



# The Australian Brontë Association

Newsletter

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## Brontë Biographies For Busy Beginners

### Part 4: Anne

*In the early 1980s I presented a six part series of radio broadcasts for radio station 2SER. These short radio scripts, written together with Julie Bromhead, give the main facts for those newer ABA members who may not have had time to read any of the book-length biographies. In this issue we meet Anne.*

**Christopher Cooper**



ANNE: Thursday July 31<sup>st</sup> 1845.  
Yesterday was Emily's birthday and the time when we should have opened our 1841 papers, but by mistake we opened it today instead. How many things have happened since it was written – some pleasant, some far otherwise. Yet I was then at Thorpe Green and now I am only just escaped from it. I was wishing to leave it then, and if I had known that I had four years longer to stay, how wretched I should have been. But during my stay I have had some very unpleasant and undreamt of experiences of human nature.

Others have seen more changes. Charlotte has left Mr White's and been twice to Brussels where she stayed each time nearly a year. Emily has been there too, and stayed nearly a year. Branwell has left Luddenham Foot and been a tutor at Thorpe Green and had much tribulation and ill health. He was very ill on Thursday but he went with John Brown to Liverpool, where he now is I suppose, and we hope he will be better, and do better in future. This is a dismal, cloudy wet evening. We have had so far a very wet, cold summer.

Charlotte has lately been to Haversedge, in Derbyshire, on a visit of three weeks to Ellen Nussey. She is now sitting sewing in the dining room. Emily is ironing upstairs. I am sitting in the dining room in the rocking chair before the fire with my feet upon the fender. Papa is in the parlour. Tabby and Martha are, I think, in the kitchen. Keeper and Flossy are I do not know where. Little Dick is hopping in his cage.

*Anne Brontë - sketch by Charlotte Brontë, 17  
April 1833.*

When the last paper was written we were thinking of starting up a school. This scheme has been dropped and long after taken up again and dropped again because we could not get pupils. Charlotte is thinking about getting another situation. She wishes to go to Paris. Will she go?

She has let Flossy in, by the by, and he is now lying on the sofa. Emily is engaged in writing the Emperor Julius's life. She has read some of it and I very much want to hear the rest. She is writing some poetry too. I wonder what it is about. I have begun the third volume in *Passages in the Life of an Individual*. I wish I had finished it. This afternoon I began to set about making my grey-figured silk frock which was dyed at Keighley. What sort of a hand shall I make of it? Emily and I have a great deal of work to do. When shall we sensibly diminish it? I want to get a habit of early rising. Shall I succeed?

We have not yet finished our Gondal chronicles which we began three years ago. When will they be done? The Gondals are, at present, in a sad state. The unique society, about half a year ago, were wrecked on a desert island as they were returning from Gaul. They are still there, but we have not played at them much yet. The Gondals, in general, are not in first rate playing condition.

Will they improve? I wonder how we shall be, and where, and how situated on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1848 when, if we are all alive, Emily will be just thirty. I shall be in my twenty-ninth year, Charlotte in her thirty-third, Branwell in his thirty-second. And what shall we have seen, and known, and shall we be much changed ourselves? I hope not, for the worst, at least. I for my part cannot well be flatter, or older in mind than I am now.

Hoping for the best, I conclude

Anne Brontë.

**MALE NARRATOR:** Anne Brontë, you might think, was the least likely person to be a creative writer. She was gentle, self-effacing, accommodating. The most philosophical of us all, Charlotte called her. Yet there was a toughness and originality about her which Charlotte never got used to. Emily's strength was her inflexibility – Anne's was determination. She was ever conscious that life wasn't meant to be easy, or in her own words:

Believe not those who say  
the upward path is smooth  
lest thou should stumble in the way  
and faint before the Truth.

A measure of that determination is the difference between her first novel *Agnes Grey* or *Passages in the Life of an Individual*, as she calls it in her diary note, and her second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. *Agnes Grey* is certainly more than one would expect from her hymn-like poems or her rather mundane diary notes, but in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* she launches into a criticism of society and a rejection of orthodox views. It was no small thing, at that time Anne was writing, to say that the heroine was justified in leaving her husband. Indeed, was a better person for so doing, or that evil was not eternally punished. "To believe in everlasting torment," she makes her heroine say, "would drive me mad."

Anne wrote the book while her brother, Branwell, was destroying himself with drink and drugs and she forced herself to go on with it, almost as if Branwell's redemption depended on it. Certainly as if her own maturity and acceptance of life depended on it.

**FEMALE NARRATOR:** Certainly Anne's work does not show the power of *Wuthering Heights* and she did not share Charlotte's genius for description and the creation of atmosphere. But Anne was only twenty-six when she wrote *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. At that age Charlotte hadn't even written *The Professor*, and she was thirty before she wrote *Jane Eyre*. The question must always remain whether Anne may have become the better story-teller had she lived. Anne at least, in her own way, may have become as important as her two sisters. She was the only Brontë who overcame the rigours of leaving home and she made some success at earning a living, although it appears clear from her correspondence that she did not enjoy the role of governess. She did, however, enjoy at least some measure of popularity with her young pupils. For all her self-effacement Anne made herself into the kind of person and writer that she was by the qualities of perseverance and determination. She was less reclusive than Emily and less self-concentrated than Charlotte. As the youngest of the family she had been more under the

influence of Aunt Branwell. She had slept in her aunt's room while Charlotte and Emily were talking themselves to sleep with their imaginary adventures. It was a struggle with her conscience to break free from her aunt's straightjacket of religion.

**MALE NARRATOR:** That Anne had her trials as governess there can be no doubt. At the tender age of nineteen she made a brave decision to leave home and earn her own living. She became governess in the family of Mrs Ingham, of Blake Hall Mirfield and she remained there for nine months. She was of a milder temperament than her two sisters and she seemed to like children to some degree, at least more than did Charlotte. Charlotte wrote, in a letter to her friend Ellen Nussey:

**CHARLOTTE:** We have had one letter from her since she went. She expresses herself very well satisfied and says that Mrs Ingham is extremely kind. The two eldest children alone are under her care – the rest are confined to the nursery with which, and its occupants, she has nothing to do. Both her pupils are desperate little dunces. Neither of them can read and sometimes they even profess a profound ignorance of their alphabet. The worst of it is the little monkeys are excessively indulged and she is not empowered to inflict any punishment. She is requested, when they misbehave themselves, to inform their mama, which she says is entirely out of the question as in that case she would be making complaints from morning to night. So she alternately scolds, coaxes and threatens, sticks always to her first word, and gets on as well as she can. I hope she will do. It is only the talking part that I fear, but I do seriously apprehend that her employer will sometimes consider that she has a natural impediment of speech.

**FEMALE NARRATOR:** Anne's preface to the second edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* sheds still more light on her amazing inner strength. "Dear gentle Anne" seems to be the eternal description of her by her contemporaries but one cannot help wondering at the fortitude of this seemingly gentle, pious young girl. The reason for the preface was to answer those critics who had charged her with a morbid love of the coarse, if not the brutal, in *Wildfell Hall*. She says:

**ANNE:** I wish to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral to those who

are able to receive it, but as the priceless treasure too frequently hides at the bottom of a well it needs some courage to dive for it, especially as he that does so will be likely to incur more scorn and obloquy for the mud and water into which he has ventured to plunge than thanks for the jewel he procures. As in like manner, she who undertakes the cleansing of a careless bachelor's apartment will be liable to more abuse for the dust she raises than commendation for the clearing she affects.

When I feel it my duty to speak an unpalatable truth, with the help of God, I will speak it though it be to the prejudice of my name and to the detriment of my reader's pleasure as well as my own. All novels are, or should be, written for both men or women to read and I am at a loss to conceive how a man should permit himself to write anything that would be really disgraceful to a woman or why a woman should be censured for writing anything that would be right or proper for a man.

**FEMALE NARRATOR:** Anne had her trials to bear which stood quite apart from her governing and her witness of Branwell's degradation. In 1839 when the sisters were all at home together the Reverend William Weightman came to Haworth as Mr Brontë's curate. He was a lively, handsome, agreeable young fellow. "Constitutionally cheerful" was how old Mr Brontë described him. The girls called him "Celia Amelia". Charlotte painted his portrait, and he sent them all Valentines to which Charlotte replied in a rather lengthy set of verses. When he was invited to deliver a lecture in Keighley he persuaded a married clerical colleague to entertain them all to tea. The whole party burst into Haworth Parsonage very late at night after walking the four miles up the valley from Keighley and Aunt Branwell was furious that the coffee she had prepared was not enough for the two additional members of the party. This is really the only occasion when the Brontës enjoyed the normal social life of ordinary young people. William Weightman flirted harmlessly with every girl in sight and apparently caused quite a flutter with most of the unmarried young ladies in Haworth. Even the usually sedate Ellen Nussey begged Charlotte to tell her what the Reverend Weightman thought of her. But Anne was deeply and silently affected. Perhaps only

Emily, who had acquired the nickname of “The Major” because of her close guardianship of her sisters, realise just how deep was Anne’s attachment to the young curate. Charlotte apparently did not, for she light-heartedly explained to Ellen how Weightman sat opposite Anne in church, sighing softly and looking out of the corners of his eyes to win her attention. She goes on to say that the curate would be better for a wife and Ellen herself could settle him more than anyone else could. Anne’s own words in her poem, *A Reminiscence*, gives some evidence of the power of her feelings.

**ANNE:**

Yes, thou art gone  
And never more thy sunny smile shall  
gladden me.  
The lightest heart that I have known  
The kindest I shall ever know.

**FEMALE NARRATOR:** But in August 1840 Anne went as governess to the family of the Reverend Mr Robinson, a country landowner at Thorpe Green, near York. It was not Anne’s destiny to be a happy wife. William Weightman died of cholera in 1842 and it does not take very much imagination to know how Anne felt at the time, alone at the Robinsons and far away from her home and family.

**MALE NARRATOR:** A letter from Anne to Ellen Nussey in October 1847, when the sisters were all at home together strikes a contented, if rather mundane, note on life at the Parsonage at the time. When one considers that this was the very same time when the publicity from their various novels was reaching its height, it seems even more down to earth and commonplace.

**ANNE:** My dear Ellen, many thanks to you for your unexpected and welcome epistle. Charlotte is well and meditates writing to you. Happily for all parties the East wind no longer prevails. During its continuance she complained of its influence as usual. I too suffered from it in some degree as I always do, more or less, but this time it brought me no reinforcement of colds and coughs which is what I dread most. Emily considers it a very uninteresting wind but it does not affect her nervous system. You are quite mistaken about Charlotte’s parasol – she affirms she brought it back, and I can bear

witness to the fact, having seen it yesterday in her possession. As for my book, I have no wish to see it again till I see you along with it, and then it will be welcome enough for the sake of the bearer. We are all here as you left us. I have no news to tell you, except that Mr Nicholls begged a holiday and went to Ireland three or four weeks ago and is not expected back until Saturday, but that I dare say is no news at all. We were all, and severally, pleased and gratified for your kind and judiciously selected presents from Papa down to Tabby, or down to myself perhaps I ought rather to say. The crabcheese is excellent and likely to be very useful, but I don’t intend to need it. It is not choice, but necessity, that has induced me to choose such a tiny sheet of paper for my letter, having none more suitable at hand. But perhaps it will contain as much as you need wish to read, and I to write, for I have nothing more to say, except that your little Tabby must be a charming little creature. And that is all, for as Charlotte is writing, or about to write to you herself, I need not send any messages from her. Therefore accept my best love. Your affectionate friend, Anne Brontë.

**MALE NARRATOR:** Charlotte Brontë gives us further insight into Anne’s character in her biographical notice in the preface to *Agnes Grey*. She wrote:

**CHARLOTTE:** Anne’s character was more subdued. She wanted the power, the originality, the fire of her sister Emily but was well endowed with quiet virtues of her own. Long suffering, self-denying, reflective and intelligent, a constitutional reserve and taciturnity, placed and kept her in the shade and covered her mind, especially her feelings, with a sort of nun-like veil which was rarely lifted. Neither Emily nor Anne was learned. They had not thought of filling their pitchers from the well-springs of other minds. They always wrote from the impulse of nature, the dictates of intuition and from such stores of observation as their limited experience had enabled them to amass. I may sum up all, by saying that for strangers they were nothing, for superficial observers less than nothing, but for those who had known them all their lives in the intimacy of a close relationship they were genuinely good and truly great.

**FEMALE NARRATOR:** Within one dreadful year Charlotte Brontë lost her only brother and two beloved sisters. Scarcely was Emily Brontë

in her grave before Anne began to show signs of the consumption that had caused her sister's death. Charlotte and Mr Brontë summoned the physician from Leeds who examined Anne and proclaimed that both her lungs were affected. He held little hope for her recovery. Anne's decline was gentler and slower than Emily's had been, but it was apparent from the beginning what the end must be. Charlotte later was to realise that she might have anticipated long ago this rapid decline and quick succession of deaths of her brother and sisters.

**CHARLOTTE:** All the days of this winter have gone by darkly and heavily like a funeral train. Since September sickness has not quitted this house. It is strange, but I now suspect that all this has been coming on for years. Unused any of us to robust health we have not noticed the gradual approaches of decay. We did not know its symptoms. The little cough, the small appetite, the tendency to take cold at every variation of atmosphere have been regarded as things of course. I see them in another light now.

**MALE NARRATOR:** The bitter Yorkshire winter dragged on and Anne began to long to go to the seaside resort of Scarborough which she had visited with the Robinsons several years before. She even came out of her customary reserve and wrote, begging Ellen Nussey to accompany her since it was supposed that Charlotte would not be able to leave old Mr Brontë. Anne began to believe that the move to a warmer climate would be the only measure which might save her. She wrote:

**ANNE:** My dear Miss Nussey. The doctors say that change of air, or removal to a better climate, would hardly ever fail of success in consumptive cases if the remedy be taken in time, but the reason why there are so many disappointments is that it is generally deferred until it is too late. Now I would not commit this error and, to say the truth, though I suffer much less from pain and fever than I did when you were with us I am decidedly weaker and very much thinner. Under these circumstances I think there is no time to be lost. I have no horror of death. If I thought it was inevitable I think I would resign myself to the prospect in the hope that you, dear Miss Nussey, would give as much of your company to Charlotte as you could, and

be a sister to her in my stead. But I wish it would please God to spare me, not only for Papa's and Charlotte's sakes, but for my own as well because I long to do some good in the world before I leave it. I have many schemes in my head for future practice, humble and limited indeed, but I should not like them all to come to nothing and myself to have lived to so little purpose.

**FEMALE NARRATOR:** At length, on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1849, Charlotte, Ellen and Anne set out for Scarborough. Mr Brontë and the servants knew it would be the last time they saw Anne alive. Charlotte, writing of the final days of her last and youngest sister, said:

**CHARLOTTE:** Anne followed in the same path as Emily but with slower step, with a patience that equalled the other's fortitude. I have said that she was religious, and it was by leaning on these Christian doctrines in which she firmly believed that she found support during her most painful journey. I witnessed their efficacy in her latest hour and greatest trial and must bear my testimony to the calm triumph with which they brought her through. She died May 28<sup>th</sup> 1849.

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### *The Duke of Windsor and the Brontës*

Yes, Marloesje, the story that you read concerning the Duke of Windsor and his comments on *Jane Eyre* was not apocryphal and does indeed have its basis in fact.

In the official biography of the Duke – *King Edward the Eighth* (Collins 1990), Philip Ziegler mentions the story as relating to the period during the 1920s when the Duke was the Prince of Wales. It was reported by his then secretary Tommy Lascelles: 'I recall the Prince of Wales years ago ... saying to me, "Look at this extraordinary little book which Lady Desborough says I ought to read. Have you ever heard of it?" The extraordinary little book was *Jane Eyre*'.

Ziegler states that 'the Prince never learned to read for pleasure or acquired even a superficial knowledge of the English classics', and he goes on to relate a similar story concerning the Brontës. This was noted by the Prince's equerry Bruce Ogilvy and concerned

## Eating With The Brontës

the Prince's long term mistress of the 1920s, (and who was replaced by Wallis Simpson in the early 1930s), Freda Dudley Ward. 'She was an excellent influence on him ... and tried ... to broaden his intellectual horizons. Once she gave him a copy of *Wuthering Heights* to read. "Who is this woman Bronte" he asked dubiously.

It was not just the Brontës who suffered from a lack of literary recognition by the Prince. In her biography of Thomas Hardy, *The Time Torn Man* (Viking 2006), Claire Tomalin tells of the occasion when the Prince was visiting his West Country estates in July 1923 and found that his schedule included having lunch with Thomas Hardy at his home, Max Gate, near Dorchester. 'The Prince had never read a line of his work, but he was made aware that he was a very old and famous Dorset writer, and that some of his books were in the Royal collection.' Ziegler continues the story as the Prince 'asked Hardy to settle an argument he had had with his mother (Queen Mary) about whether the novelist had written a book called *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. "I said I was sure it was by somebody else". Hardy answered politely that had indeed been one of his earlier books'.

Ziegler comments 'a worldly knowledge of English literature is perhaps unnecessary to a monarch, but to be totally ignorant of its greatest monuments is surely undesirable'.

Would the Prince have taken a little more interest in reading for pleasure had he known how many long years of exile lay ahead of him? - patently bored and lacking a meaningful purpose to his life with no worthwhile role to pursue. What would the Brontës would have thought of their own Queen's great grandson abrogating his Royal duties and giving up his throne for love? With their interest in the political happenings of their day, what discussions they might have had together, and what stories they could have woven around the saga of the Duke's abdication, a story which bears out very clearly the aphorism that often truth is stranger than fiction.

**Catherine Barker**

*Food is a constant in our lives and has always been a basic ingredient of women's writing. The Virago Book of Food - The Joy of Eating (edited by Jill Foulstone) is the first anthology to celebrate international food writing by women including Charlotte and Emily Brontë. Their extracts are reproduced below:*

### Regrettable Meals

The refectory was a great, low-ceilinged, gloomy room; on two long tables smoked basins of something hot, which, however, to my dismay, sent forth an odour far from inviting. I saw a universal manifestation of discontent when the fumes of the repast met the nostrils of those destined to swallow it; from the van of the procession, the tall girls of the first class, rose the whispered words -

'Disgusting! The porridge is burnt again!'

'Silence!' ejaculated a voice; not that of Miss Miller, but one of the upper teachers, a little and dark personage smartly dressed, but of somewhat morose aspect, who installed herself at the top of one table, while a more buxom lady presided at the other. I looked in vain for her I had first seen the night before; she was not visible. Miss Miller occupied the foot of the table where I sat, and a strange, foreign-looking, elderly lady - the French teacher, as I afterwards found - took the corresponding seat at the other board. A long grace was said and a hymn sung; then a servant brought in some tea for the teachers, and the meal began.

Ravenous, and now very faint, I devoured a spoonful or two of my portion without thinking of its taste; but the first edge of hunger blunted, I perceived I had got in hand a nauseous mess: burnt porridge is almost as bad as rotten potatoes; famine itself soon sickens over it. The spoons were moved slowly; I saw each girl taste her food and try to swallow it; but in most cases the effort was soon relinquished. Breakfast was soon over and none had breakfasted. Thanks being returned for what we had not got, and a second hymn chanted, the refectory was evacuated for the schoolroom. I was

one of the last to go out, and in passing the tables, I saw one teacher take a basin of the porridge and taste it; she looked at the others; all their countenances expressed displeasure, and one of them, the stout one, whispered – ‘Abominable stuff! How shameful!’

*Jane Eyre*

### Amuse-Bouches

We always ate our meals with Mr Heathcliff. I held the mistress’s post in making tea and carving; so I was indispensable at table. Catherine usually sat by me; but to-day she stole nearer to Hareton, and I presently saw she would have no more discretion in her friendship, than she had in her hostility.

‘Now, mind you don’t talk with and notice your cousin too much,’ were my whispered instructions as we entered the room. ‘It will certainly annoy Mr Heathcliff, and he’ll be mad at you both.’

‘I’m not going to,’ she answered.

The minute after, she had sidled to him, and was sticking primroses in his plate of porridge.

*Wuthering Heights*

### Kitchens

One step brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory lobby or passage: they call it here ‘the house’ pre-eminently. It includes kitchen and parlor, generally, but I believe at *Wuthering Heights* the kitchen is forced to retreat altogether into another quarter: at least I distinguished a chatter of tongues, and a clatter of culinary utensils, deep within; and I observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fire-place; nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders on the walls. One end, indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, in a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The latter had never been underdrawn: its entire anatomy lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood laden with oatcakes, and clusters of legs of beef, mutton and ham, concealed it. Above the chimney were sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of horse pistols, and, by way

of ornament, three gaudily painted canisters disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone: the chairs, high-backed, primitive structures, painted green: one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser, reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies, and other dogs haunted other recesses.

*Wuthering Heights*

*More food for thought from further afield:*

Near a fireplace of marble inlaid with garnets, lapis lazuli and agate, the Maharaja’s son sat on a chair constructed entirely of antlers, eating a boiled egg and reading *Blackwood’s Magazine*. Beside the chair a large cushion on the floor still bore the impression of where he had been sitting a moment earlier; he preferred squatting on the floor to the discomfort of chairs but feared that his English visitors might regard this as backward. ‘... A boiled egg and *Blackwood’s* is the best way to begin the day’: JG Farrel *The Siege of Krishnapur*

Submitted by Sarah Burns

## A BIOGRAPHY

### *The Brontës, Juliet Barker, Phoenix Press, 1994*

This work is now some 17 years old, and there is, we believe, another edition of it being published. Have you read it recently? It is *superb!*

A native of Yorkshire, Barker served six years at Haworth Parsonage as curator and librarian, and *eleven* years researching the Brontë family. She has chosen (I believe quite rightly) to treat in this biography, the whole family rather than just single individuals within it, which gives a much richer picture of their lives than other works have been able to do. Barker quotes extensively from the *Juvenilia*, seeing those early writings – not unnaturally – to be sources for the adult works.

The work is beautifully written, and comprehensively footnoted, particularly where her interpretation differs from previous publications.

Barker uses Elizabeth Gaskell as her starting point of course, but her meticulous, extraordinarily wide research in (for example) letters and local press gives her access to information not available to Charlotte Brontë's early biographer, and she corrects Mrs Gaskell on some points. She also believes that Gaskell was misled by her reliance on Charlotte's friend, Ellen Nussey, who had after all very little part in Charlotte's later life, and also very little to do with either Patrick Brontë or Arthur Bell Nicholls. Barker however gives a most rounded picture of these two gentlemen, both so careful in their care of Charlotte, and after her death of her reputation.

The light – even flirty! – relationship with publisher George Smith shows a different facet of Charlotte's character, to readers who have necessarily concentrated so strongly on her fruitless preoccupation with Professor Heger in Belgium. The letters with the publisher's reader, William Smith Williams, also were a supportive part of her professional life.

To this reader, the work has given a much broader picture of the wider community of Haworth, and of the talented family within it.

**Helen Malcher.**



## **UNESCO Memory of the World International Advisory Committee Visits the Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth, Yorkshire**

*ABA member Roslyn Russell is Chair of the International Advisory Committee of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme. For more information on the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme in Australia and at the international level see <http://www.amw.org.au>*

In May this year the Brontë Parsonage Museum at Haworth was visited by a party of people who had come from all over the world to participate in the Tenth Meeting of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) of UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme, held in Manchester.

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme's mission is to facilitate preservation, by the most appropriate techniques, of the world's documentary heritage; to assist universal access to this heritage; and to increase awareness worldwide of its existence and significance. So a visit to Haworth to view the story of the Brontës and their literary legacy in the place in which their works were created was very appropriate for this international group.

The visit to Haworth was scheduled between two days of intensive discussion on various aspects of the Programme – including the inscription of items and collections held in libraries, archives and museums on the International Memory of the World Register that lists documentary heritage of world significance – and was a welcome opportunity for everyone to relax and enjoy a visit to this important cultural site.

Countries represented in the party of IAC members and observers that went to Haworth on 24 May this year included Australia, Austria, Barbados, Chile, China, France, Germany, Ghana, Israel, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lebanon, Morocco, The Netherlands, The Philippines, Poland, Saint Lucia, South

Africa, Switzerland, Tajikistan and the United Kingdom. Despite the fact that the group included people from diverse cultural





Joie Springer, Chief of Secretariat, UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, in Haworth's

backgrounds and language groups, many people said that they had read at least some of the Brontës' literary works – not surprisingly, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* topped the list.

Although rain was threatening, the clouds began to clear as the coach approached Haworth, although the wind that greeted us as we made our way up the pathway to the Brontë Parsonage Museum reminded us that late spring in England can be very chilly. The visit began with an illustrated lecture on the story of the Brontë family by the Director of the Museum. The larger party was divided into groups and each took group took it in turns to go through the Museum, while the others explored Haworth or browsed in the Museum shop.

Once each group had seen the displays in the Museums, it returned to the lecture room for a real treat delivered by Education Officer Susan Newby – a close-up viewing of some of the treasures that are not on display at present. The viewing took us from the Brontës' childhood through their adulthood and finally to small memorials created to remember them.

The first of these treasures to be displayed was a toy lion that showed signs of much love from the Brontë children. Then we saw a sampler worked by the young Emily. It was

incredibly neat, with the embroidered letters in ruler-straight lines.

An example of one of the tiny handwritten books created by the Brontë children was then brought around for us to examine at close range. This one, by Charlotte, was a parody of one of the family's favourite magazines, *Blackwood's Magazine*, complete with mock advertisements and list of contents.

Then we saw an illustrated letter, again by Charlotte, to Ellen Nussey. Charlotte has drawn her friend as an elegant young woman on the arm of a handsome man, while Charlotte, caricatured as a rather grotesque figure in an unflattering dress, waves them goodbye.

Next to appear was a pair of Charlotte's shoes, tiny and narrow, as befits a woman who was very small (those who have seen her dresses in the Museum will have an idea of just how small she was.

We were then shown another of the small handwritten books, and a letter written in the normal way and then across on the diagonal, a very common practice in nineteenth-century letter writing when paper was a valuable commodity and postage was expensive.

Finally, we were shown a mourning



*Brontë Parsonage Museum sign, Haworth, Yorkshire.*

bracelet containing some of Anne Brontë's hair, and another of the small books inside a specially fashioned silver case – essentially a reliquary formerly owned by a great admirer of the Brontës. We felt very privileged to be able to see these wonderful objects at such close range.

After the group members had made their purchases at the Museum shop, and in other attractive shops in Haworth, everyone adjourned to the nearby Weavers restaurant for a superb three-course lunch of modern English food, then travelled back to Manchester for another day of discussion and deliberation on the preservation of the world's documentary heritage.

Roslyn Russell

### A question...:

*Mandy Swann's interesting talk at our May meeting elicited from Michelle Cavanagh the following question to the speaker.*

Mandy Swann's interesting talk "Charlotte Brontë and Romanticism" has got me thinking about Romanticism in all its forms. I've been pondering on the phenomenon of our annual Anzac Day ceremonies and what they have become in recent years, both amongst politicians and the general public. I feel that Anzac Day marches and memorials, which should draw attention to the folly, destruction and futility of war, have now almost become a dangerous form of Romanticism. Would others agree with my suggestion?

Michelle Cavanagh

In her thought-provoking question, Michelle Cavanagh links Romanticism with a deluded or naïve idealism, and literary critics often consider idealism (sometimes naïve), as a defining aspect of Romanticism. However, I would draw attention to the contested nature of the term Romanticism in literary criticism and the variety and (regularly contradictory) traits historically used in critical analyses of Romanticism. It is also important to recall that Romanticism is a term used by literary critics most often to describe a set of traits associated with writing produced between

1785 and 1830. That said, Romanticism is also critically discussed separately from that period as a broad aesthetic and ideology. If an emphasis is placed on the nobility of war in Anzac day celebrations, insofar as idealism is part of the aesthetics and ideology critics ascribe to the term Romanticism, then perhaps these celebrations can be considered a form of Romanticism. Yet, Anzac day celebrations also tend to focus on the folly, destruction and futility of war. Anzac day 'celebrations' can be viewed as presenting the chance to remember the emotional suffering experienced in times of war, and interestingly, a focus human emotion is also a trait critics ascribe to Romanticism.

Mandy Swann

### Did you know...

That **Cowan Bridge School**, in Yorkshire, which was so catastrophic for the Brontë girls' lives, health and happiness, was formerly named *Casterton* and was a very early example of formal education for women.

Charlotte described the abuses, the typhus epidemic in which seven students died, the scandal which followed, and subsequent reform of the school in *Jane Eyre*. The character of Helen Burns is based closely on Maria. Reverend Brocklehurst is a portrait of William Carus Wilson, who managed the school in the Brontës' time. Women readers who had attended the school confirmed Charlotte's account.

A plaque commemorates this association.



# NEWS in brief

## *From the Society*

~ President Christopher Cooper has been travelling in Northern Europe for the past month or so. Makes one realise just how much he does for the Society when he's around!

~ This issue will be distributed to members at the weekend conference on 'Education' in the Southern Highlands, 5-7 August. It has been given this delayed publication date because of Christopher's absence.

~ Articles and report from that weekend, as well as from talks at our meetings, will be considered for inclusion in *The Thunderer* in December this year. Members are encouraged to submit items of interest for publication.

## *From Members*

These following verses have been submitted by member **Patricia Stebbings-Moore**. They are by **Branwell Bronte**, translating Horace, and demonstrate in that young man a high ability in both Latin and verse. Both from *A Garden of Latin Verse*, by Frances Lincoln

### THE RACE FOR FAME

Many there are whose pleasure lies  
In striving for the victor's prize, Whom dust clouds,  
drifting o'er the throng  
As whirls the Olympic car along,  
And kindling wheels, and close shunned goal  
Amid the highest gods enrol.

**Branwell Bronte (1817-1848)**

SUNT QUOS CURRICULO PULVEREM OLYMPICUM  
COLLEGISSE IU VAT METAQUE FERVIDIS  
EVITATA ROTIS PALMAQUE NOBILIS.  
TERRARUM DOMINOS EVEHIT AD DEOS.

**Horace, Odes 1.1, lines 3-6**

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### LIVING AND LOVING

Be not ever pondering  
Over what the morn may bring;  
Whether it be joy or pain,  
Wisely count it all as gain;  
And, while age forbears to shed  
Snows, or sorrows o'er thy head,  
Do not scorn the dancers' feet,  
Nor thy lover's dear retreat.

**Branwell Bronte (1817-1848)**

QUID SIT FUTURUM CRAS FUGE QUARERE. ET  
QUEM FORS DIERUM CUMQUE DABIT LUCRO  
APOONE. NEC DULCES AMORES  
SPERNE PUER NECQUE TU CHOREAS.  
DONEC VIRENTI CANITIES ABEST MOROSA.

**Horace, Odes 1.9, lines 13-18**

~~~~~

### Haworth Parsonage at Night

A silver glow comes from the west  
And darker grows the sky  
Whilst songbirds fluting to the nest  
Know night is drawing nigh

The sky of white and azure blue  
Is now a shining grey  
'Tis then the stars come out anew  
And slowly fades the day

All the milling crowds are gone  
The shops have closed their doors  
And all is sweet tranquility  
Upon the sweeping moors

The old grey house is peaceful now  
Free at last from curious eyes  
Regaining lonely dignity  
Beneath the tranquil skies

**Jean Walker**

Quoted from *The Bronte Society Gazette*,  
Issue 64, April 2011.

# PROGRAM FOR 2011



This symbol indicates meetings held at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt St Sydney, just around the corner from Town Hall station, usually on Level 1. Meeting charge is \$5. Meetings begin at 10:30am with morning tea from 10am.



**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER Rowan McAULEY**

## Who are you Miss Snowe?

A discussion about the dead ends, obfuscations, red herrings and misdirections in the narration of *Villette*. Rowan has published many children's books, including several titles in the *Go Girls* series. She recently gave a course on the Brontës at the WEA.



**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER: Cindy BROADBENT**

## Emily's Use of Dialect in *Wuthering Heights*

### 'Eye Up - Sit Ye Dahn and open yer Lugs!'

In this talk Cindy examines the linguistic links between the Yorkshire dialect and Old Norse and older forms of English. Cindy is a freelance writer and has written for the *Good Weekend* and various airline magazines. She is currently the international correspondent for the magazine of the Australian Museum in Canberra.

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER: Combined Christmas Lunch (12 for 12:30)**

We will be joining with the NSW Dickens Society at the Castlereagh Hotel, Castlereagh St, Sydney.

## Our Visiting Speakers for 2011

**Rowan McAuley (September meeting)** is a children's author who is conducting an excellent Bronte course at WEA. She will discuss the confusions and obfuscations in the narration of *Villette*. Rowan has published many children's books, including several titles in the *Go Girls* series.

**Cindy Broadbent (November meeting).** Cindy's background is in Yorkshire, and in linguistics, and she will examine Emily's use of a strong Yorkshire dialect in the servant Joseph in *Wuthering Heights*, making comparisons with Old English and old Norse.

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*Members are strongly encouraged to submit pieces for this, their Newsletter.*