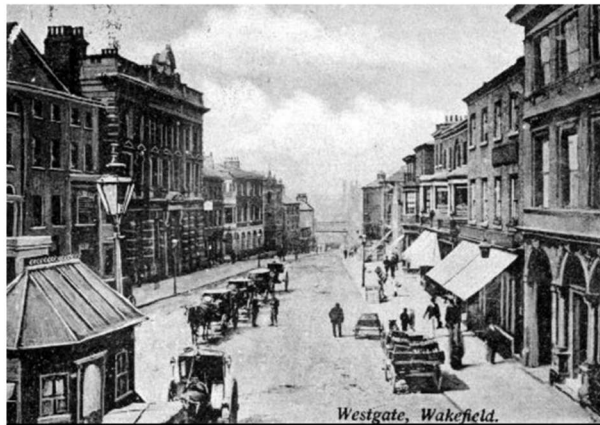


FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF WAKEFIELD

REMEMBERING ANN HURST

Westgate, in its heyday was noted by Curwen as having 'the noblest appearance of any (he) ever saw out of London'. Ann printed and distributed *The Wakefield & Halifax Journal* from the building to the front on the right of this photograph, where the NatWest bank is now. Behind the modern granite front there may remain the original elegant arches



A FORGOTTEN FOOTNOTE

BY SARAH LEAH COBHAM
BASED ON RESEARCH BY HELGA FOX

Never has a woman from Wakefield been so resolvedly and deliberately written out of our history. Never has a woman so instrumental to radical change been so maliciously and knowingly expunged from the part she played in exposing and challenging slavery and never before has such a powerful legacy been so easily erased.

Men write women out of history. Especially when they hold the keys to the printing press.

Ann Day was born during the month of February 1772, and married Rowland Hurst, an established printer with premises in both Northgate and Westgate, in the spring of 1798. After Rowland's death in 1823, Ann Hurst a widow with 3 young sons, became Wakefield's first female newspaper owner and proprietor.

**Hurst Ann, bookseller, stationer, printer,
& publisher of the *Wakefield & Halifax
Journal*, (Fri.) patent medicine vender &
tea dealer, Westgate**

TIMELINE

- 1772 Baptised 15th March 1772 at Westgate Chapel Wakefield
- 1798 Married Rowland Hurst 15th April
- 1800 The Hurst family are known Wakefield Printers
- 1811 The Wakefield & Halifax Journal is listed in the London and County directory
- 1812 Rowland Hurst appointed Special Constable
- 1818 The Hurst family are known as Booksellers, Printers and stationers with premises on Westgate and Northgate
- 1823 Rowland Hurst dies leaving Ann with 3 sons living, one son recently deceased, & 2 daughters that died in infancy.
- 1825 Wakefield Auxiliary Society for the Abolition of Slavery is actively supported by Ann's paper
- 1826 With editors Naylor & Johnstone, Ann raises a petition for the Abolition of Slavery and sends it to Parliament.
- 1825 - 1828 Advertising for G Carroll's lottery & various patent medicines treating scurvy & venereal disease.
- 1828 Active support for the newly formed Dispensary on Wood Street and The House of Recovery at the bottom of Westgate. The House of Recovery was established by women of the town in 1826
- 1828 Advertising tickets to Wakefield Fancy Ball available from her bookshop in Westgate.
- 1828 Ann is well known as an Abolitionist, a Bookseller & Stationer with offices on Westgate
- 1830 Ann nails her and her paper's colours to the mast when she prints the Abolition of Colonial Slavery Flyer designed to bring the question of abolition to the fore.
- 1830 The Wakefield & Halifax Journal expands as Ann's son, Rowland Hurst (Jnr) takes over and re-brands the paper calling it 'The Journal'.
- 1832 Ann dies and is buried in Morley





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FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF WAKEFIELD

ANN HURST

BY SARAH LEAH COBHAM

Ann threw her considerable intellect, business experience and political influence behind *The Wakefield & Halifax Journal* so it soon became known as Wakefield's most radical, liberal and influential newspaper of the time. Its editorials and abolitionist articles lay at the heart of the anti-slavery movement and under Ann's leadership this paper and several of her other region wide sister publications, thrived. *The Wakefield & Halifax Journal* directly influenced the outcome of Wakefield's 1832 election of Liberal MP Daniel Gaskell after *The Representation of The People Act*, (which deliberately excluded women from voting) was passed in Parliament in the same year.

Ann's presence on Westgate had been established long before she took over the printing and weekly distribution of *The Wakefield & Halifax Journal* from the building currently the home to The NatWest Bank.

A reimagined banner of the *Wakefield & Halifax Journal* by artist Shannon Wishon of Dream Time Creative. Note Ann Hurst's tea rooms do not offer sugar but rather, locally sourced honey. Tea was not originally linked to the slave trade, but rather sweetening tea with sugar amplified the slave trade.

In 1824 Elizabeth Heyrick of Leicester calls for a complete boycott on sugar and an immediate not gradual abolition. William Wilberforce bans women being active members of the anti-slavery movement and bans men from speaking at women's meetings.



Ann was a patent medicine vendor which meant, as there were no licenses required in law, she was able to sell both women's traditional herbal medicine alongside tinctures and herbal remedies ready packaged designed to treat common ailments and diseases.

As a woman she was unable to trade as an apothecary so this, with her business head on, would have given her credibility at a time when elixirs, salves and pills were at the height of popularity. These 'medicines' were more affordable than a visit to the doctor at a time when more formal (male) medical knowledge was in its infancy. Amongst her stock were cures for various venereal diseases, none of which worked of course, but the very fact she was named as a stockist of such 'quack' medicines in several other publications, tells us just how bold and unconventional a woman she was.

Ann was unashamedly ambitious which meant that her career as a tea dealer was thriving at a time when the drinking of tea was condemned by some as an improper and dangerous. Especially for women. The real reason for this slandering of tea (and those who drank it - women as opposed to men who frequented coffee houses) was of course to demonise the fashion of females gathering to meet together, in neutral places (the tea-rooms and front drawing rooms) where they were suspected of strategizing political and social campaigns. By 1831 however, the drinking of tea was seen as a great and exclusive social occasion worthy of note and was promoted by the Temperance Society and Unitarians alike. Clara Clarkson, in her diary, 'Merrie Wakefield' writes on October 12th 1831, 'She (Sarah Lindley) asked me to go to drink tea with them one day next week'.



Ann was an agent and seller for G Carroll's Government Lottery.
The last lottery took place 18th October 1826



FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF WAKEFIELD

ANN HURST

BY SARAH LEAH COBHAM

Westgate, with its elegant Georgian buildings had, according to Curwen, 'the noblest appearance of any (he) ever saw out of London' and attracted visitors from far and wide. Ann made it her business to provide tea as an alternative to alcohol thus normalising the type of gatherings women were 'allowed' to take part in. It was a lucrative business and kept her connected to an increasingly active women's network. Tea was expensive and Ann's clientele had money.

As a Unitarian Ann's moral and social compass prompted her to support equal suffrage as well as the improvement of health and well-being. Ann used her printing press to unlock opportunities for fledgling social movements and advertised and sold tickets from her bookshop in Westgate to Wakefield's Fancy Ball in 1828. The Ball was to raise funds for the newly formed Dispensary on Wood Street and the newly established (by the women of the town in 1826) House of Recovery at Westgate End.

Ann was a woman of great intellect who knew the power of the written word and how to wield it. What she printed changed the course of Wakefield's history and that change began with decisions she made and implemented.

Ann oversaw the work of long-time editors, friends and fellow Unitarians, Reverend Martin Joseph Naylor and Reverend Thomas Johnstone and, within 14 months of the death of her husband the paper had moved resolutely towards supporting the abolitionist cause. It was reported in the Sheffield Independent on Saturday 11th June 1825, that her paper was printing articles to support the Wakefield Auxiliary Society for the Abolition of Slavery and by February 1826 The Wakefield & Halifax Journal was actively encouraging and reporting on anti-slavery meetings in the town. Ann raised a petition through her newspaper, one of many presented to the Tory government from different societies across the land, and had it sent to Parliament to demand the 'entire Abolition of Slavery'.

WAKEFIELD FANCY BALL, under the
PATRONAGE OF
LADY ARMYTAGE,
LADY DODSWORTH,
MRS. JOHN PEMBERTON HEYWOOD,
MRS. DANIEL GASKELL,
MRS. TEMPEST.

There will be a FANCY BALL in the Music Saloon, Wood-Street, Wakefield, on Wednesday, the Ninth Day of April, for the Benefit of the Dispensary and House of Recovery.

Tickets, Tea included, Ten Shillings each.
WM. THOMPSON LEE, Esq.
JOHN NAYLOR, Esq. Jun.
Rev. JOHN PEMBERTON SIMPSON,
JOHN HATFIELD, Esq.
TOTTENHAM LEE, Esq.

STEWARDS,

Ladies and Gentlemen are requested to provide themselves with Tickets, as no Money will be received at the Doors. Dancing to commence at Nine o'Clock. Tickets are to be had of Mr. Nichols, Mr. Stanfield, and Mrs. Hurst, Booksellers, Wakefield. Carriages to set down with the Horses' Heads towards the Court House, and take up the contrary Way.

Leeds Intelligencer - Thursday 27 March 1828



The House of Recovery was established in 1826 by women of the town who offered care for the poor suffering from infectious diseases. Generally seen as Wakefield's first hospital and a precursor to Clayton Hospital which closed in 2012. Clayton Hospital combined the General Dispensary on Cross Street/Wood Street and the House of Recovery which closed in 1854 due to lack of funding.

THE PETITION.
To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled. The humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of WAKEFIELD and its Vicinity.

SHEWETH,—That your Petitioners are impressed with the Conviction that a System of Slavery is repugnant to Justice, Humanity, and sound Policy, to the Principles of the British Constitution, and to the mild Spirit of the Christian Religion.

That your Petitioners, therefore, feel it to be their Duty to promote, by every justifiable Means, the Amelioration of the Condition of the Poor Slaves, and the final Abolition of this horrid System; having Regard, at the same Time, to the Safety of the Colonies, and the real Interests of all Parties concerned.

That your Petitioners are more strongly stimulated to the Performance of this Duty, by the deep Concern with which they have viewed the determined Opposition of the West Indian Colonial Authorities, to the humane Measures of his Majesty's Government, for Ameliorating the Condition of the Slave Population; and by feeling that, with the whole People of England, they, by large Bounties and protecting Duties, are become virtually Supporters of this System, so repugnant to Justice, and so disgraceful to a Free People.

That, actuated by these Views and Feelings, your Petitioners beg Leave respectfully to approach your Honourable House, with their humble but earnest Prayer, that you would adopt such Measures as to your Wisdom may seem expedient, to remove those Bounties and protecting Duties, and to raise our enslaved Fellow-Subjects from their degraded State, and as speedily as the Interests of all concerned will admit, to effect the entire Abolition of Slavery throughout the whole of the British Dominions.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

Published in the Wakefield & Halifax Journal 23rd February 1826

FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF WAKEFIELD

ANN HURST

BY SARAH LEAH COBHAM

John Goodchild, in his article in *The Wakefield Express* of October 12th 1979, gives Naylor and Rowland Hurst the credit for the success of the paper. He quotes Naylor when he writes:

"Ignorance is the cause of nearly all the evils of mankind. But the Press has the power to dispel this ignorance" The claim was made appropriately, by Dr Martin Naylor, editor of 'The Wakefield and Halifax Journal and Yorkshire and Lancashire Advertiser (formerly The Wakefield Star)' at a dinner in 1832 held to celebrate the passing of the Reform Bill. In the early 1830's the 'Journal' owned by Rowland Hurst and now edited jointly by Naylor and JD Hubbard, was the sole organ of such enlightenment to be published in Wakefield'

John Goodchild was correct in only one thing in this opening section. The *Wakefield & Halifax Journal* WAS the only beacon of light in Wakefield, but it wasn't because of Rowland Hurst. It was because of the visionary Ann and the relentless campaigning for reform by the Unitarian Chapel under the leadership of Reverend Johnstone. Goodchild's words singlehandedly wiped Ann Hurst, Johnstone and the Unitarian movement's fundamental role in the political and social reform of Great Britain, out of existence.

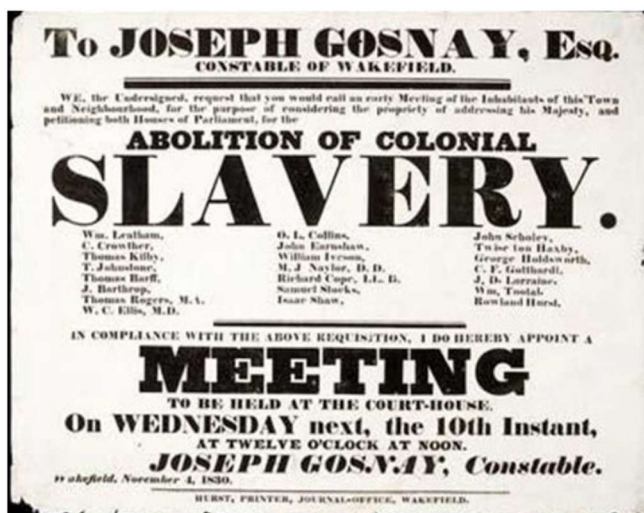
Perhaps Goodchild gleaned his information from the précised and already biased memoirs of Naylor, printed in 1843 by rival paper the *York Herald*. The author of the piece from the *York Herald* writes:

'In addition to his other onerous duties, Mr Naylor was for upwards of twenty-seven years, Editor of a Liberal Newspaper... the proprietor the late Mr Rd Hurst who retained Mr Naylor's valuable assistance as editor. The Journal remained under the same management until Christmas 1830'

The *York Herald* has strong opinions about the direction The *Wakefield & Halifax Journal* took thereafter.

'...since which time it has undergone many changes of title, editors, proprietors. The principles, and few, indeed, of its former readers, would acknowledge in the paper that now bears a portion of its name, any similarity to the parent stock'

In other words, (after December 1830, whilst continuing to thrive and expand under the direction of Ann's son, Rowland (Jr) Hurst, once the paper was sold in 1833, just a few short months after Ann's death), the paper deteriorated. Sold, and sold again, its radical, liberal truth telling style was subsumed into a more right wing publication and it eventually fell out of favour. Yorkshire had begun its swing back to the Tory right by the time Naylor died in 1843 which will have influenced the opinion and tone of the original *York Herald* editorial. Convenient to the politics of the time and with no mention of the outstanding revolutionary work by The *Wakefield & Halifax Journal* under Ann's radical leadership, Ann was erased from history to suit a political and gendered agenda.



Anti-slavery meeting announcement printed by Hurst Printers at the Journal Office, Wakefield 4th November 1830

Ann's final and most defiant act as sole proprietor of the most successful newspaper in Wakefield was to publish a flyer addressed to the constable of the time, Joseph Gosnay, Esq, giving notice of an Abolition of Colonial Slavery Meeting to be held at The Court House on Wednesday the 10th November 1830. This act was more than bold, it was revolutionary. From this point onwards, Wakefield had publicly nailed its colours to the mast and with the great swell of support as a result, Daniel Gaskell Liberal MP was elected in 1832 on the anti-slavery platform. Once elected he was able to influence the course of history and challenge the great injustices perpetuated by slave owners across the land. The flyer names 22 men who openly supported the meeting. No women are named. Ann's part in all this appears to have been lost and forgotten. Until you look closer. At the footnote on the flyer.

'HURST, PRINTER, JOURNAL OFFICE, WAKEFIELD'

Ann is there. She has been there all along. Subsumed into her husband's name and assumed to be insignificant and inconsequential. A forgotten footnote.

Ann died March 1832 age 60 and with her also died the impetus for grass root change. The anti-slavery movement was handed, deftly, to Wakefield's man in parliament. As politics changed course and the Tory party were elected in 1837 the light behind Wakefield's fight for abolition faded. And so, the deliberate erasure of Ann from our memories began. Ann became a tragic victim of the printing press and the profession she had been such a resounding figurehead for.

The time has come for Ann to take her rightful place as one of Wakefield's greatest enablers, revolutionaries and abolitionists because then, as now, Black Lives Matter.