

Anne Jemima Clough (1820–1892)



Anne Clough was born in Liverpool on 20 January 1820, the only daughter of James Clough (1784–1844), cotton merchant, and his wife, Anne. In 1822 the family moved to Charleston, South Carolina, as her father endeavoured to build up his business. Anne was educated entirely at home by her mother. In part because of this, she developed a passionate and lifelong concern with processes of teaching.

When Anne and her family returned to Liverpool, she worked with an informal, domestic group of middle-class pupils. In 1852 they moved to the Lake District, to Eller How just outside Ambleside where Anne gathered round her a group of pupils, including Mary Arnold, the future novelist Mrs Humphry Ward. The early death of her brother, Arthur, in 1861 left his widow, Blanche, with three small children, and in 1862 Anne went to live with her sister-in-law to help with the upbringing of the children.

At the same time, she was a signatory of the memorial asking the schools inquiry commission to investigate girls' schools as well as boys' and submitted to them a note of suggestions for action, which she then expanded into a brief article for Macmillan's Magazine in 1866 to raise standards and mobilize resources. Economically she advocated combination between schools to share specialist teachers and suggested that these local networks might also arrange courses of lectures by distinguished visitors, 'as a means of creating a taste for higher studies and collective instruction'.

In 1867 Anne Clough chose Liverpool as her base for a pilot project on these lines. It rapidly became clear that specialist lectures would command more support than attempts to persuade schools to combine; the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, of which Anne was a founder member and secretary in 1867–70, brought together associations in five cities, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, and Newcastle, to commission a first course of lectures on astronomy from James Stuart, fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Having inspired a host of associated and competing enterprises and sown the seed of the university extension movement, the council, under Anne's presidency in 1873–4, wound up its activities.

By then she herself was fully engaged in the enterprise which brought together all her aspirations, enthusiasms, and energies. In May 1871 she accepted an invitation from the philosopher Henry Sidgwick to take charge of a house which he had rented in Cambridge where five young women, who wished to come from a distance to attend the recently established lectures for women, were to reside. Demand rapidly outstripped supply, and a larger house and then a second one were leased. Such was the buoyancy of demand that more building was soon contemplated; in 1879 the Newnham Hall Company and the association which had launched the lectures combined forces to form the Newnham College Association for Advancing Education and Learning among Women. Therefore, in Cambridge, they were able to build, to organise lectures and teaching, and to raise and administer funds for scholarships and bursaries. The gestation of Newnham College was complete, and Anne Clough became its first principal, serving throughout without a salary.

Anne Clough's lack of self-consciousness and pretension also eased her relationships with students. She was wholehearted in her commitment to Newnham's absence of religious affiliation and her bequest to Newnham was conditional upon its non-sectarian status. Her legacy is marked in Clough Hall and the Clough memorial gates at Newnham College, a stained-glass window at Liverpool Cathedral while Edge Hill University has a section of the main building and halls of residence called Clough in honour of her contribution to higher education and the history of education in Lancashire.