

The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter

Issue No 22

Dec 2008



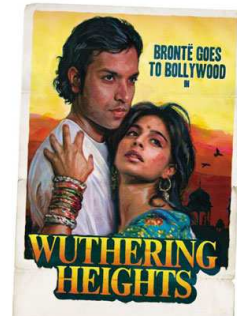
WILL BARRACK OBAMA BE READING *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*?



A traditional warm Yorkshire greeting has been sent across to the new president of America. The Yorkshire Tourist Board has sent a bumper hamper to him, showcasing the best of Yorkshire's produce. As well as a bottle of beer from the Keighley-based Timothy Taylor brewery and a Yorkshire County Cricket Club tie is a copy of Emily's *Wuthering Heights*. The Tourist Board has also offered an invitation for Barack to visit Yorkshire after he formally takes office. Keep a look out at Haworth Parsonage for the president. You'll recognise him by the small army of rain-coated security men in dark glasses, wandering around the graveyard pretending to be looking at the tombstones!

BOLLYWOOD MUSICAL *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

The media are thrilled with the upcoming production (next spring) of a Bollywood-style adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* (on stage) by the Tamasha Theatre Company. Some even suggest a possible Bollywood adaptation. The acclaimed writer Deepak Verma has put the finishing touches to a musical version of the novel, transposing the quintessentially Yorkshire love tale to the deserts of Rajasthan and swapping Victorian snobbery for India's strict caste system. The play will be set to Bollywood-style music but will broadly follow the plot of the 1847 novel, which recounts how the tormented foundling Heathcliff fell in love with Catherine, the daughter of the kindly benefactor who took him off the streets of Liverpool.



DECLAN WHEELDON TO PLAY THE YOUNG HEATHCLIFF



Declan Wheeldon, aged 14, will appear as a young Heathcliff in the new production of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* due to be shown in Britain on ITV in January 2009. 'He has rubbed shoulders with some famous faces during his stint on the set,' claims the Bridlington Free Press. He must be a tall lad to be able to rub his shoulder in the faces of Kevin McNally, of *Pirates of the Caribbean* fame and Tom Hardy! Other familiar figures during the filming in Derby and the Peak District was former Coronation Street actress Sarah Lancashire. She heaped praises on Declan's performance. 'You've been great and are an absolute star!' she wrote in his picture album that he made to record his time on the set.

The Duchess of Devonshire and the Brontës

by Sarah Burns



The Duchess, a film based on the novel *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, by Amanda Foreman, was released in Sydney in October 2008. The film stars Ralph Fiennes and Keira Knightley as the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. Charlotte Rampling plays her mother, Lady Spencer, and Dominic Cooper is Earl Grey, her lover.

Keira Knightley

The Duchess, the former Lady Georgiana Spencer, married the 5th Duke of Devonshire in 1774 at the age of 17. She was a beautiful 18th century socialite, fashion icon and gambler. (Susannah Fullerton notes in *Jane Austen and Crime* that the Duchess left £100,000 worth of gaming debts when she died.) She was also an active political campaigner (for the Whigs). During the 1784 general election she was rumoured to have traded kisses for votes.



Left: Portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788)



Right: Portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire with her infant daughter Lady Georgiana Cavendish by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)

The marriage, and the society they moved in, was famously satirized in Sheridan's play *School for Scandal*, where a wife from the country, Lady Teazle, is beguiled by fashionable people.

The Duchess had a daughter with Charles, the 2nd Earl Grey – Eliza Courtenay, an ancestor of Sarah, Duchess of York. Diana, Princess of Wales, was a descendant of Georgiana's brother, the 2nd Earl Spencer.

The Sylph by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire



Georgiana published a novel *The Sylph* anonymously in 1779 at the age of 22.

This book begins with a sordid tale of gambling addiction, infidelity and loss and that's just the brief biography of the author! This 'romance' novel predates Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* by three decades and could very well have influenced Austen, the Brontës and many writers since.

The novel is composed of a series of letters mostly written between the heroine and her family, describing at first the excitement, but then the gruesome reality of loneliness, vanity and deceit.

The two key movie locations within the Peak District and Derbyshire are the Chatsworth Estate, the Devonshire family's Derbyshire home, and Kedleston Hall, built for the Curzon family, depicts Althorp, the Spencer family home.



Chatsworth House

Whilst Georgiana is the most infamous Duchess, probably the most famous is the current Duke's mother, Deborah, the youngest and last surviving Mitford sister, who is responsible for the restoration of Chatsworth House and its magnificent gardens following World War II.

Stephen McClarence, a journalist for the UK's *Daily Telegraph*, visiting the area ahead of the release of the film wrote:

If the tourist brochures are to be believed on this sunny afternoon in the Peak District, we're in Jane Eyre country and Pride and Prejudice country simultaneously. Wherever we turn, the two books seem to meld seamlessly into each other. Mr Darcy could be locking a mad wife in the attic as Mr Rochester takes tea with Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Jane Eyre and Elizabeth Bennet skip off into the sunset together to live happily ever after.

Film Review by Christopher Cooper

Some of us were lucky to get free tickets through the Jane Austen Society of Australia to a preview of *The Duchess*. Keira Knightley played Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire, and Ralph Fiennes played the rather boorish Duke who was more interested in his hunting dogs than his family.

Georgiana was married at 17, when the Duke was 27. Ralph Fiennes made him look much older but perhaps that was simply his distant, humourless manner. It was a loveless marriage and Georgiana was a spirited young girl who loved society and craved affection. She met Lady Elizabeth Foster at Bath and Bess became her soul-mate. Georgiana persuaded her husband to let Bess come to live with them for a time. That time was to last many years.

Bess became the Duke's lover and for many years Georgiana had to endure this ménage à trois but eventually she became reconciled to these unusual marital arrangements and even became friends again with Bess. In fact, as she lay dying, she gave her blessing to her husband marrying Bess when she was gone.

Georgiana was an enthusiastic member of fashionable society, where she was a leader of fashion and was known for her improbable hair styles. She also gave her strong support to the Whig party. If she was at a rally, the attendance trebled! Through these political endeavours she became very good friends with Charles Grey. He would eventually become Prime Minister. Not surprisingly they had an affair, but when the Duke found out, Georgiana couldn't understand why, when he was living openly with his mistress, he wouldn't permit her some consolation. Such were the double standards of the day!

One reason why Georgiana was out of favour with her husband was the fact that she hadn't been able to produce a son, as had been faithfully promised by her mother. Eventually, after some daughters and miscarried sons, she produced an heir – William Hartigan Spencer George Cavendish – known simply as Hart.

In 1811, when his father died, Hart became the 6th Duke of Devonshire. He was much more like his mother than his father. He took a strong interest in things scientific, as well as literature. He read and admired *Jane Eyre* and Charlotte wrote to William Smith Williams:

I am glad the Duke of Devonshire found pleasure in the perusal of Jane Eyre, especially if he be – as I suppose he is – an intelligent man as well as a Duke.

The Dukes of Devonshire

The Dukes of Devonshire are members of the aristocratic Cavendish family in the United Kingdom.

The Duke's subsidiary titles are:

- * Baron Cavendish of Hardwick (1605),
- * Earl of Devonshire (1618),
- * Marquess of Hartington (created 1694),
- * Baron Cavendish of Keighley (1831) and
- * Earl of Burlington (1831)

Many of the Dukes of Devonshire have been prominent politicians, including one prime minister, one leader of the Liberal Party, and one Governor-General of Canada. The family also produced the famous early physicist, Henry Cavendish.

Despite the title, the family estates centre in Derbyshire. The family seats are Chatsworth House and Bolton Abbey. The family also own Lismore Castle in County Waterford, in the Republic of Ireland.

Patrick Brontë and the 6th Duke of Devonshire

Following the publication of Mrs Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, many people made a pilgrimage to Haworth. Patrick Brontë was reluctant to see any of these tourists, however, one of the select few to be granted an interview was the 6th Duke

of Devonshire, whom Patrick had met whilst at Cambridge. The Duke visited the Parsonage for about an hour. He was very deaf and Patrick was almost blind, but they managed somehow! After the visit the Duke sent a generous gift of game and invited Patrick and Arthur Bell Nicholls to visit him at his seat at Bolton Abbey.

In *The Brontës*, Juliet Barker writes: “With so many tourists of varying degrees of fame coming to Haworth, it was perhaps not surprising that advantage was taken of them in more ways than one. Approaches had been made to the Duke of Devonshire, through Sir Joseph Paxton, seeking financial assistance towards a public subscription in Haworth, which was intended to fund the provision of heating in the church and schools. ‘*This has been done, without our knowledge,*’ Patrick wrote indignantly to Sir Joseph,

and most assuredly, had we known it, would have met with our strongest opposition. We have no claim on the Duke. His Grace, honour’d us with a visit, in token of his respect for the memory of the Dead, and His liberality and munificence, are well, and widely known, and the mercenary, taking an unfair advantage of these circumstances, have taken a step which both Mr Nicholls, and I utterly regret and condemn.

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BOOKS THAT CHANGED ME by Claire Thomas

From the Sun-Herald, 9th November 2008

Wuthering Heights



I read this book as a teenager and all that tumultuous emotion was incredibly appealing to me at the time. The intense love between Heathcliff and Catherine became, somewhat embarrassingly, a kind of passion to aspire to. I remember thoroughly enjoying this novel at school. It was one of the first examples of 19th century fiction I remember and I’ve continued to love, and study, books from that period. Almost 20 years after I first read *Wuthering Heights* I’m now doing a PhD in 19th century literature.

Claire Thomas is the author of the book Fugitive Blue “a fluidly elegant novel that captures the fragility of love”. She is undertaking a PhD on George Eliot, Henry James and 19th century travel writing.

JANE EYRE REVIEW

A Review of the recent BBC production by Michelle Cavanagh

Madness is a social construction and the Victorians, especially the male of the species, were masters at using it to their advantage. Mental illness during the Victorian era revolved around the empowerment of men while women's roles were moulded around the idea of female passivity and submission. The picture Charlotte Bronte paints for the reader of Mr Edward Rochester reinforces these male stereotypes which Toby Stephens, in the role as Rochester, plays extremely well. While Ruth Wilson's performance of Jane Eyre in some respects personifies some of the 19th Century characteristics expected of woman she also displays a strong will whenever the situation calls for it. Rather out of character with the notion of Victorian femininity Charlotte Bronte portrays Jane Eyre as a perceptive women of independent original thought, traits which we see clearly she has from early childhood.

While I agree with some of Roslyn Russel's thoughts on the recent BBC's production of *Jane Eyre* – such as how refreshing it is to see the continuous presence of Adèle, the portrayal of her 'French' influence and the sympathetic treatment of Bertha Mason but unlike Roslyn, who would have liked a more 'dark and brooding' Rochester, I loved the way he was portrayed. Rochester came across as spoilt and arrogant; initially speaking to Jane as though she was a dog while later flirting outrageously with her – to me this amounted to powerful direction of a flawed character and which I found refreshing. Rochester, who tries to blame others for his fate, is fully aware of his powers over women which, together with his art of seduction, give him the upper hand. That is until the end of the novel when Jane discovers Rochester is a blind cripple and, having been taught many



lessons, including humility, she is finally able to accept him as her equal.

It was also refreshing to see Grace Poole depicted in such a common sense manner – someone who got on with her job without the appearance of judging her charge Bertha Mason. Doubtless Grace Poole's drinking was her way of coping with the job she had to do. And what woman, locked in an attic by her husband, wouldn't go mad? Edward Rochester wouldn't have been the first

19th Century husband, married to an heiress to gain her money, who then had her locked up in an effort to move her out of his life because she didn't live up to what was the expected role which women were meant to adopt to be acceptable to society. While Charlotte Bronte doesn't let us hear Bertha Mason's views of her marriage to Rochester could the author have been asking her readers to ponder on Bertha's unfair treatment – in much the same way that Anne Bronte exposes drunkenness in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* published the year after *Jane Eyre* – which manifests itself when Bertha sets fire to Rochester's bed and destroys Jane Eyre's wedding veil?

After all, earlier in the novel Rochester admitted that there was nothing wrong with Bertha when he married her, telling Jane in Chapter 27, “I found her a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram; tall, dark, majestic. All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me”. But because Bertha was flirtatious and did not hide her enjoyment of sex she was no doubt considered to be a nymphomaniac, an idea which developed during the Victorian era when one third of all patients in Victorian Asylums suffered from this so called 'mental illness'.

Charlotte Bronte's novel draws on many themes, some of which at the time were considered to be scandalous. The Bronte sisters, encouraged by their father to keep abreast of what was going on in their world, were aware that reform was in the air and through their writing did what they could to encourage new ideas. This BBC depiction of the novel, adapted by Sandy Welch and directed by Susanna White was, in my opinion, an excellent version. I felt the characterisation was brilliant, making the story believable while at the same time exploring the Gothic theme.



depicted as Jane drives to Thornfield Hall and the small door which closes behind her as she enters into her new life, the wild moors as a backdrop to Jane's wild thoughts while she battles with her desires after fleeing from Thornfield. I like to think that Charlotte Bronte herself would be more than happy with this production.

Sources:
The Penguin Bronte Sisters - Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, 1984

<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~ulrich/femhist/madness.shtml>

There was much to appreciate in this production, such as the way Mr Brocklehurst's visit to Gateshead Hall was portrayed from a child's perspective, the religious symbolism embodied in the scene of Helen Burns death, the bright new day

http://www.fashion-era.com/a_womans_place.htm#Married%20Woman%27s%20Property%20Act%201887

MOOR FOR CORNISH

Emily Dunn and Elicia Murray Bronte Blog August 21, 2008

Bronte girl, Abbie Cornish, is in line to play Cathy in a film of *Wuthering Heights*. She has garnered more publicity for cavorting with Reese Witherspoon's ex-husband Ryan Phillippe lately, but it seems Abbie Cornish is about to dust off her acting skills for a part in the screen adaptation of Emily Bronte's Gothic bodice-ripper *Wuthering Heights*.

Following on from her upcoming role as John Keats's love interest, Fanny Brawne, in Jane Campion's *Bright Star*, the Australian actress, whose film credits include *Somersault*,



Photo: Janie Barrett

Candy and *Stop-Loss*, has reportedly won the role of Cathy, Heathcliff's ill-fated lover.

Screen magazine *Variety* reported that Natalie Portman left the project in May because of a scheduling clash. Teutonic thespian Michael Fassbender is signed to play Heathcliff. The German-born, Irish-raised actor is also reportedly in final negotiations to join Brad Pitt in Quentin Tarantino's latest project, *Inglorious Bastards*, about a Tennessee hillbilly who takes on the Nazis.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS AT THE HARBOUR THEATRE IN FREMANTLE

Reviewed by Jackie Thipthorp, one of our ABA members, living in Perth.

I was fortunate enough to attend the final performance of this production adapted by Charles Vance on its last day, 24th May 2008, and after the onslaughts of finally moving house that week it was a welcome break.

Having never seen a theatrical production of *Wuthering Heights* it was intriguing to see how it would eventuate. It was a long performance and because of its length, no doubt, demanding on the cast, as it ran from 8.00 pm to 11.00 pm with only a 15 minute interval. The props and setting were good – to the right of the stage Thrushcross Grange was portrayed, and to the left, the larger setting of Wuthering Heights.

The show commenced with Mr. Lockwood reciting to the audience from the corner of the small theatre, then entering Wuthering Heights and introducing himself to Heathcliff as his new tenant, portraying well his unwelcoming reception there.

Dialogue used from the start of the play was direct from the book, and there were

strong performances from Mr. Lockwood and Nelly Dean, playing major roles.

At first I was disappointed with the character of Heathcliff but as the actors warmed up, the strong character of Heathcliff improved. The actor Travis Vladich definitely portrayed better the more refined Heathcliff when he returned a gentleman hoping to win over and marry Catherine.

Catherine Earnshaw played by Janine Bramall put in a vigorous and spirited performance throughout and one couldn't help but laugh at her impassioned and vehement demands to have her own way; casting Linton aside and expecting his acquiescent acceptance of Heathcliff, or crushing Isabella Linton's infatuation for Heathcliff as the absurdity she considered it.

Overall it was a good performance with the actors interpreting their characters well especially the exacting emotions of Catherine Earnshaw/Linton.

SCROGGLING IN HAWORTH

'Tis almost the season to be jolly, so say 'bah humbug' to the credit crunch and recession, and instead head for Haworth, which next weekend launches a glittering build-up to Christmas, organised by the village's traders association.

Around the cobbled streets you can still have a great time without spending a fortune, and what's more, you could do it virtually every weekend until December 21. You can get into the festive spirit next weekend with the scroggling parade. The word 'scroggling' means the traditional custom of gathering holly.

On Sunday, bands of Morris Men will lead a traditional procession of children dressed in Victorian costume, who follow the Holly Queen up the cobbles to her crowning ceremony on the church steps. The newly-

crowned Queen then unlocks the church gates to symbolically invite the spirit of Christmas into Haworth.

Highlight of the countdown will be the famous Torchlight Weekend, which will be launched by a lantern parade on the Saturday. Children and adults are invited to join in the procession up Main Street, carrying home-made lanterns. The following evening, starting at about 5pm, the Christmas procession will be shedding a magical glow on the surroundings.

Gather at the bottom of Main Street, ready for the procession as the sun sets and Main Street glows with the light from hundreds of torches before making its way up the Victorian cobbles. To bring the evening to a suitable conclusion, join in the traditional carol service at St Michael's Church.

HEATHER GLEN IN HAWORTH

From the Brontë Blog (retrieved by Stephanie Rigby)

The title of the annual lecture at the last Brontë Weekend in Haworth was *The Originality of Wuthering Heights*. The lecture was given by Heather Glen, a frequent visitor to the Parsonage, who is Professor of English in the University of Cambridge. This is a very brief summary which can not do full justice to a lecture which was fresh, accessible and full of new insights for most of the audience, the obvious product of meticulous research.

She began with a focus on the fact that Emily Brontë is sometimes referred to in various terms as a 'one-off', a lone genius who lived in a kind of 'rustic ignorance'.

"Emily chose Scott as her hero at the age of nine ... there is plenty of evidence in the *Juvenilia*", we were told. "She was sharply aware of literary tradition." There are many connections with Scott's work – for example the fact that he often uses servant narratives – and Lockwood could be said to be in the Scott tradition to some extent, because of all the 'polite, young civilised men' in the *Waverley Novels* who encounter a rude, uncivilised world, from which they eventually learn something. Lockwood, however, learns nothing.

"Emily had nothing of Scott's geniality, his sense of the ultimate triumph of civilised values ... she was more racy than Scott ... *Wuthering Heights* ends in ambiguity, not in moral richness. In *Wuthering Heights*, dialogue is used directly, without the intervention of an intervening narrator. Complex emotions and relationships are rendered through dialogue, a product of Emily's precise, imaginative intelligence."

We were asked to look at the passages printed out for us. The first was from chapter nine: "I was rocking Hareton on my knee, and humming a song that began:

*It was far in the night,
and the bairnies grat,
The mither beneath the mools heard that
When Miss Cathy, who had listened etc."*

This was followed by an extract from *The Ghaists Warning* an appendix to Walter Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, which began:

*He's married a may,
and he's fessen her hame
But she was a grim and laidly dame
When into the castell court drave she,
The seven bairns stood wi' the tear in their ee*

This was accompanied (as in the original which Emily would have read), by explanations and glosses, for example:

May = maid, fessen = fetched, dule = sorrow, dout = fear, grat = wept, mools = mould or earth.

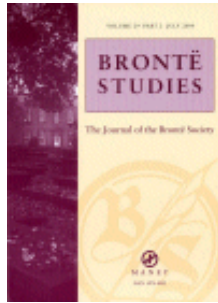
The story is about threats, revenge and the supernatural. A dead mother returns to her children from her grave because they are crying, a walking corpse which inspires terror and causes the dogs to snarl and howl. One of them is put on her lap and suckled. "It is about a passion which transcends mortality, think of all the allusions to ballads and ballad motifs ..."

With further examples, Heather Glen talked about the 'leaping and lingering' techniques which are common to ballads and to *Wuthering Heights*, where the lingering is on climactic scenes, and there are echoes ... think of the first Cathy 'captured' until she is well at Thrushcross Grange and the second Cathy held at *Wuthering Heights*. The rude, uncivilised world is perceived with the 'protection' of glosses, explanations ... and books. What does Lockwood pile against the window when the terrifying child ghost tries to get in?

THE LATEST ISSUE OF BRONTË STUDIES

‘This Shattered Prison’: Confinement, Control and Gender in *Wuthering Heights*.

Jamie Crouse looks at the plot device of confinement in *Wuthering Heights*. You may remember from a talk at one of the Three Sisters weekends where we saw that Emily not only features confinement in her novel, but is also preoccupied with the trappings of confinement such as locks and keys and hasps and staples.



A Trip to Yorkshire – 1842

Sarah Fermi puts into the public record a letter written at the time of the Chartist riots during the general strike. It was written by Maria Brewitt, the sixteen-year-old sister of the bride of John Greenwood Sugden of Steeton Hall. The Greenwood family had associations with the

Brontës. The letter describes the journey of the bridal party from Essex to Steeton. It ends with a tense account of the family awaiting the arrival of the Chartists rioters at their very door.

‘The Awful Event’ in *Wuthering Heights*.

Laura Inman shows how death dominates the narrative, drives the plot, and is expressed thematically and symbolically.

Marriage in *Jane Eyre*: From Contract to Conversation

We heard this first from **James Phillips** in his recent talk to the ABA.

‘I Heard Her Murmurs’: Decoding Narratives of Female Desire in *Jane Eyre* and *Secresy*

Nicole Fisk relates *Jane Eyre* to Eliza Fenwick’s novel *Secresy* (1795).

The Rout of the Reverend Redhead: Gaskell and Longley

Brian Wilkes contrasts the account of the expulsion of Patrick Brontë’s predecessor at Haworth by the parishioners (involving unruly behaviour in his services that included a donkey in church) with that given by the Bishop Longley. This letter, to his wife, predates Mrs Gaskell’s account and differs somewhat from it. Bishop Longley went on to become the Archbishop of Canterbury and this letter has only recently come to light at Lambeth Palace.

CHARLOTTE’S DOLL HOUSE

Christie’s announces an upcoming auction of a private collection of Roger Warner of South Kensington on 20th and 21st January 2009. He was one of the most renowned and admired British antique dealers of the 20th century.

Among the items are Wordsworth’s desk chair from Rydal Mount and a dolls house said to have been decorated by Charlotte Brontë.

Ann Dinsdale, the Brontë Society’s Collections Manager said of the doll’s house

“[Roger] purchased it from the Greenwood family and it was always claimed within the family that the interior had been decorated by Charlotte during her time as governess to the Sidgwicks.”



JANE EYRE STRUCK A CHORD WITH ZHANG

Abridged from an article in *The Australian*, August 16, 2008

ZHANG Lijia has written a book called *Socialism is Great! A Worker's Memoir of the New China*, though she doesn't think it is, of course.

Zhang began work at 16, testing pressure gauges in a missile factory in Nanjing, where she grew up. Today, aged 43, she is a ubiquitous, insatiably curious journalist, writing and broadcasting for the West's weightiest media from Beijing. Every press conference, every maybe-interesting talk, every party, it seems, she's there. And she writes in short sentences, eager to move the reader on to the next event or emotion.

It would seem odd for such a life force to have produced yet another tome in the important, brave, but also sometimes debilitating books of Chinese "scar literature" that have sold so well in the West in recent years, starting with Jung Chan's wonderful *Wild Swans*.

While the world of *Socialism is Great!* is harsh, however, Zhang's tone is different. "It's about chasing your dreams," she says. "It's about the start of the kai fang (opening up) era in the 1980s, after the Cultural Revolution, when China was starting to respond to Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms."

Another distinction from most other Chinese books is that Zhang wrote it in English. She learned written English by reading classic English literature and has not stopped.

And she has a real ear for her second language, again aided by the next English resource she relied on, the radio; she became

"obsessed with listening to the BBC," she says.

Again, she writes in the book: "My 'Dear John' letter to him was more or less a copy of Jane's confession to Mr Rochester. I wished I was more beautiful, I said, better educated, and of better social standing. But my spirit was equal to his, and I wanted to be treated as an equal. If I wasn't as important to him as he to me, I just had to give him up."

It's intriguing that a self-taught woman who left school at 16 may cause some readers in Australia to Google the English literary references that come naturally to her.

"People tend to write memoirs when they reach old age," Zhang says. "but if you have a compelling story, anyone can write one at any age."

The family lived in a tiny two-bedroom apartment, and Zhang shared her bed with her grandmother and younger brother. They ate sparingly. "I had a craving for meat," she says. In the summer, she and her brother

would shin up trees, catch cicadas, roast them over a fire and eat them mashed. Their world was contained by the factory, surrounded by its high-security walls.

Zhang received no promotion in her decade at the factory. She had to queue monthly to show she was not pregnant and was then handed the next month's supply of sanitary towels. Families were very strictly planned.

She started to read English literature as an escape. "I was fascinated by this language system so different from ours. I began listening to English songs and of course singing them, especially as I cycled."



She hung around at Nanjing's "English corner" where young Chinese went in the hope of meeting a native English speaker with whom to practise.

"Some of my colleagues laughed at me, calling me 'a toad who wants to eat swan's meat,'" she says. The phrase refers to someone with ambitions way too high. "You're a factory worker,' they'd say, 'why learn English?' But I just didn't care. The idea of individualism took root in me."

"Chinese people have a strong tendency towards conformity." There are many traditional sayings about this, she says, such as "the bird who flies first gets shot" and "the big tree catches the wind".

"Traditionally, a person was defined by relationships, and the individual didn't have a place," she says. "In my own transformation, *Jane Eyre* played an important part. The book struck a chord."

In 1989, she began to organise demonstrations, picking up on the vibes from what was happening in Beijing.

In a climactic scene in her book, she accompanies some fellow workers from Nanjing to the capital and addresses a huge crowd from a platform in the middle of Drum Tower Square, today the epicentre of some of the city's funkier bars.

"There was so much passion and innocence and creativity in the 1980s (the decade she covers in her book)," she says.

Reforming the party was at the centre of debates in the '80s: "Now it's off-limits," she says. But Zhang is optimistic about China; a cautious optimist, well aware of problems such as the income gap and regional disparities.

Her parents still live there, but can't read English, "and it's better it stays that way", she says, given the frankness of her book, though there's no unkindness or bitterness in it.

It relies heavily on her diaries of the time: "Writing them was my way of making sense of my life." Writing the book, she admits, she augmented her diaries with her memories, which inevitably are coloured by emotion.

Her book is dedicated to her mentor, Zhou Fang, who worked alongside her and who left China for the US with \$38 and is now a senior engineer in Minneapolis.

But Zhang remains struck by the image, from a recent trip back to Nanjing, of a workmate who didn't get out until the factory sacked all the women over 45. Now she scrapes a living selling newspapers, wearing an old army coat.

"If I'm going through a difficult patch, I count my blessings," Zhang says. "I can still dream."

Rowan Callick is The Australian's China correspondent. "Socialism is Great!" is published by University of Western Australia Press.

MEMBERSHIP FEES KEPT ON HOLD

We announced at a recent meeting that we'd be raising the membership fees by \$5. This would have been the first increase in the 11 years we've been operating. However, because of the rather dire economic climate, we have decided to postpone the increase for a year. So membership remains as follows:

Single membership \$20;
Concession membership for members of The Brontë Society (UK) \$15;
Concession (full time student, senior, unemployed) \$15;

Family membership \$25 (two at one address).

Also, we announced that the forthcoming Coolangatta weekend will cost \$315 per person (\$95 single supplement). We're pleased to announce that this has been reduced to \$270 per person (\$90 single supplement).



WEEKEND CONFERENCE, MAY 2009

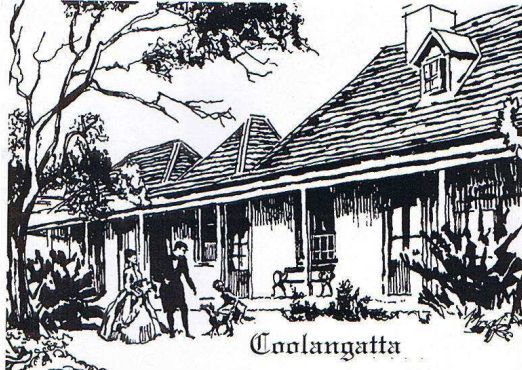
The Australian Brontë Association and The NSW Dickens Society Conference
29th – 31st May 2009

Theme: THE COLONIAL CONNECTION

Coolangatta Estate is the site of the first European settlement on the South Coast of New South Wales, settled by Alexander Berry and Edward Wollstonecraft (nephew of Mary Wollstonecraft, wife of Shelley and author of *Frankenstein*) in 1822. They obtained a grant of 10,000 acres and 100 convicts and built their settlement on the foothills of a mountain named 'Coolangatta', an Aboriginal word meaning 'fine view'.

The Estate today comprises a 300 acre resort including a village complex (accommodation and restaurants), golf course, recreational facilities, vineyards and the surrounding countryside. There's a 9 hole golf course, tennis court, solar heated swimming pool, croquet and bowls lawn and, of course, the opportunity to go wine-tasting on the Estate. One of the planned activities is a guided tour where we can learn of the extensive history of the estate.

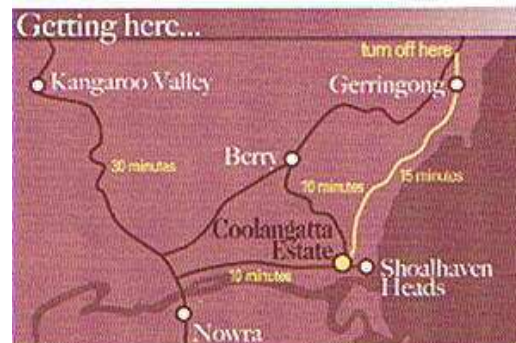
The accommodation is in several cottages, each comprising one or more self-contained rooms. They include the Stables, the Blacksmith Shop, the Dairy and the Plumbers Shop. They're mostly the original buildings but have been extensively renovated and are very comfortable.



COST

The 2 night package, including room, breakfasts, Mr Berry's Banquet on Saturday night and morning tea on Saturday, is \$270 per person twin-share (+\$90 single supplement). All rooms have en suite facilities. The non-residential rate including all of the above, except accommodation and breakfasts, is \$110 per person.

For more information contact:
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Sandra Faulkner on 9695-1170
(dickenssocietynsw@yahoo.com.au)



TALKS AND SPEAKERS

Roslyn Russell MA: (Roslyn Russell Museum Services) Roslyn will set the scene by telling us about life in the colony of NSW in the period 1820-1840. Then she'll focus on Annabella Boswell's journal which describes the extent of cultured society among the upper echelons of colonial NSW, including a reference to Dickens.

Roslyn is a director of the Roslyn Russell Museum Services and is an author of a number of books and publications on Australia's history and heritage, including an edited selection of the letters of historian Manning Clark.

TALKS AND SPEAKERS FOR THE COOLANGATTA CONFERENCE (Continued)

Susannah Fullerton MA (president of the Jane Austen Society of Australia)

Susannah will talk about Mary (Wollstonecraft) Shelley, wife of the poet Percy Shelley and author of *Frankenstein*. Her cousin Elizabeth Wollstonecraft married Alexander Berry and Mary carried on a correspondence with them.

As well as her role in the Jane Austen Society, Susannah has played an important part in many other literary societies. She's a well-known freelance lecturer on all things literary and has also conducted numerous highly successful literary pilgrimages to the UK and Ireland and written several books.

A/Prof Anne Collett (University of Wollongong)

Charlotte Brontë wrote, in one of her letters to W.S. Williams at Smith Elder & Co, that there are times when she's so low that all she can read, apart from the Bible, is the writing of Alexander Harris. Among his works, published by her own publisher, Smith Elder & Co, are an autobiography *Settlers and Convicts* and a novel *The Emigrant Family*. Charlotte wrote warmly in praise of the novel and so it's clear that she knew a lot more about life in NSW than we might have imagined.

Anne is a member of the English Studies Program at the University of Wollongong. She teaches literatures that are written and spoken in English with emphasis on the history of ideas, the social, cultural and political context and their literary representation.

Sandra Faulkner (president of the NSW Dickens society):

Sandra's talk will cover Dickens association with the Antipodes, including references to people he knew here. She'll also discuss those of his characters who were sent to the Colony, either as convicts or free settlers, as well as his views on transportation. She'll

also speak about his two sons who spent time here.

Sandra was Personal Assistant to the Head of Rolls-Royce Aero Engines in the UK, with Public Relations responsibilities, before coming to Australia in 1989. She continued her business interests here, for a time, and has been a volunteer public speaker and tour guide for the State Library of NSW for over 10 years. She became President of the NSW Dickens Society in 2006.

Rodney Pyne: (retired English teacher and ex-senior examiner in English):

Rodney will give a brief talk about a few of his ancestors who lived and worked at or near the Coolangatta Estate in the 19th century. From the humblest of beginnings, they went on to become pillars of the local Shoalhaven community, both prosperous and free.

Rodney has taught in State and Catholic secondary schools in the Sydney area for 36 years. He has served as a radio operator in the Royal Australian Signals and has travelled extensively overseas, visiting all the continents except South America. He has authored 3 school textbooks for High School English and History and was, for 5 years, Senior Examiner in HSC English. Rodney now lives in Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains.

Peter Lucas (committee member of the NSW Dickens Society):

Peter will give a brief talk about Henry Lawson and will include excerpts from Lawson's long poem about Charles Dickens.

Peter Lucas worked as a journalist for the Sydney Morning Herald and spent 22 years in the ABC, in radio and television publicity and as a departmental manager. He has a BA from UNE, became a Pitt Street farmer and has owned 38 different cars. He resides in the village of Exeter where Dickens remains the light of his life.

THE SYLPH

by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire

Reviewed by Christopher Cooper

I recently saw the wonderful film *The Duchess* on the life of Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire and her love-less marriage. I must confess that what made me go was the prospect of seeing Keira Knightley again, but I began to be more fascinated by the character than the actress. I just had to find out more about her. To my delight I discovered that she was an author – something that wasn't mentioned at all in the film. I wonder why not?

Georgiana wrote *The Sylph* in 1779 (Jane Austen was only four), a novel about a love-less marriage, about 5 years into her own. Of course it's not autobiographical – at least the heroine is called Julia, not Georgiana – and the events aren't quite an exact copy of those in her own life. But it's obvious that she drew heavily on her own experience.

It wasn't her first venture into writing. Her first novel, *Emma*, was written in 1773 when she was only sixteen and before she left home to marry the Duke. I haven't yet been able to locate a copy of this book but I have read *The Sylph*, and I simply couldn't put it down!

Both novels have an epistolary format. This gives the author the opportunity of telling the story from a variety of points of view. In this case the majority of the letters are between Julia and her sister Louise. But some are from the wicked Lord Biddulph to his equally obnoxious friend, where he describes his success, or rather lack of success, at seducing Julia. So we see this attempted seduction from both sides.

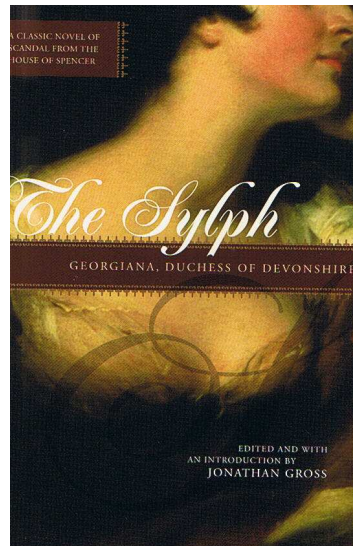
Probably most interesting of all is the correspondence between Julia and her Sylph. She has to address her letters to a certain coffee-shop. Technically a "sylph" is a spirit of the air, just as a "nymph" is a water spirit.

But in this case he was a flesh and blood creature who took on the role of her guardian angel. He would give her advice and warn her of the pitfalls of London high society. She would consult him as to whether it was wise to accept such and such invitation, and so on. It was clear that he was part of her social circle because he would often comment on people and events in her life. At one stage she developed an addiction to gambling (as Georgiana did herself) and he was able to help her shake it off.

Only towards the end of the novel do we discover the identity of this mysterious Sylph. In fact he's a sort of Trinity: Sylph, X and Y. Both X and Y were known to her, but until she discovered the identity of the Sylph she doesn't realise that they are one and the same!

One thing I found particularly interesting is what you might call its "narratorial depth". Remember that in *Wuthering Heights*, the story is told by Lockwood, who for much of the story is simply relaying what he's told by Nelly Dean. Then at one point Nelly herself relays a lengthy account given by Isabel about her love-less marriage to Heathcliff. At this stage the story is being told twice removed.

Georgiana goes one better. She writes of her friend Miss Finch, who tells Georgiana of a visit to an old man. This man's daughter Nancy was seduced by Lord Biddulph and her father tells the story. The two run off, but are tracked down by Baron Ton-hausen (reminiscent of Darcy tracking down Wickham and Lydia) and at this point of the story the events are told third hand: Baron → Nancy's father → Miss Finch → Julia.



In the book there's a nice balance between emotion and the inward moral struggle on the one hand and a lively sequence of exciting incidents on the other. Julia is a married woman whose marriage has become quite barren. She's separated from her family. A certain man has a sympathetic ear and, she's quite sure, he has no designs to corrupt her. Should she seek his emotional support and run the risk of gossip? The incidents include a battlefield, a masked ball, bailiffs coming to turn Julia out of her house, and a dead body in a locked room.

As I read the book I kept wondering whether Charlotte or Emily ever read it. Did Jane Austen read it, for that matter? It was by no means an obscure work, having gone into several editions before 1800. The fashionable world of London society is miles apart from Jane Austen's Hampshire, or Bath, and certainly it is nothing like life at Wuthering Heights! But did Jane Austen conceive Darcy partly on the basis of Baron

Ton-hausen? Did Emily get the idea of the Russian-doll narration from Georgiana? The evidence isn't strong. But whether they read *The Sylph* themselves, it was a work that had seeped into public consciousness and they may well have been influenced by it even if they hadn't even heard of it.

The most recent edition of *The Sylph* appeared in 2007 by Northwestern University Press. I ordered my copy through Berkelow's bookshop, but subsequently discovered that Abbey's bookshop had one on their shelves.

If you enjoyed *Pamela* by Richardson, you'll enjoy this book. In fact Georgiana makes reference to Pamela Andrews and her Mr B. when it is revealed that Lord Biddulph encouraged Nancy to read *Pamela* in the hope that it might corrupt her morals! There is no chance of *The Sylph* corrupting any one's morals because Georgiana remains true to her moral upbringing, and is rewarded in the end.

NEW WEBSITE FOR THE ABA

www.maths.mq.edu.au/bronte

Our website has been given a complete makeover by Harriet Jordan. It now looks properly professional. Also we have a slightly shorter web address. The old address of

www.maths.mq.edu.au/~chris/bronte/aba.htm will still work, but the above has been set up as an "alias". We did consider getting a suitable web address on a commercial server, but apart from the small cost it seems to add

authority by associating it with Macquarie University, and the inclusion of maths, being the department with which I am associated, adds a little quirkiness which I'm sure Emily would have approved of. When I saw her drawings of ellipses, as a drawing exercise, I felt that given the opportunity she would have made an excellent mathematician!

Christopher Cooper

THE BRONTË BRAND

The name "Brontë" has been appropriated by many companies, not all associated with the Yorkshire. Here we have Brontë chocolates, the famous Brontë liqueur and the last, found on the shelves of Franklins, a tin of Brontë lambs tongues in jelly. Probably the latter are not from the moors around Top Withins as it's a company based in Sydney.



WHO'S WHO IN *SHIRLEY*

Unlike the Dickens Society we don't have such a thing as a "book of the year", but for 2009 *Shirley* has been put, unofficially, into that role. We'll be having both a talk on *Shirley*, and a dramatic performance of some of its scenes, so it might be worthwhile for you to read it, or re-read it. To assist you, here is a list of the many characters.

FIELDHEAD:

Shirley Keeldar: heiress, just turned 21 and mistress of Fieldhead in the parish of Briarfield

Charles Cave Keeldar: father of Shirley

Mrs Sympson and the Misses Isabella and

Getrude: aunt and cousins of Shirley

Henry Sympson: son of Mr Sympson, lame and pale

Mrs Gill: Shirley's housekeeper

James Booth: gardener at Fieldhead

John: man-servant at Fieldhead

Tartar: Shirley's dog, large, strong and fierce-looking, half mastiff, half bull-dog



Oakwell Hall, the original of Fieldhead



The Red House, the original of Briarfield Rectory

BRIARFIELD RECTORY:

Caroline Helstone: friend of Shirley, living with her uncle Mr Helstone

James Helstone: Caroline's father, "handsome, dissolute, soft, treacherous, courteous, cruel"

Mrs Agnes Pryor: assumed name of Caroline Helstone's mother

Agnes Gray: maiden name of Caroline's mother

Matthewson Helstone: uncle of Caroline, rector of Briarfield

Mr & Mrs Hardman: family to whom Mrs Pryor had been a governess

Caroline Gray: sister of Mrs Pryor

Eliza: Mr Helstone's cook

Fanny: servant of Mr Helstone

HOLLOWS MILL:

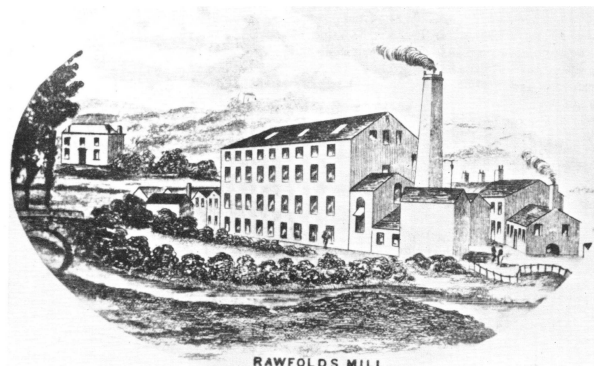
Robert Gerard Moore: cloth manufacturer at Hollows Hill, mother was Belgian

Constantine Gérard: grandfather of Robert, an Antwerp merchant

Hortense Gérard: mother of Robert and Louis Moore

Louis Gérard Moore: younger brother of Robert, tutor in the Sympson family

Hortense Gérard Moore: sister and housekeeper of Robert, orderly, economical



Rawfolds Mill, the original for Hollows Mill

Sarah: servant of Robert Moore, disliked Hotenses's continental cookery
William Farren: employee of Robert Moore, also worked at Fieldhead as a gardener
Grace Farren: wife of William – children Ben and Michael
Fred Mugatroyd: employee of Robert Moore, bound and left in a ditch on Stilbro' moor
Jeremiah Pighills: employee of Robert Moore
Joe Scott: overseer at Hollow's Mill
Henry Scott: son of Joe, and employee at Hollow's Mill

BRIARMAINS:

Hiram Yorke: highly respected manufacturer, living at Briarmains, near Briarfield
Mrs Hesther Yorke: wife of Hiram
Rose & Jessie Yorke: daughters of Hiram
Matthew, Mark and Martin Yorke: three of the four sons of Hiram
Deb: servant of Hiram Yorke

NUNNELY PRIORY:

Sir Philip Nunnely: owner of Nunnely Priory, with literary tastes, proposed to Shirley
Mr Grame: steward for Sir Philip Nunnely

CHURCH AND CHAPEL:

Cyril Hall: vicar of Nunnely, wedded to his books and his parish
Margaret Hall: sister of Cyril, spectacled and learned
Peter Augustus Malone: Irish curate of Briarfield, strongly built, fond of eating and drinking
David Sweeting: curate at Nunnely, smart and sensible, quite unlike his fellow curates
Joseph Donne: curate of Whinbury, wooed Shirley, lodger with John Gale
Thomas Boultry: vicar of Whinbury, headed the Sunday School procession in Royd Lane
Mrs Boultry: wife of Thomas, with an exaggerated reverence for her husband
Grace Boultry: daughter of Thomas, Sunday School teacher
Mr Macarthey: successor to Mr Malone as curate of Briarfield
Mrs Whipp & Mrs Hogg: landladies of Mr Malone and Mr Sweeting
Thomas: clerk of Briarfield Church
Moses Barraclough: "preaching tailor", lead the Luddites at the battle of Stilbro' moor
Dr Broadbent: "beautiful" speaker at the Bible Society meeting at Nunnely
Mr Langweilig: German Moravian minister, boring speaker at the Bible Society meeting
Supplehough: Baptist preacher, held up as an example to the three curates by Mr Helstone

MEDICAL MEN:

Drs MacTurk: medical men, father and son
Greaves/Graves: assistant to the Doctors Turk
Zillah Horsfall: nurse employed by Dr MacTurk, "rough, hard-handed, drinker and smoker"
Dr Rile: another medical man

OTHERS:

Miss Birtwistle: a young lady present at the parish tea
Mary Cave: fancied by Hiram Yorke and Matthewson Helstone in their youth
John-of-Mally's-of-Hannah's-of-Debs: wooed Sarah
John Gale: small clothier
Mrs Gale: wife of John, attended the three curates at the tea party
Abraham Gale: six-year old son of John

Pearson Hall: solicitor at Stilbro' and agent for Shirley
Michael Hartley: half-crazy weaver, shot Robert Moore
Mr Pearson: cloth manufacturer of Whinfield, shot at in his bed during the disturbances
Anne, Kate and Susan Pearson: daughter of Mr Pearson
Noah o' Tim's: one of the leaders of the Luddites
Timothy Ramsden: wealthy "corn-factor in Briarfield, stout and puffy"
Mrs Ramsden: wife of Timothy, on the "Jew Basket" roster
Mrs Rouse: on the "Jew Basket" roster
Mr Armitage: one of the commercial men of Briarfield, shot at on the moor
Miss Armitage: marriageable single woman, thought to a possible wife for Robert Moore
Mr Roakes: cloth manufacturer
Christopher Sykes: cloth manufacturer of Whinbury
Mrs Sykes and the Misses: wife and daughter of Christopher – Dora marries Sweeting
Mary Ann Ainley: ugly old maid of Briarfield, but full of benevolence
Miss Mann: old maid of Briarfield, prim and grim
Colonel Ryde: officer in charge of the defence of Hollows Mill
Sugden: police constable
Mr Wynne: magistrate of Briarfield, wanted his son Sam to marry Shirley
Samuel Fawthrop Wynne: son of Mr Wynne, disliked by Shirley
The Misses Wynne: young ladies who were thought, in turn, to be suitable for Robert Moore

SUMMARY OF *SHIRLEY*


The world is changing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Shirley Keeldar, modelled after Emily, is a spirited heiress, strong and independent. Her friend, Caroline Helstone, lives with her uncle, keeping house. She is less self-assured. She wants to do something worthwhile but is unable to find a direction in life. Robert Moore, a nearby mill-owner introduces labour-saving machinery which arouses the anger of the workmen and a riot breaks out. This is happening at the time when the Luddite movement was spreading across the land and at one time there were more soldiers putting down the riots than there were in Spain fighting Napoleon. After his frames are destroyed, Robert makes peace with the "frame-breakers" by promising more jobs, and better housing. Their story ends with several weddings, and begins with a delightful tea-party. The opening line is almost as memorable as the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*.







Of late years an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England: they lie very thick on the hills; every parish has one or more of them; they are young enough to be very active, and ought to be doing a great deal of good.

Those who say that the Brontës lack humour should read *Shirley*. There are two really funny scenes. The first is in chapter 1 is where the three curates are having tea together and squabbling most delightfully. Charlotte really shows that she can write bright and witty Dickensian dialogue. The other scene, in chapter 27, employs more subtle humour. This is where Shirley is explaining to her uncle, Mr Sympson, why she has refused Sir Philip Nunnely's proposal. While she's not actually rude to her uncle, Shirley employs biting sarcasm, and shows that she's a match for any man.

It's interesting that "Shirley", now universally used as a girl's name, was used only for men up to the time of Charlotte's novel. Charlotte chose this very masculine-sounding name to reflect Shirley's strength of mind and character – a woman who could look into any man's face as an equal. What would Charlotte have made of it now being a very soft and feminine name, an especially it being the name given to the sweet little curly-headed Shirley Temple!

PROGRAM FOR 2009

Meetings indicated by  are held at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt St Sydney (just around the corner from Town Hall station), with a meeting charge of \$4.

<p> Sat 14th FEBRUARY: CHARLOTTE AND TENNYSON Alison HODDINOTT: PERILS OF BIOGRAPHY: CHARLOTTE BRONTË AND TENNYSON A number of biographers have claimed that Charlotte Brontë disliked Tennyson's poetry. In this talk I will argue that her attitude was more complex than dislike and that, particularly in her two final novels, she was influenced by, and yet challenged, this most representative voice of Victorian poetry.</p>
<p> Sat 2nd MAY: Christopher COOPER: SHIRLEY AND THE LUDDITES In 1812, the year Patrick Brontë married Maria, the Luddite movement spread to West Yorkshire and Rawfolds Mill was attacked. Thirty-seven years later Charlotte wrote <i>Shirley</i> in which the Luddite riots were depicted, and Rawfolds Mill became Robert Moore's mill.</p>
<p> Fri 29th – Sun 31st MAY BRONTË/DICKENS WEEKEND CONFERENCE at the Coolangatta Estate, Shoalhaven. The theme is THE COLONIAL CONNECTION This conference is a joint venture with the NSW Dickens Society. The historic Coolangatta Estate was settled by Alexander Berry and Edward Wollstonecraft in 1822. It has been transformed into a comfortable 4 star resort with a winery, a 9-hole golf course, a tennis court and a solar heated pool.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TALKS</p> <p>Sandra Faulkner: Dickens and his connections with Australia. Susannah Fullerton: Mary (Wollstonecraft) Shelley, including her connections with Coolangatta. Roslyn Russell: NSW in 1820-1840 with a focus on the colonial diarist Annabella Boswell. Anne Collett: Alexander Harris (one of Charlotte Brontë's most loved writers) who wrote about his experiences in NSW in the 1820s and 1830s. Rodney Pyne: on his ancestors who lived and worked in the Coolangatta area. Peter Lucas: Henry Lawson, including his poem about Dickens. The cost, including breakfasts, morning and afternoon teas and the Saturday night Banquet (including a bush band and ghost stories) is \$270 per person (single supplement is \$90). Non-residential rate \$110.</p>
<p> Sat 6th JUNE: Christine ALEXANDER: CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S CHRISTIANITY Christine will focus on the narrative of pilgrimage as a clue to Charlotte Brontë's attitude to Christianity and her strong hold on life through adversity.</p>
<p>Fri 3rd JULY: MR SMITH'S LIBRARY – a workshop George Smith was the partner of Smith, Elder and Company who published Charlotte's novels. We don't know what his library contained, but when Charlotte visited him in London she must have been quite impressed by it. We'll examine Christopher Cooper's antiquarian books – books that could have been, but probably weren't, in George Smith's collection, and learn about the history of the printed book. (This is substantially the same talk as was given in 2002.)</p>
<p> Sat 1st AUGUST: Carmel NESTOR: MARIA BRONTË AND ELIZABETH BRANWELL Maria, the mother of the Brontës, died not long after giving birth to Anne, and her sister Elizabeth Branwell, came to look after the six children. Judging by her letters to Patrick (in one she referred to him as "my dear saucy Pat") Maria had a lively mind and a skill with words. What might she have thought of the literary success of her daughters had she lived?</p>
<p> Sat 14th NOVEMBER: SCENES FROM SHIRLEY Pamela Whalan has written and directed many plays, both in Sydney and in Newcastle. She will be adapting a couple of scenes from <i>Shirley</i> and will be bringing a couple of actors from Newcastle to perform them. Hopefully this will inspire much discussion and there'll be opportunity for us all to talk about our impressions of the novel. This is the nearest thing we've had to a "book of the year" and you'll get a lot more out of the performance and discussion if you've read the book beforehand.</p>
<p>Sat 5th DECEMBER: JOINT CHRISTMAS LUNCH WITH THE NSW DICKENS SOCIETY Details to be announced later.</p>