

HOLDSWORTH HOUSE

HOTEL & RESTAURANT

HALIFAX, WEST YORKSHIRE, HX2 9TG | www.HoldsworthHouse.co.uk

SALLY WAINWRIGHT FANS CAN DISCOVER ANNE LISTER'S HALIFAX

Both Holdsworth House and Shibden Hall are historic houses located in Halifax, West Yorkshire. Up until now there was little to connect the two – Shibden Hall was built 1420 whilst Holdsworth House as built 1633. But with the forthcoming BBC/HBO costume drama *Gentleman Jack*, written by Sally Wainwright, hitting our screens soon the team at Holdsworth House has been digging into its own past a little more.

Gentleman Jack is the dramatised story of Anne Lister, a wealthy landowner, spinster and diarist who lived at Shibden Hall in the early 1800s. Lister's story is unique as her diaries hold secrets, written in coded language, which tell of her lesbian love affairs. During the time Anne Lister lived at Shibden Hall, an Elizabeth Wadsworth lived at Holdsworth House, just three miles away. Wadsworth was older than Lister (closer in age to Lister's aunt Anne and uncle James with whom Lister lived). Wadsworth was also descended from a wealthy Halifax family and educated at the same school as Lister, The Manor in York. Wadsworth kept diaries covering the same period as Lister and it's these diaries (held on deposit at West Yorkshire Archive Services) that have recently unearthed Wadsworth's connections to the Lister family, as well as the Brontes of nearby Haworth.

Both Wadsworth and Lister were responsible for managing their estates and were keen gardeners; both were skilled in farming, staunch church and Tory and moved in the upper circles of society. In her diaries Wadsworth describes daily life: playing the harpsichord, managing her finances and visiting some of the families that also played a large part in Lister's life – The Priestleys and the Walkers (Anne Walker later became long-term lover of Anne Lister). The ladies shared the same doctor, worshipped at Halifax Minster and visited the same town events, including a touring Madam Tussaud's exhibition.

Following the death of Elizabeth Wadsworth in 1837, Lister records a conversation in her diaries with a Reverend Kenny, regarding Wadsworth's will: *'[the Fitzgeralds] had no expectations from Miss Wadsworth of Holdsworth, who had £700 a year. In the event they did receive some property which had either been Miss Wadsworth's or in which she had a life interest.'*

Through her connections in the church and her charity work, Wadsworth's diaries disclose connections with 'Mr Brunty' (Reverend Patrick Bronte) and Dorothy Wordsworth (sister of poet William). Unlike Lister, Wadsworth was a great philanthropist, using much of her income to establish a local school for the poor and build Bradshaw Church.

Lister and her ancestors made many changes to Shibden Hall's architecture and as a result the interior design is markedly similar to that of Holdsworth House. Large open fireplaces, wood-panelled halls (probably from the Georgian period), stone mullioned windows and even the long-case clocks found in both are just some of the resemblances.

Today Shibden Hall is a wonderful museum whilst Holdsworth House is an independent four-star hotel. Fans of Sally Wainwright's *Gentleman Jack* series can stay at Holdsworth House and visit Shibden Hall on a special **Discover Anne Lister Break**, which includes adult entry to Lister's former home of Shibden, plus dinner bed and breakfast at the hotel **from £159** per room for two people.

It's not the first time that Sally Wainwright has helped put the Calderdale region on the map. Her series *Last Tango in Halifax* (partly filmed at Holdsworth House) and *Happy Valley* have showcased the West Yorkshire landscape to millions around the world.

ENDS

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To read the full history of Holdsworth House visit www.holdsworthhouse.co.uk/attractions/house-history/

To read specific links to Anne Lister and the Brontes read the blog www.holdsworthhouse.co.uk/anne-lister-era/