



# *The Australian Brontë Association Newsletter*

**Issue No 46**

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## **CATS SAVE THE BRONTËS**



**A scene from *Cats* on Broadway June 19 1997**

**NEW YORK (NYT NEWS SERVICE).**- Thanks in part to a donation from the estate of one of England's most esteemed poets — and some dancing cats — the Brontë Parsonage Museum's doors will remain open, for now.

The estate of T.S. Eliot has gifted the struggling museum, which reopened in late August after being closed since March, £20,000 (or approximately \$35,753 in Australian dollars). The donation was first reported by the BBC.

The parsonage, located in Haworth, said it was facing a loss of expected income of more than £500,000 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

There is a connection between Eliot and the Brontës. The "Bradford millionaire" who appears in the Eliot poem "The Waste Land" is thought to be Sir James Roberts, a Yorkshire philanthropist who was also a customer at the bank where Eliot worked. Roberts donated Haworth Parsonage — once the home of the Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne — to the Brontë Society, which operates the museum, in 1928. Roberts knew the family as a child.

But the Eliot estate's gift didn't come with any fanfare. Rebecca Yorke, the head of communications and marketing at the Brontë Society, said she discovered the donation when it showed up on the museum's crowdfunding campaign page with a message of support. "Realizing that it was from the T.S. Eliot estate was a very special moment," she said.

# THE STRANGE TALE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S GHOST

From the 2020 Hallowe'en post on the website [annebronte.org](http://annebronte.org).

Halloween comes but once a year, but that's why I like to make it last all weekend, meaning that today it's time for this year's Brontë Halloween blog post! In previous years we've looked at the Long Island staircase said to be haunted by Anne Brontë, at the Gytrash of Ponden Hall, and at the ghost of Mrs Baines which haunted Penzance at the time that the Brontë's' mother Maria and their Aunt Branwell lived there. Today we're going to look at ghosts in the writing of Charlotte Brontë, and a spooky report of Charlotte being a ghost herself.

Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, of course, is a book full of superstition and gothic tones, and yet it is Charlotte Brontë who most consistently wrote about the supernatural and otherworldly. Her unfinished book *Willie Ellin* sees an unnamed spirit taking up residence in the human world, and even when a teacher at Roe Head School it seemed that Charlotte was experiencing phenomena that can't easily be explained away, as we see from this excerpt from her journal:

The toil of the day, succeeded by this moment of divine leisure, had acted on me like opium & was coiling about me a disturbed but fascinating spell, such as I never felt before. What I imagined grew morbidly vivid. I remember I quite seemed to see, with my bodily eyes, a lady standing in the hall of a gentleman's house, as if waiting for someone.



Roe Head, where Charlotte taught, drawn by Anne Brontë

Could this vision have been waiting in the hall of a gentleman's house, waiting for Charlotte to take up her pen ten years later and write her story in *Jane Eyre*? This novel too is full of hauntings, of past spectres being made all too real, and it contains one of the most famous ghost scenes of them all as the young Jane is banished to the red-room.

This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchen; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered. The house-maid alone came here on Saturdays, to wipe from the mirrors and the furniture a week's quiet dust: and Mrs. Reed herself, at far intervals, visited it to review the contents of a certain secret drawer in the wardrobe, where were stored divers parchments, her jewel-casket, and a miniature of her deceased husband; and in those last words lies the secret of the red-room—the spell which kept it so lonely in spite of its grandeur.

Mr. Reed had been dead nine years: it was in this chamber he breathed his last; here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne by the undertaker's men; and, since that day, a sense of dreary consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion.

The red-room of Jane Eyre may have been inspired by Shibden Hall in Halifax which had a haunted Red Room.

My seat, to which Bessie and the bitter Miss Abbot had left me riveted, was a low ottoman near the marble chimney-piece; the bed rose before me; to my right hand there was the high, dark wardrobe, with subdued, broken reflections varying the gloss of its panels; to my left were the



The red-room of Jane Eyre may have been inspired by Shibden Hall in Halifax which had a haunted Red Room.

muffled windows; a great looking-glass between them repeated the vacant majesty of the bed and room. I was not quite sure whether they had locked the door; and when I dared move, I got up and went to see. Alas! Yes: no jail was ever more secure. Returning, I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as

**GHOST'S VISITS TO RECTORY.**

**VISION OF CHARLOTTE BRONTE.**

**Spectre's Footsteps Terrify Vicar's Dog.**

The ghost of Charlotte Bronte, the famous Victorian novelist, is said to pay an annual visit to the rectory at Hathersage, where the novelist once stayed. The visits occur in February, and the next is expected in a few days.

It is in the bedroom which Charlotte Bronte occupied during a three weeks' stay at the rectory with her friend, Ellen Nussey, in 1845, that the ghost is said to appear. The manifestations have occurred annually during the incumbency of the Rev. J. H. Brookbank, the present vicar, and his sons first saw the figure when they were too young to associate it with the novelist.

The description they then gave, of a tiny woman in early Victorian dress, with pale face, slightly twisted mouth, and large melancholy eyes, left no doubt among their elders that the shade was that of Charlotte Bronte.

**Dog Terrified.**

Mr. N. Roden, a schoolmaster at Hathersage, who witnessed one of the February manifestations, said:

"Footsteps descended the staircase and seemed to pass through the wall and into the library. The vicar's dog barked frantically, its hair stood on end, and it backed terrified into a corner until the retreating footsteps passed out of hearing."

"On another occasion Mrs. Brookbank and her daughter were startled whilst standing in front of the house at eleven o'clock at night, when a tall man wearing clothes of the Victorian fashion walked past them and into the churchyard." He stood for a moment among the tombs, repassed them, and disappeared.

**A Man She Loved.**

The description of the man applied unmistakably to Thomas Kyre, a wealthy man who lived near Hathersage during Charlotte Bronte's visit, "and with whom," Mr. Roden added, "I believe Charlotte Bronte was in love."

It is believed that the ghost of the novelist returns to Hathersage, because that was the only place wherein she could find sanctuary and respite from the misery and tragedy of her life.

The vicar, when asked to deny or confirm the manifestations, reluctantly admitted the conviction of his wife and two sons that they had seen what they believed to be the ghosts of Thomas Kyre and Charlotte Bronte. He himself had not seen the ghosts.

In no circumstances, he said, would he admit spiritualists or members of the Psychic Society to take part in any experiment or manifestation.

coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and

appearing before the eyes of belated travellers. I returned to my stool.

Superstition was with me at that moment; but it was not yet her hour for complete victory: my blood was still warm; the mood of the revolted slave was still bracing me with its bitter vigour; I had to stem a rapid rush of retrospective thought before I quailed to the dismal present... Shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room; at this moment a light gleamed on the wall. Was it, I asked myself, a ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind? No; moonlight was still, and this stirred; while I gazed, it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head. I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern carried by someone across the lawn: but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort.

The heroine of *Villette*, Lucy Snowe, also finds herself beguiled and besieged by dread of the supernatural, thanks to the recurring presence of a ghost nun:

The Brontës had been brought up on ghostly folklore and tales of the supernatural, thanks to the Pennine tales of their loyal servant Tabby Aykroyd and the Cornish tales regaled by their Aunt Branwell. It's easy to imagine them telling



each other spooky stories by candlelight on All Hallow's Eve, but perhaps more



**'A sudden bell rang in the house—the prayer-bell. Instantly into our alley there came, out of the berceau, an apparition, all black and white. With a sort of angry rush—close, close past our faces—swept swiftly the very NUN herself! Never had I seen her so clearly. She looked tall of stature, and fierce of gesture. As she went, the wind rose sobbing; the rain poured wild and cold; the whole night seemed to feel her'**

*Villette*

surprising were the stories that circulated in the 1920s of Charlotte Brontë herself appearing as a ghost!

**Dundee Evening Telegraph, 11 February 1927**

It is reported here in February 1927 that Charlotte's ghost has been appearing on an annual basis at the beautiful Hathersage Parsonage where she stayed with Ellen Nussey in 1845. The incumbent vicar's children often see her ghost, and her appearance is said to terrify the dog. The article also conjectures that her phantom returns to this spot because she was in love with the man who lived there, Reverend Henry Nussey whose proposal she rejected and who at least partially inspired St. John Rivers in *Jane Eyre*, and because she had found calm at Hathersage in contrast to the misery of Haworth. The article also points out that the ghost of Thomas Eyre, who had lived at nearby North Lees Hall, also haunted the building and

that the Psychic Society had offered to help investigate the matter, but their request was not being entertained.

Did Charlotte visit this building, Hathersage Parsonage, again in the 1920s?

A month later, however, Hathersage's vicar the Reverend J. H. Brookbank took to the press to deny these claims, saying that the idea that he and his family had seen Charlotte's ghost was absurd – but perhaps it's telling that there was no comment from the family dog!

Charleston Gazette, 13 March 1927

We've had a little bit of Halloween fun today, and I think we could all do with that as another lockdown looms. Once again, Brontë books will prove invaluable in the weeks ahead, so please join me next Sunday for another new post. Next Sunday will be the special one that I hinted at in last week's post, so I hope you can join me for it. Stay safe and if you have a terrified pet today don't panic, it's probably just Charlotte Brontë popping by to say hello.

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

### C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY

The inaugural meeting of the C.S. Lewis Society will be held on



10:30am Saturday 1<sup>st</sup>  
May 2021  
Castlereagh Boutique  
Hotel

Speaker: Kel Richards,  
radio broadcaster,  
political commentator

and author.

He will speak on "In the  
Steps of C.S. Lewis in  
Oxford and Dublin".

Cost \$10 to cover room hire  
and tea & coffee (includes  
introductory membership of the  
society).



Please register with Christopher Cooper  
040307 7473 or  
christopherdonaldcooper@gmail.com

### A memorial concert for Maria-Louise Valkenburg

(a loyal ABA member, who died in 2014)

7.30 Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021  
Lakeside Rd Uniting Church,  
EASTWOOD



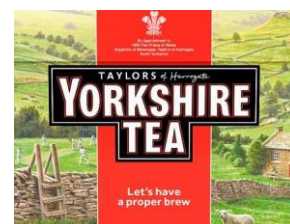
John Martin, Piano  
Georgia Lowe, Harp,  
Jacqueline Kent, Flute

The concert will be  
free of charge.

For catering purposes  
please register with  
Christopher Cooper  
040307 7473 by 14<sup>th</sup>  
June 2021.

### YORKSHIRE TEA

Traditionally the Yorkshire Tea Company donates packs of Yorkshire tea bags to the ABA for distribution at our Christmas Lunch. This year because of Covid they have been unable to source the 10 packs, but we are assured that this tradition will continue their tradition in 2021.



# BRONTË BLOGS

Because web addresses can't include accents, 'Brontë' must be spelt 'bronte'.

Bronte Blogspot	bronteblogspot.blogspot.com
Bronte Parsonage Blog	bronteparsonage.blogspot.com
Bronte Babe	brontebabeblog.wordpress.com
In Search of Anne Bronte and her Family	annebronte.org
the Bronte Sisters	kleurrijkbrontesisters.blogspot.com
Bronte Family	blog.bridgemainimages.com
Bronte B Log	Facebook
A Walk Around the Bronte Table	Facebook
Australian Brontë Association	Facebook
The Bronte Sisters	Facebook

## 'CHUCK' IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

There are three uses of the word 'chuck' in *Wuthering Heights*.

### **Chapter 21 Heathcliff chuckled**

The word 'chuckle' means a quiet laugh. It is derived from 'chuck' meaning chicken. A chuckle is a noise similar to a hen clucking.

### **Chapter 31 chucked it (a note) off**

To chuck is to throw carelessly. From Scottish, where a 'chuck' is a small pebble.

### **Chapter 34 Will you come, Chuck (Heathcliff to young Cathy)**

Chuck is a term of endearment, derived from 'chook', which is in turn derived from the sound of a hen's clucking.

Shakespeare used the term in 1603 in *Othello* Act IV, scene 2: "Pray, chuck, come hither."

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have all experienced enormous upheaval in our lives this year. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our health, livelihoods and wellbeing would have been unimaginable when we began another year of talks relating to the Brontë family in March this year. By the time our May meeting came around things had changed somewhat.

In response, we have had to create, adapt and sometimes endure new ways of living. This has of course been extra hard on our families and friends living in Victoria and for those with relatives in Aged Care facilities who've been hit extra hard plus

those with family members living overseas such as I have.

While some things in life are out of our control, together with the support, expertise and suggestions of your committee members - Annette Harman, Michael Links, Carmel Nestor, Catherine Barker, Christopher Cooper, Cindy Broadbent, Jan Roden and Patrick Morris - the ABA has, I feel, responded boldly and creatively in response.

With the first meeting of the year in March conducted as normal, and the May meeting

conducted entirely on Zoom, we've been able to hold the July, September and November meetings as usual. This has been thanks to the administration of the Castlereagh Hotel who have made sure that the meeting rooms we've used have been set up for social distancing as necessary.

In July Susannah Fullerton spoke about *The Governess in Victorian England*; then in September Cindy Broadbent discussed *The Birth of Childhood and*

ABA Members, NSWDS members and Friends can celebrate the end of this challenging year with a wonderful Victorian Christmas lunch to take place at the Castlereagh Hotel's Cellos Restaurant on Saturday 5 December from 12 noon. So once our ABA Christmas lunch is over we'll all no doubt ready ourselves for a somewhat different family Christmas celebration to the one which many of us originally had in mind.



*"Agnes Grey"*. Special thanks to Harvey Broadbent who filmed the September meeting for those members who didn't feel comfortable heading into Sydney during the pandemic so they could watch it later on YouTube. Finally our November meeting saw Carolyn Everett discussing *The Temperance Movement in Victorian England*. For Carolyn's talk our Publications Editor Christopher Cooper set himself the task of learning how to set up a YouTube account so that he too could film the meeting to send out to those not able to attend the meeting. So many thanks to Christopher; this pandemic has certainly given us much more to think about and also some new skills!

Talks for the year 2021 have all been organised and it will be another year of interesting speakers, details of which are now on our webpage. Things might still seem rather uncertain at the moment but

Unfortunately The Seventh International Juvenilia Conference has had to be postponed once more and will now take place 18-21 May 2022. Day Three, Friday 20 May 2022, is sponsored by ABA and covers a session on the Brontës and another on Jane Austen with the conference dinner in the evening at Doyles on the Beach, Watsons Bay. So, even if you can't attend the full conference I'm sure you'll be anxious to attend our special day. Full details can be accessed at <https://sam2.arts.unsw.edu.au/isljc2021/>

Despite the conference set back, next year we have many interesting talks planned for you. So together let's take any challenges which are in store for us in 2021 in our stride. Stay safe everyone.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Michelle Cavanagh, ABA President**

# The Australian and Canadian Brontë Connection

by Michelle Cavanagh

On 5 September 2020 I received an email from Pat Marshall who lives in Ottawa, Canada requesting details of Fergus McClory's Sydney address. When Fergus McClory became the first Australian representative in 1986 Pat Marshall was the Canadian representative of the Brontë Society and the two began a correspondence and, as Pat explained in her first email, she thought it would be nice to reconnect with Fergus. However after a little research I discovered that Fergus McClory had died in 2014, details of which I passed on. Interestingly though both Christopher Cooper and myself used to attend the Brontë Society meetings at which Fergus officiated and which took place at St Andrew's House, just behind St Andrew's Cathedral. Then in 1998 the Australian Brontë Association was formed as an independent but complimentary organisation to expand the local Brontë activities. Over time more emails took place between Ottawa and Sydney with Pat sending me four letters she'd received from Fergus in 1986 and

1987. It turned out that the pair almost met up at Haworth but that was not to be.

*Haworth 29.4.86*

*Dear Pat,*

*I'm writing this at the Parsonage, just a day or two before I leave to fly home; what a shame we could not have met here for the AGM!! Never mind, I look forward to meeting you as soon as may be, even if I have to arrange next year's flight home via Canada!! Warmest good wishes to you and your family – enjoy Haworth and the memory of those marvellous sisters. I shall write to you as soon as I can, more fully!*

*Yours sincerely, Fergus McClory*

Pat also sent me three old Brontë Society flyers only one of which has a date on it; Saturday June 22nd 1935. Another one, while it has no date, mentions Life membership of five guineas or annual subscription of ten shillings. There's certainly been a lot of water under the bridge since then.

## MEMORIES OF FERGUS

by Christopher Cooper

The first planning meeting of the Brontë Society in Australia took place on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1986, at the home of the then Australian Representative, Fergus McClory, at his home in French's Forest. There were 12 members attending, of which Elisabeth and I were two such members.

The first actual meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1986 in the Talbot Room in St Andrews House. We began with a Brontë Quiz. This was followed by a talk by Penny Gay on Anne Brontë and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Then Wendy Parkins spoke on Charlotte Brontë and *Jane Eyre*. This was

followed by a reading of some of Emily's poetry. I spoke about a series of radio programs that I had made of the lives of the Brontës.

The second meeting was held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1987. Penny Gay spoke about *Agnes Grey*, repeating the author George Moore's comment that this novel is "the most perfect prose narrative in English literature". Kate Newey and Judith Elen spoke about the Brontë poems and letters. Christine Alexander commented on Charlotte's *Roe Head Journal*, and finally Penny Gay gave an "entirely different view of Emily Brontë".

The third meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1988 when Leanne Grant gave a social history overview of the 1830's to the 1850's. This was followed by Kate Newey, who spoke on Economics in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and Judith Elan gave a talk entitled *The Folk Tale in Jane Eyre*.

The 1989 meeting featured Michelle Dixon, speaking on "Wordsworthian Views of nature in *Jane Eyre*" and Cathy Waters on "The History of the family in *Wuthering Heights*." In 1991 we watched the video *In the Shadow of the Brontës*. Jenny Gribble spoke on "The Brontës and Childhood" and Kate Newey examined the Gothic in *Villette*. In 1992, Christine Alexander told us of her recent visit to England while Penny Gay spoke of her trip to the UK and her work on Shakespeare.

The year 1993 was a big one, being the centenary of the founding of the Brontë Society. In April we had a joint meeting with the Jane Austen Society of Australia. In those days JASA met in North Sydney. In May we had a picnic in Bronte Park, followed by a walk through Waverley cemetery. In June there was a Brontë performance by some students of St Catherine's School. Then in July we held a costume dinner at Café Troppo in Glebe.

March 1994 began with a Study Day together with the Jane Austen Society. It was led by Annette and Graham Harman, and the theme was "Austen and Brontë – two households, community and language in the novels. In November 1994 Christine Alexander and Penny Gay spoke. In November 1995 Christine Alexander shared her impressions of the Japanese view of the Brontës, after her recent visit to Japan. Susannah Fullerton spoke on Agnes Grey and the plight of the governess. Anthea Taylor spoke on "The Brontë concept of salvation" and Fergus McClory told us of his participation in the Brontë Society excursion to Northern Ireland.

In July 1997 Penny Gay spoke on the recent TV serialisation of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Then in December 1997, Susannah Fullerton, Christine Alexander, Kate Newey, Brigitte Lucey, myself and Marloesje Valkenburg met at Susannah's house to discuss the possible formation of the Australian Brontë Association. It wasn't intended as a coup, though I fear that Fergus saw it that way. We wanted a Brontë organisation that was independent of the Brontë Society, so that we could have more flexibility in arranging more meetings and the ability to control our own finances. We made every effort to include Fergus, to be on the committee, and even to be the President. But for some reason he declined the offer. However we remained on close terms with the Brontë Society in the UK and, to this day, the report on the activities of the ABA are published as the activities of the Brontë Society in Australia. I have been the Australian Representative of the Brontë Society for many years.

You will recognise many familiar names amongst the supporters of the forerunner of the ABA: Christine Alexander and Susannah Fullerton have given many talks over the years to the ABA. Annette and Graham Harman have also delivered some interesting talks. Brigitte continues to be a member. Unfortunately we lost Kate Newey, who was our membership secretary in the early years, but she returned to the UK and, so far as I know, is still lecturing at Lancaster University.

Although her name doesn't appear in the minutes, our current President, Michelle Cavanagh, was a regular attendee at St Andrews House. The strange thing is that, despite the number of members being quite small, neither of us remembers the other being there! At some stage I will give an account of the subsequent history of the Australian Brontë Association.

# THE BRONTË SOCIETY DINNER AT THE EL TROPPO IN 1993

You will see some familiar faces among the participants at the Brontë Society dinner, but my, how much younger we all looked!



**Christine & Peter Alexander and  
Kate Newey**



**Colette McGowan and Michael  
Links**



**Marloesje Valkenburg, Elisabeth &  
Christopher Cooper**



**Susannah & Ian Fullerton and  
Annette & Graham Harman**



**Unknown people – any guesses?**



**Everyone**

# BRONTËS IN THE DUNGEON

Reprinted from the Newsletter number 19

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2007 a few brave members allowed themselves to be incarcerated in a dungeon to hear a number of Brontë poems that have to do with dungeons and prisoners. Sometimes the dungeons are actual dark, damp prisons. Sometimes they are figurative and are symbols of separation. Sometimes the prisons are the graves where loved ones are buried.



**L to R: unknown, Catherine Barker,  
Michelle Cavanagh, Lorraine Turner**

Marloesje Valkenburg read one poem by Charlotte, two by Emily and six by Anne. It is perhaps a little surprising that Anne, commonly regarded as the most normal emotionally, should be much more preoccupied with imprisonment than her sisters.

Charlotte's poem is *A Wretch in Prison*. The prisoner was Murry, one of the members of the Duke of Wellington's staff in *The Twelve Adventurers*. The reason for his imprisonment is not given. There is no window in the prison cell and the prisoner wishes he could glimpse the sun's rays or the stars at night.

*Oh, for the song of the gladsome lark,  
For the morning sun's fair beam,  
Instead of this dungeon, deeply dark,  
Where ne'er its light doth gleam!*

.....  
*Oh, that the glad stars through my dungeon-bars  
Would shed their lustre clear;  
That the solemn moon would lighten the gloom  
Which reigns in silence here!*

One of Emily's two dungeon poems is *The Prisoner*, written for the Gondal saga.  
*Silent is the House – all are laid asleep;  
One, alone, looks out o'er the snow-wreaths  
deep;  
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze  
That whirls the 'wilderer drifts and bends the  
groaning trees.*

*Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;  
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or  
door;  
The little lamp burns straight; its rays shoot  
strong and far:  
I trim it well to be the Wanderer's guiding-star.*

One imagines that it an unusually comfortable dungeon until it becomes clear that the speaker is not the prisoner.  
*In the dungeon-crypts, idly did I stray,  
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;  
'Draw the ponderous bars! open, Warder stern!'  
He dare not say me nay – the hinges harshly  
turn.*

*'Our guests are darkly lodged,' I whispered,  
gazing through  
The vault, whose grated eye showed heaven  
more grey than blue;  
(This was when glad spring laughed in awaking  
pride;)  
'Aye, darkly lodged enough!' returned my sullen  
guide.*

*Then God forgive my youth; forgive my careless  
tongue!  
I scoffed, as the chill chains on the damp flag-  
stones rung:  
'Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to  
fear,*

*That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?’*

But the captive was not some dangerous insurgent who must be kept in the strictest confinement lest he escape and wreak havoc on his enemies. It was a sweet maiden.



**L to R: Christopher Cooper, Marloesje Valkenburg, Sarah Burns**

*The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow;*

*‘I have been struck,’ she said, ‘and I am suffering now;*

*Yet these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong,*

*And were they forged in steel, they could not hold me long.’*

The jailor has no mercy for her, but the visitor feels compassion for her. Then he discovers that he knows the maiden.

*She knew me and she sighed, ‘Lord Julian, can it be,*

*Of all my playmates, you, alone, remember me?*

*Nay start not at my words, unless you deem it shame*

*To own from conquered foe, a once familiar name –*

By now the jailor is getting impatient and allows Lord Julian to take over.

*‘We have been two hours good!’ he muttered*



**L to R: Wendy Hope, Lorraine Turner, Christopher Cooper**

*peevishly,*

*Then, loosing off his belt the rusty dungeon key.*

*He said, ‘You may be pleased, Lord Julian, still to stay*

*But duty will not let me linger here all day;*

*If I might go, I’d leave this badge of mine with you*

*Not doubting that you’d prove a jailor stern and true.’*

If you wish to know whether Lord Julian did prove to be a jailor stern and true you will have to read the complete poem.

In Anne’s poem *A Voice from the Dungeon* the dungeon appears to be more figurative than literal.

*Long have I dwelt forgotten here*

*In pining woe and dull despair;*

*This place of solitude and gloom*

*Must be my dungeon and my tomb.*

*I dream of liberty, ‘tis true,*

*But then I dream of sorrow too,*

*Of blood and guilt and horrid woes,*

*Of tortured friends and happy foes;*

In *The North Wind* Anne welcomes the breeze that comes through the iron bars because it has come from her own land and brings messages from home.

*That wind is from the North, I know well;*

*No other breeze could have so wild a swell.*

*Now deep and loud it thunders round my cell,*

*Then faintly dies,*

*And softly sighs,*

*And moans and murmurs mournfully.*

*I know its language; thus it speaks to me –*

*‘The sweet world is not changed, but thou*

*Art pining in a dungeon now,*

*Where thou must ever be;*

*No voice but mine can reach thine ear,*

*And Heaven has kindly sent me here,*

*To mourn and sigh with thee,*

*And tell thee of the cherished land*

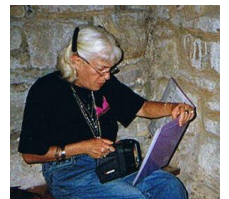
*Of thy nativity.’*

*Confined and hopeless as I am,*

*O speak of liberty,*

*O tell me of my mountain home,*

*And I will welcome thee.*



**Marloesje**

In *The Captive Dove* Anne identifies with a caged bird.

*Poor restless Dove, I pity thee,  
And when I hear thy plaintive moan  
I'll mourn for thy captivity  
And in thy woes forget mine own.*

*In vain! In vain! Thou canst not rise –  
Thy prison roof confines thee there;  
Its slender wires delude thine eyes,  
And quench thy longing with despair.*

Another of Anne's Gondal poems is *Lines Inscribed on the Wall of a Dungeon* written in 1844. Here the prisoner is denied even the solace of a wind that has blown

from home. Imagination remains the only solace.

*Though not a breath can enter here,  
I know the wind blows fresh and free;  
I know the sun is shining clear,  
Though not a gleam can visit me.*

Finally, we heard Anne's poem *A Prisoner in a Dungeon Deep* in which the prisoner is set free. But when told that his foes are all dead he cries out that all mankind must be now dead.

*'My foes are dead! It must be then  
That all mankind are gone.  
For they were all my deadly foes  
And friends I had not one.'*

## FLOCK THEATRE ONLINE PRODUCTION OF *JANE EYRE* November 2020

### Review by Annette Harman.

I enjoyed this Zoom production of *Jane Eyre* by Flock Theatre because it was a skilful blend of "live-action performances with shadow puppetry" (Flock Theatre, 16/10/2020) for a pandemic audience in Covid-19 times. The actors were costumed and recorded from separate locations with puppetry providing heightened Gothic scene setting and plot linkages. The stationary camera angles created an intense viewing experience for the audience; as each actor filled their own screen, presenting their characters' experiences intensely by delivering powerful monologues, interacting with other characters. The actors were well trained and managed to layer their character with theatrical realism. The production team using Zoom and editing skills created a 3D virtual theatre space which I admired. Julie Butters' adaptation of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë took the familiar path of a love story between Jane (Julie Butters) and Rochester (Eric Michaelian), young Jane (Sydney Nunnes) Richard Mason (Victor Chiburis) St John Rivers (NoahTodd).

Flock Theatre's press release states "Jane Eyre, an orphan in early nineteenth-century England, overcomes a loveless childhood to become governess to the ward of the enigmatic Mr. Rochester. Jane soon

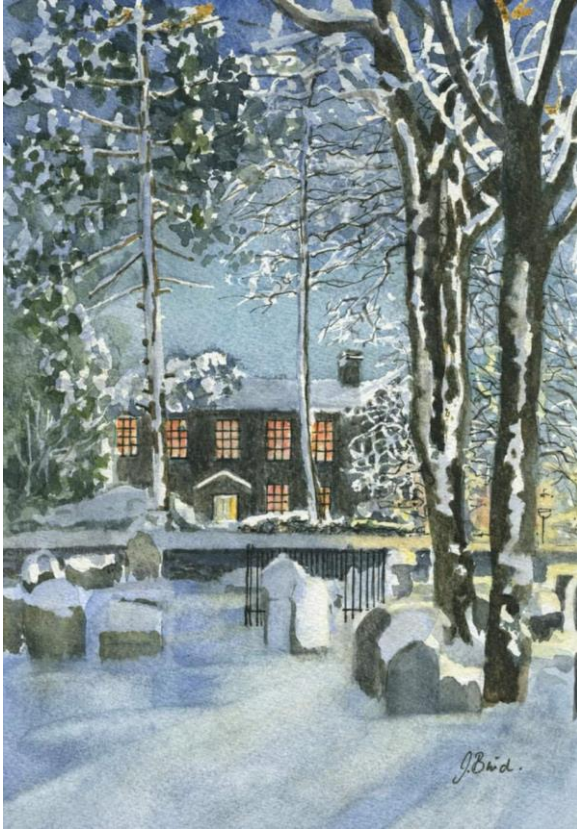
believes she's found the home and the love she's always yearned for, but Mr. Rochester's dark secrets threaten to keep them apart. Blending gothic romance with a powerful story of personal growth, *Jane Eyre* explores one woman's struggle to find love and independence despite barriers of gender, class, and circumstance". The gothic romance is accentuated by the shadow puppetry, the actors themselves and the Zoom medium to great melodramatic effect.

"Jane is fiercely determined to control her own destiny and stay true to her convictions despite immense external pressure... That makes her as compelling today as in 1847 when the novel was published" explained Julie Butters. I don't believe that Jane wanted to control her own destiny rather she clung to her Christian convictions and experiences domestic harmony with Rochester at Ferndean, where they began their own family. Jane's domestic experiences with St John Rivers - the restrained missionary in training, her merry female cousins and her village school teaching of Morton girls are emblematic stages of development for her.

A live performance of *Jane Eyre* by Flock theatre is expected at a later date and I think it would be great to see it.

# CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS IN BRONTE COUNTRY

By Michelle Cavanagh



Many of the old traditions which take place at Christmas time in Yorkshire are steeped in the mists of time, some belonging to pre-Christian times.

The Brontë household would have observed many of these customs which they

often refer to as their pre-Christmas baking in both their personal correspondence and novels. Yorkshire, unlike many other regions of Britain also retained Christmas Eve ceremonies which included cooking a 'Furmenty', a wheat dish which was the main Christmas Eve fare.

Christmas Day usually began with cold pressed meats and brawns, pies and pickles. The main meal, for those who could afford it, was a huge goose pie, sometimes with the addition of other game such as hare, rabbit and pheasant.

Yorkshire pies were so famous that they were sent to many other parts of the country once the railways made quicker transport possible. During the Brontës time, newspapers reported the sending of enormous pies; one sent from Sheffield to London in 1832, weighed 14 stone but collapsed under its own weight *en route*! Possibly such pies were being sent on trains which passed through Luddendfoot Railway Station when Branwell Brontë worked there from 1841 to 1842.

Certainly our 21st century Christmas feasts are somewhat different to those enjoyed by the Brontës.



# VALE JACQUELINE KING (1941 – 2020)

Jacqueline was born in Berriew, Montgomeryshire, the youngest of three daughters of the local Blacksmith. She had a great interest in books and writing from an early age, entering into Eisteddfods and successfully winning several prizes in poetry and literary composition.

After eloping to Scotland with Bill King, they got married in 1959. The newlyweds enjoyed postings to Cyprus - where their children Tony and Sandra were born - followed by Aden (South Yemen), Papua New Guinea and Russia.

An active member of the Embroidery Guild, Jacqueline produced many beautiful works embellished with poetry. Her other interests included membership of various literary groups; the Dylan Thomas Society of Australia, the Jane Austin Society of Australia, the NSW Dickens Society and the Australian Brontë Association which, together with Bill, she joined in 2012.

Jacqueline loved listening to the literary society speakers and interaction with the many members of the various groups who shared her passion for literature.

Jacqueline and Bill were for many years choristers with the Sydney Welsh Choir travelling with the choir to Ireland, Wales and England in 2014. It was a trip which gave them both great joy as they were privileged to sing in many beautiful cathedrals, castles and town halls.

Jacqueline passed away peacefully at home surrounded by her family on the 7<sup>th</sup> July and a farewell service was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July.

Jacqueline radiated warmth, compassion and love to all around her and will leave beautiful memories for those who were privileged to know her. As such she will be sorely missed by her Australian Brontë Association friends.

**Bill King**



## STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN THE BRONTË BIRTHPLACE



# Program for 2021

The Australian Brontë Association meets in Sydney five times a year. Meetings are held at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street (near Park Street) at 10:30am, though we serve morning tea from 10:00am. Those who wish to do so, have a light lunch at the hotel after the meeting. At each meeting, a paper on some aspect of the Brontës' life and work is presented. There is a meeting charge of \$5 (members) and \$10 (non-members).

## **Saturday 13th March 2021 Tasarla Harman**

### ***Some contemporary perspectives on the Brontë sisters***

How do the three Brontë sisters compare to the three Kardishian sisters? What were the effects on 19th century lives of tuberculosis when compared to Covid-19 in the 21st century? How did the public and private sphere affect the lives of the Brontë sisters? Tasarla will also question the influence of the Brontës in the pop culture of today. She will be exploring the Brontës as never before, producing a session which will certainly provide much food for thought!

## **Saturday 8th May 2021 Christine Alexander**

### **Exploring Juvenilia: the Brontës and other early writers**

This talk will look at features of early writing in an attempt to provide insight into what led particular children to become authors and why we might find it worthwhile to read their juvenilia.

## **Saturday 10th July 2021 Christine Jack**

### **The Trauma Testimonies of Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre and Adèle Varens**

Charlotte Brontë experienced significant trauma across her life and incorporated many aspects of it into *Jane Eyre*. Her understanding of the experience of trauma including that arising from abuse as well as the journey of recovery is remarkable given that it was well before the development of any relevant theory. The project being discussed in this talk involves application of contemporary trauma theory to aspects of the lives of Charlotte's and her fictional characters, Jane Eyre and Adèle Varens. After a brief coverage of the methodology being used in the project and some key theoretical understandings, examples related to each of the characters will be presented. They illustrate her insights as well as a blind spot that exemplifies intergenerational trauma.

## **Saturday 11th September 2021 Alison Hoddinott**

### ***How to be a Good Wife: Charlotte Brontë and Charles Dickens***

*Villette* and *Bleak House* were both published in book form in 1853. At the time the two novelists were thinking about marriage and the situation of the Victorian wife. Charlotte Brontë (born 1816) was wondering which of her suitors, if any, to choose. Charles Dickens (born 1812) was considering the incompatibility of his marriage to Catherine, which had taken place in 1836, when she was six weeks short of being of age. Their reflections on marriage are mirrored in their biographies, which quote freely from their letters, and in both novels.

## **Saturday 13th November 2021 Anne Collett**

TBA

## **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December Christmas Lunch**

**Cellos Restaurant, Castlereagh Boutique Hotel**