

heard anything spoken against Ann Cutler except her manner of approaching the Lord - she prayed with great exertion of voice, and in this she never lost her foes". She was nicknamed "Praying Nanny". In 1790 she wrote to John Wesley about her spiritual experiences, and he replied (15th April) that she should be cautious when speaking of this, because there would be people who would misunderstand her.

William Bramwell wrote that Ann was at Dewsbury, Greatland, Birstall, the Leeds circuit, Bradford and the Otley circuit. "In appearance she was weak and insignificant ... her daily food consisted of milk and herb tea" [This sounds incredible!] "... she rose at midnight for an hour of prayer, and winter and summer she invariably got up at four o'clock". 1794 was a busy year and on one occasion she and another lady conducted the service at the Preston Methodist chapel, a most unusual event because there was still opposition to women preachers. On December 8th she wrote from Derby to a friend at Leeds "I was above a week in Oldham circuit, above a fortnight at Manchester, above a fortnight in Leek circuit and now I have been a week in Derby circuit. I am going to Macclesfield, they have sent for me".

Macclesfield had a thriving silk industry and was in the forefront of the industrial revolution, which is perhaps why it came to have a strong Methodist connection. Mr Charles Roe, local employer and silk magnate was sympathetic and in 1775 he built Christ Church at his own expense via an Act of Parliament, as a private benefice of the Church of England. John Wesley visited in 1777 and eight times more before his death in 1791. It is thought that this is the last Anglican church in which he preached. A Methodist chapel was opened at Macclesfield in 1779 and on at least one occasion Wesley preached there in the afternoon and at Christ Church in the evening, both congregations being interchangeable.

Bramwell wrote that Ann arrived at Macclesfield on Monday 15th December 1794 "very poorly of a cold", but insisted on carrying out her programme of prayer meetings and visiting the sick. On Wednesday 17th the evening meeting continued till 1am, but this seems to have been her last, and she weakened, and died at about 6pm on Monday 29th December 1794. Bramwell did not mention the brass plate over Ann's grave at Christ Church, but it was there before 1825 and Smith mentioned it in 1893. It read

CHRIST CHURCH MACCLESFIELD

Founded
by Charles Roe, Esq.
in 1775



"Underneath lie the Remains
of ANN CUTLER;
Whose simple Manners, solid
PIETY, & extraordinary Power
in PRAYER distinguish'd & render'd
her eminently useful in promot-
ing RELIGIOUS REVIVAL whe-
rever she came. She was born
near Preston in Lancashire &
died here Decr. 29 1794 aged 35.

Some time later a large memorial stone was laid, in memory of the wives of five Methodist preachers, six preachers' children and Ann Cutler. It remains an important feature in the re-designed churchyard.

The surname Goodwin is found in Macclesfield at the time, so perhaps Ann's real mother had relatives there. Ann's father, Richard Cutler seems to have been prosperous. In 1791 he paid the most tithe in the west end of Thornley. Ann's sister Dorothy and husband William Rigby had taken over the running of Higher House farm by 1806. Dorothy lived to be recorded in the first census in 1841 as the head of the Rigby family at Higher House. Her daughter-in-law Jane Rigby continued at Higher House till at least 1891, the most recent census to be published. Ann's brother William married and had two daughters but there are no Cutler households in the 1841 or later censuses of the Chipping area. It seems possible that the Cutler family ran out of sons. The name "Cutler" is now only remembered as a large disused quarry in Thornley and as the name of the lane in Chipping linking Hesketh Lane to Parsonage Lane. The quarry is on part of the Cutler family farms, but the connection with the family has not yet been discovered. Perhaps Cutler Lane was built with stone from Cutler's quarry? There are memories that Higher House was a thatched building demolished about 1925.