



Catherine Turner nee Rankin 1797-1894

School mistress, signator of 1866 petition

Catherine was the daughter of John Cole Rankin, a merchant from Newcastle upon Tyne and his wife, Catharine (nee Holland). In 1819 she married Rev Henry Turner, minister of High Pavement Chapel, Nottingham from 1817 and she worked as a teacher in the Sunday School at High Pavement Chapel. Henry died in 1822 so Catherine was a widow for 72 years.

Catherine set up a successful school for girls at Lenton Fields – (now the University nursery) One of her early pupils was Mary Needham, the future mother of Alice Greg who married Ben Dowson. In her book on her grandmother, “What Grandmother Said”, Alix Meynell writes ‘Her mother, Mary Needham, went to Mrs Turner’s School in Nottingham which ‘was something very different from the ordinary schools for young ladies.’ Here the girls were taught not only the usual subjects, but also botany, history, philosophy; they learnt to speak French, to take an interest in public affairs, to think for themselves and “have an earnest purpose in life.’ One of the visiting masters was the father of Herbert Spencer to teach natural philosophy. Writing and arithmetic was taught by John Taylor, headmaster of High Pavement School. They also learnt dancing, singing and Latin. In 1832-1834 Catherine Turner hired rooms at Bromley House for evening dance classes.

In 1861 she was living at Park Terrace and staying with her are Constance Martineau born in London and Maria Stansfield born in Halifax. (Lucy Constance Martineau (1830-1917) was the daughter of Richard Martineau and Lucy Needham and thus a cousin of Alice Dowson, nee Greg, the Nottingham suffragist.) Constance and Maria are recorded as pupils of Catherine Turner in the 1841 census. By 1871 she is at Park Terrace, in 1881 at No 13 and in 1891 at No 8. Her father in law was Rev William Turner of Newcastle who was an early mentor of Elizabeth Gaskell, all related through the Holland family. Catherine’s cousin was the economist, Harriet Martineau, who she frequently visited in the Lake District, often looking after Harriet who did not enjoy good health. There she was in contact with the many of Harriet’s friends, including Mrs Arnold the widow of Dr Arnold of Rugby. She died in 1894 and is buried in the General cemetery