

Anne Lister's Home

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Introduction

The story of Anne Lister (1791–1840) is now interpreted primarily through three main sources. First, through her five-million-word diaries, currently being transcribed and available online. Second, through Sally Wainwright's television character, 'Gentleman Jack', embodied by actor Suranne Jones. And third, through her home, Shibden Hall, in Halifax, West Yorkshire. It is the relationship between Anne Lister and her home that I shall explore in this chapter.

Shibden Hall used to be a 'hidden gem' of a council-funded historic estate with around twenty thousand visitors per year. It is now internationally known as 'the Home of Anne Lister', the lesbian icon and prolific diarist, traveller, mountaineer and businesswoman, and is a place of pilgrimage for the LGBTQ+ community. Since the *Gentleman Jack* television series aired in May 2019, my role as Collections Manager for Calderdale Museum Service has changed from giving talks and tours, which started by having to explain who Anne Lister was, to welcoming international visitors, researchers and 'Lister Sister' fans, with far more knowledge than previous visitors and often more than me! Shibden Hall is also now seen as a 'literary house', esteemed alongside the Brontë Parsonage in nearby Haworth, a status I could barely have imagined when I arrived to work there in 2014.

The Calderdale Museum Service is part of Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council, which manages both Shibden Hall and Bankfield Museum in Halifax, and the Smith Art Gallery in the nearby town of Brighouse, as well as two large collections stores. My responsibilities are for the preservation of the museum's objects and sharing their stories through displays, exhibitions and events across our three sites, and online through our website and social media. Our collections number around seventy thousand objects, from fine art, costumes and textiles to everyday objects

and toys. Our Museum Service team (half the size it was ten years ago) also includes a Museums Manager, a Front of House Manager, two curators, an education officer, a museums assistant, several Front of House staff and volunteers.

On arriving at Shibden Hall in 2014, despite my Masters in Gender Studies and prior work in the heritage sector sharing women's stories, I had not heard of Anne Lister. I wondered, and worried, given the small staff and low budget, about how to share her fascinating story with the world. The most recent guidebook, from 2014, contained limited information about Lister and her legacy.¹ By 2015 we had incorporated new information in the Hall thanks to an Arts Council grant; this included more about Anne Lister, and an audio-visual unit with pages of Lister's diaries and information by biographer Helena Whitbread. In 2015 Shibden Hall was selected by Historic England as one of the nation's historic sites for their 'Pride of Place' Project,² showcasing sites with LGBTQ+ heritage links. In 2016, I produced a longer interview with Helena Whitbread, 'The Anne Lister Story',³ to be played at the Hall and shared online (now viewed more than 400,000 times online) and a marketing film, 'Shibden Hall: 500 Years of History'⁴ (with more than 90,000 views to date).

The year 2018 saw television presenter Mary Portas meeting Whitbread at Shibden Hall to share Anne Lister's story for the Channel 4 documentary *Britain's Great Gay Buildings*,⁵ hosted by Stephen Fry, bringing Lister's story and the site of Shibden Hall to yet more new audiences. Growing interest in Lister, and lack of a clear overview of her legacy in the form of the Hall and museum collections, spurred me to produce a new book, *Anne Lister of Shibden Hall*, in 2018 (reprinted in 2019, with an updated version of the Hall's guidebook).⁶ Thanks primarily to the exposure provided by Sally Wainwright's *Gentleman Jack* television series (April–July 2019), Shibden Hall entered 2020 as the busiest and most internationally known it had ever been. That year I also organised a conference at Bankfield Museum, in conjunction with the nearby Brontë Parsonage Museum, entitled 'Interpreting Anne Lister and the Brontës', discussing museum, television and film adaptations of their stories and the Brontë novel adaptations. During the Covid-19 closures of 2020–1, the few remaining staff focused on sharing content about Anne Lister and our museums on our website and across our main online channels, Twitter and Facebook, and used the time to create a new 3D virtual tour of the Hall,⁷ several 'behind the scenes' films,⁸ and a new 600-year timeline of the Hall's history,⁹ created with researchers from the group 'Packed with Potential'.¹⁰

I will examine how Shibden Hall and its landscape defined and was shaped by Anne Lister's remarkable character and life, and how it can still be experienced today. I show that the physical Hall and landscape can bring people even closer to the 'real' Anne Lister than her extensive diaries and now-iconic, top-hatted 'Gentleman Jack' character. I will also explain the challenges faced by a small museum service in meeting expectations, the physical difficulties in representing historic stories within a museum setting, and the complexities of constructing interpretations of history and people.

Shibden Hall's History

Shibden Hall has been a public museum since 1934. The estate is a historic landmark within a public park attracting thousands of visitors a year and is also a place for weddings, talks and tours, craft fairs, school education, family trails and arts activities. The earliest reference to the Hall is in a document in the West Yorkshire Archives dated 1420–1 and it was a residence until 1933, inhabited by various families including the Otes, Saviles, Waterhouses and Listers.



Figure 5 Shibden Hall. Photography Chris Roulston, 2022.

Shibden Hall first came into the Lister family in the seventeenth century, and they would own the Hall for more than three hundred years, during which time the family's fortunes varied. It is from the Lister period that most records of the estate survive, including the first inventory of contents of the house from 1677 and the first complete plan of the estate from 1791. The accounts of information on the Hall and estate's history are now rather dated and subsequent work has largely been based on these earlier accounts. John Lister (who first shared Lister's diaries in the 1880s) was a historian and keen to document his family heritage. He published several accounts in the *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society* in the early 1900s,¹¹ and T. W. Hanson's book and article on Shibden are also from this period.¹²

Anne Lister's uncle, James Lister (1748–1826), inherited Shibden after his father's death in 1788, living there with his sister Anne (1765–1836) and various servants and house guests. Their brother Joseph (1750–1817) lived at Northgate House in the centre of Halifax, later demolished in 1961. Their younger brother, Jeremy (1752–1836), Anne Lister's father, was commissioned into the 10th Regiment of Foot (the Lincolnshire Regiment) on Christmas Day, 1770, and saw active service in the American War of Independence. He was injured at the Battle of Concord in 1775 and on his return to England was appointed recruiting officer at Gainsborough. Jeremy married Rebecca Battle of Welton Hall in 1788 and they settled on her estate at Market Weighton in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The couple had six children, four sons and two daughters. Two sons died in infancy, a third died aged fourteen and the fourth, Samuel, died in 1813, at the age of twenty, whilst serving with the army in Ireland. Rebecca died in 1817, the same month as Joseph Lister of Northgate.

Anne Lister's Inheritance

Anne Lister moved in with her Uncle James and Aunt Anne in 1815, and in 1826, when her uncle died, she inherited a third of the estate, her aunt and father also receiving a third each, and she seems to have taken over the running of Shibden Hall. Her father, Jeremy, and younger sister, Marian (1798–1882), had also moved into Shibden by 1832. In 1836 her father and aunt both died, leaving Lister to fully inherit the whole estate. Her sister, Marian, returned to live in Market Weighton. Marian long survived her family members and died in 1882, aged eighty-four. It is not thought she ever returned to Shibden to live, but interestingly there is a photograph recorded as being of her, seated outside Shibden, possibly on a visit to the

Hall at a later date. There are currently no known photographs of Anne Lister.

Anne Lister's full ownership and control of Shibden Hall and estate was for just four years from 1836 until her death in 1840. However, having lived there from 1815, and taking majority control of the estate in 1826, this extends her involvement to twenty-five years. This is still a short time in the three hundred years of Lister ownership, which adds to how remarkable her changes and physical legacy at Shibden are.

Under the terms of Lister's will, her partner, Ann Walker (1803–54), inherited Shibden Hall on her death in 1840. There are few records of this time, but it is known that Ann Walker was removed from Shibden Hall in 1843. She was taken to York Asylum and her brother-in-law, Captain George MacKay Sutherland (1798–1847), later moved into Shibden Hall. Walker never returned to Shibden and died at Cliffe Hill in 1854. Whilst she was still alive, several different families lived at Shibden. Anne Lister had mortgaged the estate in 1837, and to pay off the debt, some of Shibden's contents, including Lister's library, were sold in 1846. Some of the estate's land was then sold in 1847 for the new railway line, opened in 1850. On Walker's death the property reverted to Lister family ownership as the estate was inherited by Dr John Lister (1802–67), the great-grandson of Anne Lister's grandfather's brother, Thomas Lister (1708–40) of Virginia, a doctor by profession with a practice in Sandown on the Isle of Wight, and his wife, Louisa Grant (1815–1892).

Anne Lister's Alterations to Shibden Hall

By 1836 the Lister family had been in residence for two hundred years. All around them, stone houses were being built by the wealthy yeoman clothiers, but the family seemed relatively happy with their home. Their principal architectural achievement before 1836 was building the barn on the north side of the house in the mid-seventeenth century, and the south front of the house had been rendered and sash windows installed. The Shibden estate produced income from agriculture, coal mining, stone quarrying and brick making. The Listers also had some income from canal shares, turnpike road trusts and pew rents. It was the stable income of rents from the farms and cottages on the estate that gave Anne Lister a firm base from which she could branch out into riskier investments.

From first moving in with her aunt and uncle in 1815, Lister had ambitions for Shibden Hall and estate and proved herself a capable manager of it. Muriel Green neatly summarises her skill and interest:

Anne helped with the management of her uncle's estate. The early Tudor house and grounds were very dear to her, and she encouraged her uncle to buy old farms and property in the neighbourhood which had formerly belonged to Shibden Hall estate. She was an astute businesswoman, capable of drawing up legal documents, negotiating purchases and sales. She superintended repairs to the farm and cottages, the planting and pruning of trees, the making of paths and roads on the estate, and the working of the coalmines which, in the nineteenth century, were at the height of their prosperity.¹³

Since her uncle remained the owner, Lister also faced issues persuading him to agree to her point of view. She notes in January 1824 that her uncle 'Listens more patiently than ever to my little plans about a few improvements at home & appears to have confidence in my being able to manage things.'¹⁴

By 1825 Lister was starting to take control, and her uncle had clearly started to concede to her judgement: 'Paid for the trees we had had – 2500 oaks at 30 shillings a thousand & 300 beeches at 35 shillings a thousand. Then ordered & paid for 300 more beeches myself without saying a word to my uncle who likes not so much expense';¹⁵ 'Talked about planting, walling, alterations & improvements. My uncle took it more patiently.'¹⁶

On his death in 1826, her uncle left Anne in charge of the Hall and estate, with income shared with her father and aunt. 'I have much to think of, and to do. My uncle's confidence and affection have placed me in a very responsible and by no means unoccupying [*sic*] situation. The executorship is left solely to me.'¹⁷ From 1826, Anne and her aunt spent eighteen months based in France. Lister continued to travel widely through Europe between 1828 and 1839, with just a three-year gap around 1836 when she was particularly focused on Shibden Hall alterations, coal mines, local elections and her relationship with neighbouring landowner Ann Walker. Lister's business endeavours and management of Shibden Hall are closely examined by Catherine Euler, who explains that 'by 1837 [Anne] was involved in very complex and interrelated works regarding coal pits, strata, the angles of inclines, drainage, ventilation, water pressure, the construction of a water-wheel, and calculations about the part a steam engine would play in all of this. She was practically obsessed with questions of water drainage and the use the drained or pumped water could be put to.'¹⁸

In 1836, after the deaths of her aunt and father, Lister had sole ownership of the Hall and estate, and commissioned John Harper

(1809–42), an architect from York. She initially asked him for plans for Northgate House, another Lister property in the centre of Halifax, which she wanted to convert into a hotel and casino. She was impressed with his work and turned her attention to Shibden Hall. Lister wanted a far grander and more imposing property. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a trend for medieval and Jacobean styles; Walter Scott's novels and Byron's poetry were bestsellers. Anne Lister travelled through England finding inspiration for her alterations in cathedrals, castles and ruined abbeys.

The initial plans by Harper were costly and together he and Lister reworked them.¹⁹ Rendering was stripped off the south front, half-timbering restored and new timber bay windows installed. They settled on a new three-storey gothic tower with a library and modern water closets on the west side, and an east wing with new kitchen, servants' quarters and dressing rooms. Lister made changes to improve the look and size of the Hall and to increase the grandeur of the estate, but clearly questioned how far she should go with her plans, as reflected in her comment in 1836: 'only afraid of making the house too large-looking and important'.²⁰ Anira Rowanchild has explored Lister's alterations to the Hall and writes that 'at a time when it was rare for women to control their physical environment', Anne Lister needed to show tradition and convention: 'Shibden Hall embodied the delicate balance of [Anne Lister's] self-production.'²¹

The front parlour is now known as the Savile room after Robert Savile, who made alterations to the room in 1525 when he added bosses to the new ceiling, with an owl, an initial 'I' for his wife and Tudor roses. The room was repanelled by Anne Lister in about 1834 and she reduced the size of the large fireplace and installed bigger windows. On 12 May 1836, she cleared out the upper rooms prior to taking out the floor and opening the housebody (the central large room downstairs) to the rafters. A new fireplace was copied from the one at The Grange, a house near Shibden, and part of the buttery built during the residency of the Waterhouse family in the 1500s was removed to accommodate the staircase and gallery above. According to archives, the work on the new staircase by John Wolstenholme of York included forty-two double twist balusters costing twenty-nine pounds and eight shillings, fifty-three plainer ones costing six pounds, twelve shillings and six pence, four figures in Norwegian oak, including the Lister lion set upright holding the family coat of arms, costing a further eighteen pounds, and the Lister family motto, *Justus Propositi Tenax* ('Just and True of Purpose'),²² costing two pounds and six shillings. The expense totalled about fifty-five-pounds, which would be

about £50,000 in today's money. Lister also added her initials on either side.

To keep servants out of sight, Lister commissioned the digging of cellars beneath the Hall to link the buttery, kitchen and her new tower. By 1839 the initial alterations were complete, and indentations can be seen today on the tower's exterior where there would have been more additions to the building work if Lister had lived to return from her travels in 1840. Shibden Hall would have ended up as a castle-like building, alluding to Lister's love of Norman and early medieval architecture. Architect John Harper then died in 1842 from malaria in Italy, aged just thirty-three, and no further plans were completed.

Subsequent residents made some changes to Shibden Hall too, but none on the scale of Anne Lister's. This may well have been because coal mining gave Lister her main income, but once that was exhausted, later residents only had farm and cottage rents, and over time the farms were sold off one by one. Nearly all Anne Lister's alterations to the Hall can still be seen today.

Anne Lister's Landscape

Surrounding Shibden, the landscape also reveals Lister's grand plans and ambitions for the Hall and estate, which continue to bear her mark, this time in a grand gatehouse (sometimes known as The Lodge), high walls, trees, ponds, walkways and the lake at the bottom of the valley. Standing outside the Hall, it is possible to walk in Lister's footsteps and see her vision of Shibden, just ignoring the newer houses now peering from the horizon into the previously private Shibden grounds. Originally, the Listers had 400 acres of farmland stretching from Shibden Mill beyond Salterlee, down the valley, and Cunnery Wood above the Hall on the hill. By the time of Anne Lister's ownership, the size was much reduced, and she sought to reclaim the land surrounding the Hall from farmland into a landscaped park – in a way, pushing other people further away and out of sight, much like the servants' tunnels inside the Hall.

Never one to do things by halves or delegate, as Liddington describes it:

[Lister] was soon filling her diary pages with dense agricultural details, as she commanded a small army of men to heave and dig, plant and cart soil for her, as she began to shape nature to her desire by disciplining one of Red Beck's boggier curves, and by rooting up the ancient agricultural hedges spoiling the leisured view from Shibden.²³

The terrace was raised using John Harper's designs to provide Shibden with an elevated platform, and at the east end tunnels were created for gardeners to use so that they would not be seen from the garden. When recently renovated, it seems there may have been future plans for another tunnel leading to the house. To the west of the Hall is a series of terraces created as an orchard. Lister added fishponds and large rockwork to create a cascade between them, in addition to a walled garden and a garden cottage. The 'wilderness garden' that Lister created, with its cascade and pools, leads to the tunnel under Shibden Hall Road and on through to Cunnery Wood, where there was a kitchen garden and ponds providing water for domestic supply.

Lister maximised the potential for coal mining on her land. Halfway between the lake and the Hall, there is a small group of trees, underplanted with daffodils, which marks the entrance to one of the old mines. Halifax had notoriously shallow coal seams that were very difficult to work. Lister's work managing the coal mines is explored further by Liddington, John Lister, Catherine Euler and W. B. Trigg.²⁴

Landscape gardener Mr Gray suggested Anne Lister widen Red Beck, named after the polluting red oxides from the coal mines. In February 1836, work began creating the Meer, a lake at the bottom of the valley using Red Beck. The lake is dammed with an ornamental balustrade of sandstone, again designed by John Harper, and had an added attraction for Lister in that she could harness its waterpower. As Euler explains:

These operations took up by far the majority of her time and the majority of the journal space for 1835 and 1837 is primarily devoted to her estate concerns, especially those having to do with coal . . . Based on the information they provided she used her own mathematical knowledge to calculate that 1,512½ cubic feet of water would be needed to work the wheel for one hour. She designed the meer, or lake, which still lies below Shibden Hall, with this calculation in mind.²⁵

From the lake it is difficult to see the Hall on its terrace, screened by trees and a high wall. Lister also created a small private place away from her family and servants on the lower slopes of Shibden. Her initial plans grew to become a 'chaumière', a small, thatched cottage, later referred to as the moss-house.²⁶ The fate and exact location of the moss-house are currently unknown.

Lister also had the 'Lister's Lane' carriage drive built to join the Hall to the main road to Halifax and Leeds, now the A58, with the addition of a grand gatehouse. It is a copy of the one at Kirkham Priory, North

Yorkshire, supporting a gothic arch, once again designed by John Harper. She first used the drive on 27 June 1837, when she visited Halifax to hear Victoria proclaimed queen. A few days later, when the gatehouse was finished, she celebrated by buying the masons a drink at the Stump Cross Inn. The Shibden Park that the public can walk around and enjoy for free today is largely thanks to Anne Lister, who may never have anticipated public access to her land and private spaces.

Anne Lister's Collections

Very few of Anne Lister's personal possessions survive today and the few remaining items are always displayed for visitors to see. As her vast library was sold at auction in 1846, just a handful of books remain at Shibden with her signature in them, and none has her book plate. A list of Anne Lister's reading and books is being compiled from her diaries and it is hoped some of her collection may one day be discovered now the name Anne Lister is more recognised.²⁷ Two large bound volumes of music remain at Shibden, both believed to be hers, one with 'Miss Lister' embossed on red leather on the front and both are signed inside 'A. Lister'. A wooden travel case, with a writing slope inside and a gold plate reading 'Miss Lister, Shibden Hall', was purchased by Calderdale Museums from France and returned to Shibden Hall. The date and style of it make it most likely to be our Anne Lister's. A Halifax slip-ware planter is also inscribed 'Anne Lister, Shibden Hall', but this most likely belonged to the last Anne Lister of Shibden (1852–1929).

Another object relating to our Anne Lister is her painted funeral hatchment, which would have cost about five pounds at the time and was probably purchased by Ann Walker. The custom was to hang it outside the house for a year after a person's death, before removing it to their church, in this case, Halifax Parish Church, now Halifax Minster. The last resident of Shibden, John Lister, rescued three Lister hatchments from the church and returned them to Shibden. The other two are likely to be those of Lister's father and aunt, but they were already in disrepair, so they are kept in store as they cannot be displayed.

There are three portraits reputedly of Anne Lister, all displayed at the Hall. The oil painting attributed to Joshua Horner (1811–81) was completed posthumously and hangs in the main housebody at Shibden between those of her aunt (painted in 1833 by Thomas Binns) and uncle (also painted posthumously by Joshua Horner). There is reference in Lister's diaries to both her and Ann Walker being sketched by Horner,

and Ann Walker may have commissioned the portrait on her return to Shibden after Lister's death. We await further discoveries from the diaries of another mention of the final oil painting being completed in her lifetime, hopefully with a note of what she thought of it! The other two portraits, one watercolour on paper and the other a small oil painting in an elaborate frame, have similarities, but their provenance is uncertain. None of the portraits has any signature or note on them, and it is interesting that the watercolour on paper has two copies, one held by the Museum Service and one in the Archives; they are slightly different from each other but feature clothes similar to those in the final portrait by Joshua Horner.

The Archives also hold more personal items than just the diaries and travel notes, including Lister's passport to Russia from 1839 and a map of the Pyrenees. In addition, there are approximately 1,800 letters between Lister and her family, friends and business contacts, including her Aunt Anne, Eliza Raine, Mariana Lawton, Maria Barlow, Lady Stuart de Rothsay, Lady Gordon, Sibbella Maclean, Ann Walker and members of the Norcliffe family, all written between 1800 and 1840. There are also notebooks comprising approximately 500 draft business letters to people including Robert Parker, her Halifax solicitor, David Booth, her last steward, John Harper, her architect, and Grays, her solicitors. In addition, there are thirty-two volumes of account and day books covering household, estate and travelling expenses, eleven volumes of schoolbooks and notebooks, eleven volumes of extracts of books read by Lister, lecture notes and miscellaneous notes. These are not yet digitised or online and require in-person viewing.

We know some of the furniture at Shibden Hall would have been present in Anne Lister's time, including the large table in the housebody, made in Yorkshire around 1595 and assembled inside Shibden. Built of oak and made with hand tools, the table extends on draw-leaves to about sixteen feet/five metres in length. The bench alongside the table may have always been at Shibden too, while the settle (a wooden bench with a back) dated 1690 and the carved wooden court cupboard, used to store and display crockery, have certainly been on site since before 1845. The richly carved bed in the Red Room made in about 1630 is also likely to have always been at Shibden.

Nearly all the oil paintings in the Hall have also been *in situ* since before Anne Lister's time, although they may, of course, have been in different positions. H. Brothers has shared references from Lister's diaries about getting three portraits of her ancestors – James Lister (1705–67), Samuel Lister (1706–66) and Reverend John Lister (1703–59) – restored by local

artist John Horner (1784–1867), reframed in 1833 and ordered from Millbourne and Sons, London.²⁸ Lister commissioned the portrait of her Aunt Anne by Thomas Binns, and, as her sister Marian did not want a portrait, Lister commissioned a painting for her of Shibden Valley by John Horner, known as *Marian's View*.

Another surviving object from Lister's time is the Lister Chaise. Built around 1725, it is one of the oldest surviving carriages in the world. It was used by the Lister family for many years and has the Lister coat of arms painted on each door. The current green and gold colours appear to be the original ones, although at some point it was painted grey, before being restored and returned to its original colours in the 1950s. It is a travelling carriage with broad windows, drawn by two horses driven by a rider, called a 'postilion', who sat on one of the horses. The carriage remains on display in the aisled barn where it has been housed for nearly three hundred years. The barn itself was first recorded in 1677 and would have been used by Lister and her staff.

Interpreting Anne Lister at Shibden

Shibden's role when it opened in the 1930s was as a museum. There was no focus on Anne Lister and the curators aimed to present the Hall itself as a point of interest, with a wide range of historical collections on display. To explain to visitors all the changes made by the numerous residents and owners of Shibden Hall over six hundred years is not an easy task. Whilst guidebooks allow space to include finer details, they are not purchased by the majority of visitors. Within the Hall itself there are restrictions on space to display information, with requirements for text to be of a legible size as well as being interesting and accessible to all ages. This often results in a room's entire six-hundred-year history being condensed into two hundred words. There is also no ideal space for individual object labels and no museum cases to securely display vulnerable or valuable objects within the room spaces. Care is taken to display objects off limits, but they are still on open display, therefore vulnerable to children swinging under ropes, enthusiastic selfie fans, dust, dirt, insects, and an occasional bat or bird.²⁹

There are also physical issues about which parts of the Hall can be accessed by visitors. There is often now a demand to see Anne Lister's library at the top of the tower. This is up a narrow, low-ceilinged, spiral staircase, with just one entrance, and so is restricted to only a handful of visitors at a time, and when staff are not too busy to facilitate this.

Similarly, the servants' tunnel running under the buttery to the dining room is down a steep staircase with low-hanging pipes and, again, has only one entrance. Other rooms that unfortunately remain off limits are the servants' quarters, up a staircase again and currently containing a staff room, toilet, office and shop store, which are needed until a separate visitor centre is created to house them. Even if these spaces did become accessible, there would be the challenge of how to re-dress the rooms with no records of what they looked like, nor with any of the original furniture. We are unable to re-dress the whole Hall as it would have been in Anne Lister's time as there is not enough pre-1840 furniture in our collections. Most of the smaller collection items at Shibden have no provenance and John Lister, the last resident, was an avid and eclectic collector of items, even including a small stuffed crocodile. During Anne Lister's twenty-five years there, the Hall would have no doubt seen regular changes in decoration, furnishings and paintings. Trying to capture a specific time-period, which has been further explored by Alison Oram, would also mean the removal of many other furniture items and collections and, in turn, ignoring any subsequent residents.³⁰

An example of the difficulty in choosing a time-period or theme for a room is the upstairs guest bedroom. Previously dressed as a nursery, this then gave the confusing idea of a family home with young children, when it was really being used as a space for education workshops on old toys, rather than representing a connection to the Hall's history. The tradition in presenting historic houses to the public was often to create the idea of a 'family home', and, in turn, a heterosexual space.³¹ Whilst the Listers were certainly all part of the same family, there were very few young children ever living at Shibden. Since 2018, the room has been a mixed-period space, displaying oil paintings, a piano, a table, chairs, a large dresser and, randomly, a narwhal horn with no provenance.³² During Anne Lister's occupation, the room was decorated with yards of fabric hung like a tent and it was known as the 'tented room'. To display it as such – drawing from a few diary references – especially when we consider the cost of acquiring period furnishings while not knowing exactly what it looked like, does not seem viable. Instead, we say it was referred to by Lister as the 'tented room' and allow visitors to imagine it for themselves.

In trying to focus on Anne Lister, we are restricted by the lack of collections directly related to Lister herself, as outlined above. Her personal possessions are few, which makes representing her and her story within the Hall even harder. Whilst we can see her changes to the physical building and accept that some of the furniture was there in her time, how do we

really get close to her without personal effects, clothing, or being able to display on site her diaries and letters? The physical changes to Shibden made by Anne Lister are a representation of herself to others, her public face, in stark contrast to the diaries, especially the coded sections, which were never meant to be seen by anyone. I wonder what Lister would think of us walking in her home, let alone reading the coded sections of her diaries. I think she might like the narwhal horn, though.

The interpretation of the Hall as Anne Lister's home is further complicated by *Gentleman Jack* and the wonderful filming sets created within Shibden, designed without the limits we have of keeping them clean and far enough away from visitors not to be touched. The production designer and team had lorry-loads of furniture and props at their disposal, which we were rather envious of, but everything was taken down and removed after use. Some visitors have expected to see the film sets still *in situ* or have assumed Shibden was filmed exactly as-is. Anne Lister's bedroom was later used by Dr John Lister's family and became the bedroom of John Lister, the last resident. None of the original furniture remains from Anne Lister's time in this room, the fireplace is blocked off and the ceiling and walls long since redecorated. Only the floorboards are original. The small Porch Chamber room next door, where Lister probably wrote her diaries, is off limits to visitors behind a glass door, as the original flooring beams are uneven and the ceiling is very low.

The bedroom and Porch Chamber were too small for the film crew to enter, so these rooms were re-created in a studio in Leeds, with both rooms noticeably larger in the television series than at Shibden. On visiting the set, we realised there would be expectations for the rooms to look similar at Shibden and found ourselves in the strange position of re-creating a historic room based on a television series. We decided the bedroom was the most personal space in the house for Anne Lister, the place where visitors would possibly feel closest to her. We purchased a replica bed of the period style, as they did for the bedroom set in *Gentleman Jack*. We had new bedding made and copied the television series' style and colour. We kept the room open for access by visitors as there were no historic collections in there, which led to some interesting reactions. Many visitors believed the room and bed to be 'real', belonging to and used by Anne Lister, even with our interpretation in place explaining it was based on the film set and what we thought was obviously a replica bed and new bedding. For a photo opportunity we placed a modern replica top hat on the bed, innocently thinking it would make a fun shot, only to find people distraught that we had allowed the public to try on Anne Lister's top hat!³³

We found our staff dealing with a new type of visitor following the television series, ones often more interested in the film sets and taking a selfie with the *Gentleman Jack* poster that we displayed in the entranceway, showcasing Suranne Jones, than with the portrait of the real Anne Lister. There were more incidents of people breaching the traditional rope barriers, taking selfies, touching off-limits collections and even daring each other on social media to do things in the Hall.

To summarise, the advantages of Shibden Hall featuring so prominently in *Gentleman Jack* have included the enormous benefit of new audiences, income from filming, increased visitors and ticket sales, and increased awareness of both Anne Lister and the Hall. All of which is priceless in sustaining the Hall's future. The disadvantages and complexities include loss of income and access for the public when closed for filming, exposure of the house and collections to potential damage from filming and increased visitor numbers, increased wear and tear, higher costs for extra staffing and cleaning, and increased expectations to deliver events and magically make the house larger to fit more people.

Conclusion

The Museum Service's focus has always been to ensure the long-term survival of our historic sites and collections, along with sharing the stories they contain. The 2019 television series, and the international exposure it afforded Anne Lister and her legacy of Shibden Hall, have certainly improved the future security of the Hall compared with just ten years ago, when it had little income and recognition outside West Yorkshire. However, we still face struggles to ride the wave of Anne Lister interest and to preserve some income for a site which is expensive to maintain. With potentially more series of *Gentleman Jack* and other new fictional interpretations in novels, poetry, art and theatre, amongst other media, along with new studies and hopefully more biographies, Anne Lister's story is no longer tied just to her diaries and to Shibden Hall.³⁴ But I believe it remains important to be able to walk in her footsteps in order to truly connect: to see, smell, hear, touch and experience first-hand the world of Shibden which Anne Lister created around her.

Notes

- 1 *Shibden Hall Guidebook* (Calderdale Museum Service, 2010).
- 2 Historic England's 'Pride of Place Project', historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/lgbtq-heritage-project/, accessed 3 March 2022.

- 3 'The Anne Lister Story', YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWMMdnzobjY&t=3s, accessed 3 March 2022.
- 4 'Shibden Hall: 500 Years of History', YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIB-oRh8gYU.
- 5 *Britain's Great Gay Buildings*, Channel 4 documentary (June 2017).
- 6 A. Clare, *Anne Lister of Shibden Hall* (Halifax: Calderdale Museum Service 2018).
- 7 Shibden Hall 3D tour, museums.calderdale.gov.uk/visit/shibden-hall/virtual-tour.
- 8 See @ShibdenHall on Twitter for previous media shares.
- 9 Shibden Hall timeline with 'Packed with Potential', cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1qt4nz8k4iowStcIq33aux6IaUCV1tdlGTgATouViu8&font=OpenSansGentiumBook&lang=en&hash_bookmark=true&initial_zoom=2&height=750#event-the-history-of-shibden-hall.
- 10 'Packed with Potential', www.packedwithpotential.org/home, accessed 3 March 2022.
- 11 J. Lister, 'Shibden Hall History', *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society*, (1907, 1910, 1915–17, 1921, 1926).
- 12 T. W. Hanson, *The Story of Old Halifax* (Halifax: F. King & Sons, 1920); 'A Short History of Shibden Hall', *Bankfield Museum Notes*, County Borough of Halifax, 1934.
- 13 M. Green (ed.), *Miss Lister of Shibden Hall: Selected Letters, 1600–1840* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1992).
- 14 H. Whitbread (ed.), *The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister, 1791–1840* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 6 January 1824, p. 346.
- 15 H. Whitbread (ed.), *No Priest but Love: the Journals of Anne Lister from 1824–1826* (Otley: Smith Settle, 1992), 17 November 1825, p. 140.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 27 November 1825, pp. 141–2.
- 17 Green, *Miss Lister of Shibden Hall*, 21 February 1826, p. 93.
- 18 C. Euler, 'Moving between Worlds: Gender, Class, Politics, Sexuality and Women's Networks in the Diaries of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall, Halifax, West Yorkshire, 1830–1840', unpublished PhD thesis, University of York (1995), p. 109.
- 19 John Harper's drawings of plans are in the *Anne Lister Papers*, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale, SH:2/M/2/1, and are also in J. Liddington, *Female Fortune: Land, Gender and Authority. The Anne Lister Diaries and Other Writings, 1833–36* (London: Rivers Oram, 1998; 2018 edition), p. 194.
- 20 Diary extract 16 April 1836; Liddington, *Female Fortune*, p. 230.
- 21 A. Rowanchild, "'Everything Done for Effect": Georgic, Gothic and Picturesque in Anne Lister's Self-Production', *Women's Writing* 7.1 (2000), 89–104, 89, 101.
- 22 Taken from the *Odes of Horace*.
- 23 J. Liddington, *Nature's Domain: Anne Lister and the Landscape of Desire* (Hebden Bridge: Pennine Pens, 2003), p. 11.

- 24 J. Lister, 'Coal Mining in Halifax', *Old Yorkshire* (1885); Euler, 'Moving between Worlds'; W. B. Trigg, 'The Shibden Hall Pits', *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society* (1930).
- 25 Euler, 'Moving between Worlds', pp. 180, 199.
- 26 Liddington, *Nature's Domain*, p. 51.
- 27 'Packed with Potential' are working on a full list of books recorded in Lister's diaries.
- 28 H. Brothers, 'Framing the Shibden Hall Portraits: a Commission Fulfilled by Anne Lister during an Awkward Stay in London, 1833', *Transactions of Halifax Antiquarian Society* 4 (1996).
- 29 The main portrait of Anne Lister in the housebody was damaged by a bird that pooped on Anne Lister's face and shoulder (possibly a good luck omen!); it had to be cleaned and conserved in 2014. Luckily this was covered by insurance, as the costs ran into thousands of pounds. With visitors coming and going it is easy for birds, rodents and insects to enter, and during filming of *Gentleman Jack* doors were propped open for hours on end, leaving the Hall in need of continuous cleaning, although most of the paintings and collections were removed to other rooms or sites for safe keeping.
- 30 A. Oram, 'Sexuality in Heterotopia: Time, Space and Love between Women in the Historic House', *Women's History Review* 21.4 (2012), 533–51.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 533.
- 32 The joys of having an eclectic collection to manage! (The tusk of the male narwhal is in fact a large sensitive tooth.)
- 33 A. Clare, 'Dressing Gentleman Jack', *Somewhere Magazine* 5–6 (October 2021 and February 2022). Costume designer Tom Pye explains the creation of the top hat and how iconic it has become.
- 34 Such as my own version of the Anne Lister story in the novel *The Moss House* (2019), published under the pen name Clara Barley.

