Foster family - Shropshire Connection** - and the many articles on the Walker family under the heading **Ann Walker, family and friends**.