



The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter

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SIX OF THE BEST THINGS TO DO IN BRONTË COUNTRY by Michelle Cavanagh



Obviously the first place anyone who travels to Haworth needs to explore is the Parsonage Museum which is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm and where the Brontë family lived. The Brontë Society, one of the oldest literary societies in the English speaking world, is a registered charity with members supporting the preservation of the museum and library collections.

Since Frances O'Connor's film *Emily*, a fictional account of how *Wuthering Heights* was conceived, it has refocused attention on where the three sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne wrote their novels. It was of course also where their brother Branwell and father Patrick - who was made curate of the nearby church in 1820 - also lived.



So where else can the avid Brontë fan visit?

The Brontë Way, at 70 kilometres in length and traversing the Pennines is ideal for anyone who likes a long walk. Starting at Oakwell Hall which is an Elizabethan manor house in Birstall, West Yorkshire - set in period gardens surrounded by 110 acres of country park - is the venue Charlotte supposedly used as Fieldhead in her novel *Shirley*.

The route winds past many places of interest to Brontë enthusiasts including the Brontë's birthplace in Thornton and Ponden Hall which is Thrushcross Grange in Emily's novel *Wuthering Heights*. Then the walk takes you past Wycoller Hall, thought to be the inspiration for Ferndean Manor in Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. Wycoller Hall was even used to illustrate the cover of the 1898 edition of *Jane Eyre*. Near to Haworth, the family probably visited Wycoller on their regular walks. The Brontë Way ends on the western side of the Pennines at Gawthorpe Hall near Burnley which was the home of the



Kay-Shuttleworth family who invited Charlotte to stay and where she first met Elizabeth Gaskell. Charlotte described Gawthorpe as "grey, stately and picturesque, a model of old English architecture" which is seen here. So the Brontë Way offers much for Brontë fans to explore.

A smaller walk for those of us not used to such a quite such

a long walk is the Haworth to Hebden Bridge walk which is a 13 kilometre track which takes you due south, past the Lower Laithe and Leeshaw reservoirs and the wooded valleys below Hardcastle Crag and Lum Bridge.

Another walk, usually associated with Emily, takes you past Hardcastle Crag as you head towards Hebden Bridge and which includes what's known as the Brontë Waterfall and includes Top Withens, the ruined farmhouse 6.5 kilometres above Haworth with views of what's been described as "some of the oldest moorlands in Europe".

And who could forget the classic 1970 movie *The Railway Children* based on Edith Nesbit's book of the same name. The Brontës literary achievements

coincided with the birth of the railway age. In 1848 Charlotte and Anne travelled to London by train to clear up the lie that their publisher

Thomas Cautley Newby said when he ascertained that *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* were all written by the one author. As Charlotte wrote to her friend Mary Taylor on 4 September 1848; “The upshot of it was that on the very day I received Smith and Elder’s letter, Anne and I packed up a small box, sent it down to Keighley, set out ourselves after tea, walked through a snow-storm to the station, got ourselves to Leeds, and wired up by the night train to London with the view of proving our separate identity to Smith and Elder, and confronting Newby with his lie”.

For the four days during which Charlotte and Anne were in London before returning to Haworth, they also visited the Royal Italian Opera House, Covent Garden - now known as the Royal Opera House - to see Rossini’s *Barber of Seville*, also visiting the Royal Academy and the National Gallery. They left London laden with the books Mr Smith had given them before heading back to Howarth. While this wasn’t the only train trip the Brontës did, or Charlotte’s first experience of train travel, what excitement and fun the London trip must have been for both Charlotte and Anne. Charlotte had first travelled by train as early as 1837 with her friend Ellen Nussey on a trip to Bridlington. The journey was on the Leeds and Selby train, one of the first lines in Yorkshire and the first line in the world where the trains were hauled through a tunnel by a steam locomotive.

Such railway experiences were much different from those of their brother Branwell whose first connection with railways was likely to have been when he travelled on the

Liverpool and Manchester railway in 1837. He was clearly an impressive, well-educated young man at this point in his short life because, in 1842, he landed a job on the Manchester and Leeds railway as the assistant clerk in charge at Sowerby Bridge station. Branwell did well enough there to be promoted to Clerk in Charge at Luddendenfoot station on an enhanced salary. There his diligence certainly won him friends



from the local businesspeople, even if it did not extend to keeping a close eye on the takings. Doodling in the margins of the station’s ledgers was one thing, but not giving correct returns was another which meant that it was the end of his railway experiences. Certainly those 19th century railways were much different to the experiences we have of railways in the 21st century.

As for Haworth’s main street during the Brontës time, it was a cobbled street in a dirt-poor village, home to miners and mill workers. Much has changed since then. Howarth’s main street is now full of galleries, book shops, cafes and lots of places selling Brontë memorabilia although the Black Bull Inn, which Branwell frequented, is still there and where you can book accommodation if you so desire.

So a visit to Brontë country has much to offer.

A BRONTË PILGRIMAGE

by Annette and Graham Harman, May 2023

In May Graham and I travelled to Yorkshire, England. Ann Brontë's grave, in Scarborough, is well visited by many people each day. Scarborough is a major tourist area. When we were there, a televised protest,



complete with surfboards and would be surfers decisively unable to enter the water because of recent sea water test results. Protesters drew people's attention to the poor water quality at South Bay, currently many people don't swim at South Bay, they go to North Bay instead.

The Scarborough area is well signposted. You follow the signs to Ann Brontë's grave in St Mary's churchyard, pause reflectively, admire the view over South Bay and think about the short lives of the Brontë sisters, their writings and family.

Comments made at the grave by various women were: "died so young", "love Agnes Grey" and "Charlotte's Jane Eyre is+ my favourite, I read it at school".

I felt that when Anne visited Scarborough as a governess and her last visit with Charlotte and Ellen she was in a place she loved.

In Haworth it was a 1940s Weekend when we visited. This event is celebrated annually because *The Railway Children* and

The Railway Children Return were filmed in Haworth. Locals and visitors dressed up in 1940s inspired clothing; dresses, soldiers' uniforms complete with army trucks, suits and farm labourers. We visited the Parsonage, went to St Michael's and walked around Haworth. I enjoyed being in Haworth again.



We also visited Sylvia Plath's grave in Yorkshire. She wrote a poem about the Brontës as did Ted Hughes, her husband the

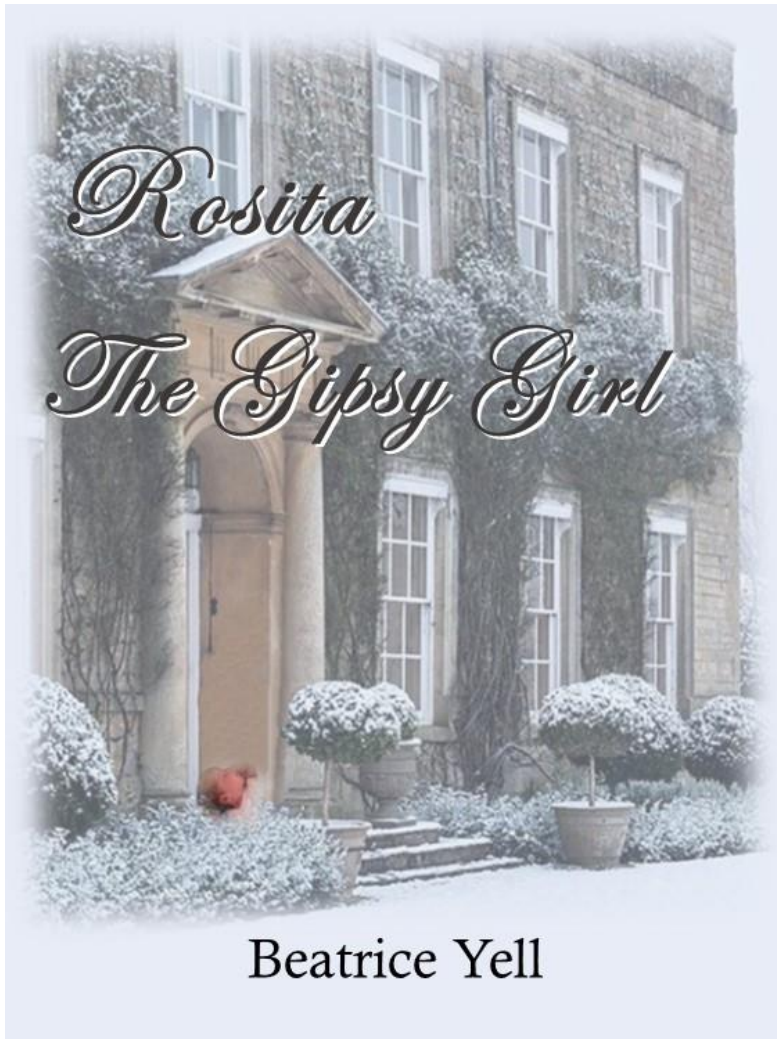


English poet laureate. Her grave is in a tiny village not signposted and difficult to find. Yet, just like Anne Brontë's grave, the foot of the grave is bare, the grass worn away by all the feet who have paused reflectively to honour these great English writers.



ROSITA THE GIPSY GIRL

ABA member Beatrice Yell has written a book - *Rosita the Gypsy Girl* - a few copies of which she'll bring to the 9th September meeting.



For those interested in purchasing a copy they will be selling for \$25 each.

The plot takes place during Queen Victoria's reign, when a young gypsy girl runs away with Richard, the local squire's son. By the time

Rosita discovers that she is pregnant, she has lost touch with Richard and, after giving birth to a daughter she leaves the baby at his family home. This action results in Rosita and Richard's daughter being cared for by Richard's mother. From thereon in, the plot thickens!

While the power of the British Empire was at its peak during the reign of Queen Victoria, the class system was extremely rigid playing its part in the ups and downs of life which Rosita and Richard have to cope with.

Michelle Cavanagh

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our first two meetings of 2023 gave us much to think about. Beginning with the first one of the year in which Elise Edmonds discussed some of the deadly diseases and dangerous therapies which would have formed the Brontës understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. I think that we ourselves are much closer to an understanding of keeping healthy in recent times since the first cases of Covid-19 were identified in January 2020 and the disease has waxed and waned since then.

Our second meeting, when Helen Groth was the speaker, also gave us much to think about as we were reminded of one of Charlotte Brontë's lesser known novels *Shirley*, and the politically charged times of the West Riding of Yorkshire's clothing district. Times were hard enough when the cloth manufacturers persisted in introducing the machines which did the work of half a dozen hands. Of

the workers - known as Luddites - who destroyed these new inventions, some were executed while others were transported to Australia. So while *Shirley* is a lesser read novel it does have a real connection to Australia.

As someone who doesn't like cold weather, it's always a pleasure when the shortest day is behind us and we can look forward to the forthcoming Spring and Summer which thankfully is on its way.

Also on their way are three more talks on *Wuthering Heights* and *Frankenstein*; Chasing certainty in *Wuthering Heights* and Emily Brontë's creaturely poetics which will then be followed by our popular Christmas lunch to be celebrated with our friends from the NSW Dickens Society.

**Michelle Cavanagh,
ABA President**

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

A very warm welcome to our newest members:

Susan Wanless, Pam Johnston, Katy Gerner, Rae Goth

We are sure that you will enjoy the meetings, talks and publications of the Australian Brontë Associations as much as we do.

Catherine Barker, Membership Secretary

THE LOST CHAPTERS OF *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

by Christopher Cooper

Part 5

HEATHCLIFF'S MISSING THREE YEARS

Here continues my project of providing the 'off-stage' material that Emily Brontë chose to leave out of her novel. Heathcliff runs off and returns three years later, much changed. Emily never reveals where he went or what experiences had changed him. Here is my suggestion of what may have happened – Christopher Cooper

I asked Mrs Dean whether she ever discovered where Heathcliff had gone when he had run away in his youth and how he had returned as a successful and wealthy young man.

"Why, Mr Lockwood, funny you should ask that. None of the family knew. It was a complete mystery until ... why it was only a few days ago when Mr Heathcliff summoned me."

"Nelly," he said, "there is something I want to get off my chest before I shuffle off this mortal cloak."

"Why Mr Heathcliff, you're not going to die I hope," I answered. But if the truth be told he was wasting away for some unknown reason.

"I may not. In fact I will not – not for some time. But I have heard Cathy calling me. If she'd had her way she would like me to cross over into the next world this very night. But damn her. I'll not let her have her own way – the spoilt girl she is."

"So you think she's a wilful girl, wherever she is. I call her a girl because I suppose she's the same young woman as when she died."

"I'd like to imagine her in hell, but I fear she's somehow managed to get into heaven. And I bet the angels are having a hard time handling her wilful ways. I'd much prefer for her to be in hell because I'm afraid

I won't rest until I join her and I think hell is a much more suitable place for me."

"Well sir, what is it that you want to tell me?"

"Remember Nelly, when I was quite young. Cathy said some hurtful things about me and I ran away?"

"Can I ever forget it. We were all upset when we couldn't find you. Cathy ran out in the rain and searched for you all night. She thought you would be hiding somewhere nearby. She caught a cold that troubled her for some days."

"Did she really miss me so much?"

"No doubt of it. She had no idea you were hiding behind the settle."

"She said it would debase her to marry me."

"But if you had stopped to hear the rest you would have heard her plan of marrying Edgar so that she would be able to use his money to make something of you – maybe start your own business."

"But she was in love with Edgar!"

"She liked him a lot but she said that you and her were soul-mates. She even said, 'Nelly, I am Heathcliff'."

Heathcliff sat up in amazement, "I never heard that."

"That's because you foolishly snuck away before you'd heard her out. So where did you go?"

“Well, Nelly, I had no money so I had to walk to Liverpool.”

“Why Liverpool?”

“That’s the only place I knew. I could still remember the way, more or less, from when I was a young child and Mr Earnshaw took me from Liverpool to Wuthering Heights.”



“But surely you can’t remember that – it was such a long time ago and you were barely walking.”

“I probably looked very small to you because I had lived on the streets of Liverpool and had very little to eat. But I did walk most of the way. A few times when I could walk no further Mr Earnshaw picked me up and carried me. I couldn’t remember the names of any of the places we passed but I remembered some unusual buildings and other landmarks.”

“So how long did it take you? It’s all of sixty miles.”

“I think it was four days. I stole some food and even begged. I had no idea what I was going to do when I got there. And then I met a young lad who told me the best places to sleep. I joined him and we slept under a bridge.”

“But what did you eat. Stealing or begging is not so easy in a large city,” I said.

“Oh Rufus had a bit of money. He got it by playing cards with the sailors. Oh Rufus had a way with cards. He taught me all the ways you can cheat. And he wagered with the tars.”

“You don’t mean they were Russian?”

“No, tars, not tzars. In Liverpool that’s what they called the sailors. You see

they used to coat their clothes with tar to make them keep out the water. These sailors were so long at sea they had no chance of spending anything. Besides they only got paid off at the end of their voyage. So here they were, with more money than sense. The only ways they could think of to get rid of all that money was drinking porter and gin or

gaming. Lord, how easy it was to cheat them!”

“So that’s how you came back a wealthy man? You wagered with the sailors in Liverpool for those three years?”

“No, it wasn’t long before Rufus and I could afford lodgings. But we’d go out every night and come back with a pocket full of sovereigns. Then one day I met a man who offered me the king’s shilling. I don’t suppose you know what that means.”

“Oh, yes I remember hearing about it one day when I went shopping in Gimmerton. It means that you contract to serve in the navy for a certain time.”

“Well I thought that joining the navy would give me an opportunity for adventure, especially as we were waging war in the Americas at the time. Rufus and I signed up on the *Barfleur*. That was our ship. She originally had 90 guns but 8 more were added on her quarterdeck just before I joined her.”



“What were it like? I’m sure I’d be sick. My aunt once went from Liverpool to the Isle of Man and she was as sick as a dog.”

“Rufus spent a lot of time spewing over the side. I felt a bit queasy the first couple of days but soon got my sea legs.”

“Did you fight in many sea battles?”

“Our first battle was in Chesapeake Bay, near Virginia. We were fighting the French there. They had come to the aid of the American rebels. General Cornwallis and his forces were besieged at Yorktown and we were part of Rear Admiral Graves fleet to raise the siege. But I’d rather not talk about it.



I saw so many terrible things over there it has rusted my soul.”

“Do you still see your friend Rufus? You must invite him up to Wuthering Heights.”

“Alas poor Rufus, as the great bard might have said. He was killed at Saint Kitts. Our good Captain Hood sailed towards the French fleet and drew them out to sea. The wind changed and we were able to skirt around them and get into the anchorage at Basseterre which the French had just left. De Grasse made three attacks on us but each time we drove the French back to sea. For a time we were successful but eventually we had to run for it and join up with admiral Rodney.”

“And your friend? How did he die?”

“It was during the second attack. He was manning one of the new guns on the quarterdeck when the Pluton broadsided us and splintered our timbers and splintered poor Rufus as well.”



“So how did you occupy yourself between battles?”

“Gaming mostly. When things went against us in battle they sought better luck in the cards. Of course very few of them had any money so they wrote out notes of promise, to be paid when we eventually got back and got paid off. I’m sure many of the devils thought we would end up at the bottom of the sea and their notes would be worthless. But when the war ended and we limped back home I converted all my promissory notes into the currency of the realm.”

“So is that why you came back when you did?”

“Yes, the war ended and I was able to leave the service. So I came back here, with my pockets weighed down by my ill gotten gains, and I hoped to marry Cathy. I was



crushed when I discovered that that perfidious woman hadn’t the decency to wait for me and instead married that pathetic excuse for a man, Edgar.”

We talked a little more, but then I saw Heathcliff’s eyes droop and he fell asleep. I had noticed that, at that time, he slept very little at night. He would walk around his room, talking to his precious Cathy. Then at daybreak fatigue would overtake him.

PART 6

HEATHCLIFF AND ISABELLA ON THEIR HONEYMOON

Another week over – and I am so many days nearer health, and spring! I have now heard all my neighbour's history at different sittings, as the housekeeper could spare time from more important occupations. I'll continue it in her own words, only a little condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator, and I don't think I could improve her style.

I asked Isabella, she said, how she and Heathcliff had spent their honeymoon. She said they had gone to Paris.

"Wasn't that a bit dangerous so soon after the Revolution?" I asked her.

"It seemed peaceful enough. We stayed in a small garret that cost just a few francs a week. You wouldn't call my husband a big spender."

"But Paris must have been so romantic."

"I don't think Heathcliff knows the meaning of the word. I spent most of my time staring at the four walls of the attic room."

"So he didn't take you anywhere?"

"Not to places I wanted to see. We never got to see the Louvre. We never went to the opera. We did spend a day at Versailles. That was nice. And he took me to the Bastille. That was a horrible place."

"I've heard that the food is wonderful in Paris."

"Some of it was. But I could never bring myself to eat snails or frog legs. Heathcliff didn't skimp on the food, however. We did eat well. And Heathcliff drank more than was good for him."

"So how did you spend your time?" I asked.

"Most days we stayed in bed till midday. Then we went out for lunch. We usually went for a walk in the afternoon and dined at about 9 o'clock in the evening. Then

Heathcliff left me in the garret while he went out and played at *Vingt-un*."

I had never heard of it. "What's that?"

"It's a card game. Heathcliff won a lot of money playing it. He said he had learnt to count the cards. He has a wonderful memory and he can remember which cards have been played and which remain in the shoe."

Now I knew very little about cards. Joseph told me that it was the Devil's game. All I knew was that they were pieces of pasteboard with symbols and pictures printed on them. But I had no idea what they have to do with shoes.

Here I interjected. "A shoe is a device to hold the cards once they have been shuffled. *Vingt-un* is just the French word for twenty-one. You get dealt two cards and you want to get as close to 21 as possible. Each of the cards numbered 2 to 10 count according to their own number. The picture cards, with the Jack, Queen or King, count as 10 and the Ace, which is the number 1, can either count as 1 or 11. If you are lucky to get an Ace and a 10, or an Ace and a Queen you've reached 21 already. That's called a 'blackjack'. But if your two cards total less than 21 you can, in turn, pick up another card. You might reach 21, or get closer to it. But if your total goes beyond 21 you go bust and you are out of the game."

"Sir, you seem to be very well-informed."

"My friend George and I often play it – not for money, mind you, just as an amusement. Please continue your story."

Isabella said, "my husband would usually come home at something like two o'clock in the morning, full of champagne, and wake me. He would try a bit of 'larking'

but usually he couldn't perform. 'I'm better in the mornings,' he would say."

"I've heard of larks. We have a lot of them around here. But I've never heard the word 'larking'."

"Never mind. After he tried larking he would beat me around the face until he fell onto the bed, fully clothed and fell asleep."

"So your honeymoon was ... well ... a bit of a disappointment."

"That's a wee bit of an understatement. Mind you, it wasn't all bad. We did spend a week down on the south coast of France and Heathcliff didn't seem to find

anywhere he could gamble. So that week was a sort of oasis in the whole trip. At least he wasn't absent and he didn't get drunk every night. But that meant he was sober enough to tell me that the only reason he married me was to prove to Cathy that she wasn't indispensable. He never got over the fact that she married Edgar."

"But she only did it to help Heathcliff to rise above his humble beginnings."

"I know, but Heathcliff can't see it that way. Anyway, I won't have to put up with him much longer. I'm off to make a new life in London very soon."



The Brontë Festival of Women's Writing is back with an impressive line-up of female writers, poets, artists and experts driving the sustainability conversation.

Inspired by the Brontë Parsonage Museum's 'year of the wild', which examines the Brontës' connection to nature and the landscape, this year's festival promises a rich programme of events celebrating female creativity, including talks, panel discussions, creative workshops, and more!

Set in the beautiful village of Haworth against the backdrop of the Brontës' inspirational former home, the Brontë Festival of Women's Writing promises to be an inspiring and empowering weekend for literature fans and nature-lovers alike.

Digital passes are available. For further information go to:

bronte.org.uk/whats-on/

Program for the Remainder of 2023

Saturday 9 September 2023: Lee O'Brien

“STRANGE POWER ... STRANGE PROOFS”:

CHASING CERTAINTY IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Wuthering Heights is as puzzling in its authorial impersonality as it is rich and compelling in terms of its characters. The violence in the novel shocked many Victorian readers and raises questions about the limits of conventional assumptions regarding what women were supposed to know.

Like Mary Shelley's creature in *Frankenstein*, Heathcliff is a monster who never really left the public imagination once he made it into print. Abusive, dangerous, certainly criminal (with, ironically, a lawyer's help) and even possibly a murderer, where does he come from? One place to look lies outside the world of the Victorian novel: the violent world of the folk ballads, the tales of reckless men and women and fatal acts that Brontë grew up hearing, and that formed a living oral history Emily Brontë deployed with fierce intelligence and skill.

Saturday 11 November 2023: Jennifer McDonell

EMILY BRONTË'S CREATURELY POETICS:

This presentation looks at Emily Brontë's relationship to the nonhuman—both nature and animals—with a view to revising (as well as bringing into sharper focus) certain accepted wisdoms about Brontë's representations and conception of both humanness and animality.

Specifically, I want to rethink the ways in which Emily Brontë's relationship with her favourite dog, Keeper has been represented and popularly disseminated in biography, fiction and in museum studies, with particular reference to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), Charlotte Brontë's, *Shirley* (1849), Emily's own *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and the Gondal poems (1884-48). I also want to suggest that Emily's relationship to Keeper had a mythic dimension that enabled imaginative openings into the wild unlicensed places of creative work, openings that offered a freedom from the restrictive lives experienced by women in Victorian society.

In this regard, Emily Brontë's relationship to Keeper bears comparison to her contemporaries, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Flush, and Emily Dickinson and Carlo.

Saturday 2 December 2022, Christmas Lunch jointly with the NSW Dickens Society (further details later)