

Elizabeth Walker, née Abney, of Clifton House. (Died 1850.)

Elizabeth Abney, the daughter of Edward and Hephzibar Abney of Measham Hall, Ashby de la Zouche, married her cousin Henry Walker of Blythe Hall and Clifton House (Rotherham) in 1806. Elizabeth's mother, was the oldest daughter of Samuel Need of Nottingham. Her sister, Susanna, married Joshua Walker, a member of the family which had founded Rotherham's highly successful Iron and Steel works. Henry was their son. The wedding took place at Melbourne Church in Derbyshire.

Elizabeth was quite religious. She, also, loved music and was herself an accomplished pianist. She was an ardent campaigner for the abolition of slavery. At the time, black



Clifton House (now Clifton Park Museum) was built in 1783 by Joshua Walker, Elizabeth's father-in-law. When Elizabeth and Henry were married in 1806, Joshua was living here with his wife, Susannah – Elizabeth's aunt. Elizabeth and Henry, therefore, went to live in another Walker property at Blythe in Nottinghamshire. Joshua died in 1815, but Elizabeth and Henry didn't move into Clifton House until after Susannah's death, probably between 1829 and 1831.



Portrait of Elizabeth hanging in Clifton Park Museum. (Courtesy of Rotherham Archives and Local Studies. Ref. No. 00973)

slaves were transported from Africa to work in the West Indian sugar plantations and the cotton fields in the United States of America. In all about twelve million slaves were transported, and about three million of these died in the terrible conditions aboard the slave ships.

Some local people were engaged in this trade, for example John Spencer of Cannon Hall, Barnsley, owned a slave ship, as did the Lassell family of Harewood House, Leeds. Elizabeth wrote poems about this trade. The one below may have been inspired by meeting freed slaves who were invited to speak at anti-slavery meetings, or by reading pamphlets that were published about their life stories.

Lucy Neal.

When in my native, happy land,
How joyous was each day,
With my sweet Lucy by my side,
Each flower look'd bright and gay; -
And buds of rich and varied hue,
And sparkling shells were there, -
I gathered them on coral strand
To deck my Lucy's hair!

We ne'er had tasted sorrows cup
Ne'er dreamed of coming ill.
Alas! The thought of bye-gone days,
Our hearts with anguish fill;-
The *Slave-ship's* bloody banner waved
Upon our peaceful shore;
Then ruffian hands, and cruel hearts,
My Lucy from me bore!

Ah! What an awful sight was that!
I never can forget
My Lucy bound by galling chains, -
I think I see her yet! -
Ye bloody fetters, lash severe,
Your pangs I heeded not; -
I gazed on Lucy's death-like brow,
Wept for her hapless lot.

Another poem, called '*Ladies' Bazaar*' was written in aid of the establishment of a school for slaves in the West Indies. The anti-slavery Bill went into parliament in 1807, but slavery did not finally end in the British Empire until 1833, and 1865 in the United States.

Elizabeth wrote other poems about animals and about death – especially about the loss of a child and the effect of this on the parents. She hated cruelty to any animal, particularly horses – though a poem written about her suggests that she was not always kind to her servants. It refers to the running of Blyth Hall when Elizabeth and Henry Walker lived there. The author was probably an ex-employee of the family, who wrote under the pseudonym '*The Anti-Slave Committee*' – an ironic reference to Elizabeth's sympathy for the American slaves, a sympathy which she apparently didn't extend to her own employees!

Fair Elizabeth the Pride of Pork Hall.

In a neat little village in fair Nottinghamshire,
There lives a blooming damsel as you quickly shall hear,
She is not very young though handsome and genteel,
Her name is Fair Elizabeth, the pride of Pork Hall.

If you are a servant and come to live at this place,
Misery and starvation stare you in the face,
Our food is all weighed, and measured are the coals,
Everything is locked up by the Pride of Pork Hall.

One young man at this place, oh shame and disgrace,
Nearly died of starvation while at this place,
He was out without food when the rain it did fall,
When he got home there was no fire at wretched Pork Hall.

So pluck up your spirits and an effort let us make,
To restore this little village to its once happy state.
We once more might be happy if the Devil would call,
And fetch away Elizabeth, the Pride of Pork Hall.

Elizabeth and Henry had four children - Henry Frederick in 1807, Caroline Elizabeth in 1808, Emily in 1811 and Arthur Abney in 1820. Her eldest son, Henry, married a Miss Howard of Portland Place, but they had no children. Her youngest son, Arthur Abney married a Miss Anderson of Carlow in Ireland. They had one child – Elizabeth Edith – who was doted on by her grandmother who said she was 'such a sweet child'. Arthur published Elizabeth's poems after her death in February, 1850.