

Harriet Catherine GREVILLE



Baptised: 28 November 1803

Died: 17 April 1866

1st LADY ELLESMERE



Paul R. Speakman 2024
HARRIET CATHERINE GREVILLE (1803 - 1866)

Born **Harriet Catherine Greville** in Bucks. in **1802** and baptised on 28 November **1803**, she married Francis Leveson-Gower in **1822**. In **1833**, he changed his name to Egerton under the terms of the will of his great-uncle the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater. In **1846**, he was elevated to the peerage as First Earl of Ellesmere. Lady Harriet became the Dowager Countess on the death of her husband on 18 February **1857**. She died on 17 April **1866** at Bridgewater House, Cleveland Square, London. The report on her funeral reprinted below appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* on 25 April **1866**.

FUNERAL OF THE DOWAGER COUNTESS OF ELLESMERE

Yesterday the mortal remains Harriet Catherine first and Dowager Countess of Ellesmere were consigned to their last resting place in the family vault in St. Mark's Church, Worsley, amidst the universal sorrow of the inhabitants of the district. The deceased, who was 63 years of age, was, 44 years ago, married to him who was then, and for eleven years afterwards, so well-known as Lord Francis Egerton, and who was in 1833 created Earl of Ellesmere. To that truly noble man she had been in the fullest sense of the word a helpmeet; and how well they had joined in promoting the good of the inhabitants of the district is evidenced by the numerous educational and other institutions which, during a period of more than 20 years, were established by them in the parish of Worsley, and in the adjoining chapelries of Walkden and Ellenbrook. The success which has attended those institutions, and the sorrow which the inhabitants have shown at the removal by death of the Earl and Countess, will permanently record the value which attached to their labours. The building and endowment of the parish church, in which their remains now rest, was a deed the liberality of which was only exceeded when, four years afterwards, they built the parsonage and doubled the amount of their former endowment. In that parish church, which was as free to everyone who entered its gates as it was to its founders, they were, when residing at the Hall, constant worshippers. Many years previously they had built the juvenile schools in that parish, which were licensed for divine service. In the same parish they had established an infant school, a reading-room, and a library, and a domestic school. The affectionate manner in which they cared for the children on their estate was most strikingly shown when Her Majesty visited Worsley Hall in 1851, on which occasion nearly 2,000 children were assembled on the slopes of the Hall gardens to present an address to their Queen. For 35 years the first Earl and Countess were associated in every useful work and benevolent purpose, and now after a separation of nine years, their remains rest together within that vault wherein also were interred, in 1862, the remains of their first-born son, the second Earl.

The wishes which the deceased lady had expressed, in accordance with that unostentatious mode in which she and her husband had always lived, were most faithfully carried out, and the funeral was, so far as the family were concerned, strictly private. The corpse, which was enclosed in a shell, a leaden coffin, and an outer coffin of polished oak was removed from London on Monday night. Leaving London by the nine o'clock train, it arrived in Manchester about three o'clock yesterday morning, and was thence taken in a hearse to Worsley Hall. At half past twelve o'clock the bell of the parish church began to toll, and a few minutes afterwards the funeral procession started. The hearse which was plumed, was followed on foot, by Captain the Hon. Francis Egerton, R.N., the chief mourner and eldest surviving son of the deceased; Viscount and Lady Enfield, son-in-law and daughter; the Earl and Countess of Sandwich, son-in-law and daughter; the Earl of Ellesmere, grandson; the Countess of Ellesmere, daughter-in-law; the Hon. A. F. Egerton and Mrs. Egerton, son and daughter-in-law of the deceased. Besides these members of the family, there also followed Lord George Cavendish; Mr. Rasbotham, who was private secretary to the first Earl; Mr. Fereday Smith, the chief agent to the Bridgewater Trust; and several gentlemen who held official positions as heads of the Worsley departments. To these the formal invitations to be present at the funeral had been confined; but the universal esteem in which the Countess was held led to a much larger

display by the inhabitants of Worsley and the surrounding district. By noon several hundred persons were present in the churchyard, and all wore mourning. All along the hedge which skirts the churchyard and faces the park, the villagers and tenants congregated to witness the passing of the funeral procession. From the west door of the church to the lych-gate there were drawn up in rows on each side of the path a large number of the Sunday school scholars, many of the elder of whom were dressed in deep mourning. The procession passed through the Hall grounds and the principal gate of the park, to the church gate, where the coffin was removed from the hears and carried along the path. At the gate the procession was met by Rev. St. Vincent Beechey, incumbent of Worsley, the Rev. J. Herbert, incumbent of Walkden Moor, and the Rev. G. C. Dickenson, curate of Worsley. During the reading of the first portion of the burial service by Mr. Beechey, the coffin rested in the chancel, where the mourners only were assembled, and in view of the handsome monument which was erected in memory of the deceased's husband. The Sunday school children also lined the way through the churchyard, from the south porch to the vault, along which the coffin was subsequently borne. The remainder of the service at the vault was read by Mr. Beechey. During these proceedings, the conduct of the large assemblage was very reverential. When the service was concluded, the mourners took their farewell glance at the coffin of her who was so dear to them, and then in the same unpretending manner in which they had walked to the church they returned to the Hall. Almost all the persons who had assembled remained to look into the vault, and then quietly departed.

Not only will those thousands of adults and children who inhabit the parishes on the Bridgewater property miss and lament her who had so greatly cared for them; but she will be missed also by those other thousands who knew her chiefly by name, and in whose remembrance she is endeared by the memory of those pleasant visits to the Park, to which during the coming Whitsuntide they cannot, in consequence of her death, be admitted.

Memorial

The memorial was unveiled on 26 July **1869** and originally stood at the crossroads in the centre of Walkden. Then, in **1968**, it was moved to the grounds of St. Paul's Church nearby.

On the day of **Lady Ellesmere's** funeral, the "principal tenants" of the Worsley estate met in the court house to form a memorial committee. The Rev. St. Vincent Beechey presided. Despite the patronage of the church and local gentlemen, the subscription was recalled as a "*spontaneous effort of the villagers in and around Walkden Moor,*" by whom the duchess was "*greatly revered and beloved.*" Designs were solicited from leading architects and were exhibited at Worsley Courthouse. At the inauguration, which was attended by around two thousand people, "*for the most part workpeople,*" the munificence and charity of **Lady Ellesmere** was recalled and honoured. Fereday Smith declared that when she and her husband had arrived in Worsley, it was a "*comparative moral wilderness.*" Blasphemy, drunkenness and crime had flourished, but through **Lady Ellesmere's** efforts "*all had been quite reversed.*" The monument, he said, should remind rising generations of her



example. Canon Beechey praised the manner of her charity, which was never indiscriminate, and always *"followed the path where calm deliberate judgement pointed the way."*
(Public Monuments and Sculpture Association)



Reredos

There was no **Reredos** in the Sanctuary when the Church was first built, only an oak altar. The Dowager Countess of Ellesmere (wife of the 1st Earl Francis) died on 17 April **1866**. The alabaster **Reredos** behind the high altar was erected to her memory by members of her family. It is believed to have come from Italy or to have been made by Italian craftsmen working in London.

The inscription reads:

*In memory of Harriet Catherine,
Countess of Ellesmere – Born October
27 1803 + Died April 17 1866.
Erected by her children*



Dated 1851.

O'D 1: full length, 3/4 right, seated, working at long piece of embroidery, voluminous gown, black lace shawl, feet on stool; background of large picture, table with flowers and books to left. Proof before title.

Royal Collection Trust (RCT)

Creator(s)

After Robert Thorburn (1818-85)
(artist)

Thomas Lewis Atkinson (1819-89) (engraver)

