



The Brontë Collection

Keighley Local Studies Library

Open

Monday to Friday
Saturday

9.00am - 7.00pm
9.00am - 5.00pm

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The Brontë Collection

Almost from the moment the sisters' books were published the Brontë family has been the focus of romantic myth and scholarly research. Keighley Library holds an extensive collection of study material and locally is second only to the Brontë Parsonage Museum. Situated upstairs in the Local Studies department, our collection includes :-

- *Copies of the novels and poetry written by Charlotte, Emily, Anne, Rev Patrick, and Branwell Brontë.*
- *Books, pamphlets and articles relating to the Brontë Family.*
- *Biographies and recollections by people who knew the family.*
- *Criticisms of and study aids to the Brontës' works.*
- *An extensive Newspaper cutting collection dating back to 1904. With many items relating to the formation and early years of the Brontë Society and Brontë Parsonage Museum.*
- **BK635**, archive of Brontë material and ephemera (See Index)
- *Early guides to Haworth and the surrounding landscape referred to as 'Brontë country'*
- *A small collection of works in the French language.*

The Brontë Society Transactions (Brontë Studies)

The library currently holds :-

Volumes 1 – 36 in print. (1895 -2014) **Volumes 37** onwards Online (2015 -)

Formed in 1893, [The Brontë Society](#) was founded to organise a permanent home for the treasured items that once belonged to the Brontë family, and to keep them together as a collection.

Brontë Society Transactions (now known as **Brontë Studies**), has been published by the society since 1895 and is the only journal solely dedicated to Brontë family research. It includes original, peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, notes on matters of interest and correspondence, and is published four times a year.



Early Brontë writers & their works

The chronological list below highlights notable works from the first 50 years of Brontë authorship. Copies of all the listed books and articles can be found in Keighley's Brontë collection.

- 1850 **Charlotte Brontë.** *A Biographical notice of Ellis and Acton Bell* . After Emily and Anne's deaths Charlotte wrote this and a preface to the 1850 print of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. This was the first official public confirmation of the authors' gender.
- 1855 **Abraham Holroyd.** *Currer Bell and her sisters*. This article was published in the Bradford Advertiser. He had a bookshop in Westgate Bradford where notable people with an interest in local history gathered. He inspired early studies in local history and started the journal '*The Bradfordian*'.
- 1857 **Elizabeth Gaskell.** *The life of Charlotte Brontë*. A friend of Charlotte's she was asked by Patrick Brontë to write an account of Charlotte's life. The book was published in 1857 two years after Charlotte's death and was the first biography of Charlotte Brontë. However Mrs Gaskell had to revise the book three times within the first year of publication due to threats of libel action.
- 1871 **Ellen Nussey.** *Reminiscences of Charlotte Brontë*. (Scribner's magazine). Ellen was Charlotte's close friend, and it was from the correspondence between them, which most of the earliest books were heavily based. This piece was her own account of Charlotte, written under the pseudonym "A schoolfellow"
- 1873 **George Smith.** *The Brontës (Cornhill magazine)* The Brontë sisters' publisher, he put pen to paper to produce this piece, giving a description of their appearance and their demeanour, and also an account of his dealing with them as their publisher.
- 1877 **Wemyss Thomas Reid.** *Charlotte Brontë: a monograph*. Reid was the Editor of the *Leeds Mercury*. His friendship with Ellen Nussey enabled him to use letters from Charlotte Brontë to Ellen as the basis of his book, which was the first real alternative to Mrs Gaskell's 1957 account.

- 1879 **Francis H. Grundy.** *Pictures of the past: Memories of men I have met and places I have seen.* An early account of Branwell Brontë's life from someone who knew him. He also suggests Branwell as a possible author of 'Wuthering Heights'.
- 1879 **J. Horsefall Turner.** Antiquarian and editor of 'Yorkshire Notes and Queries' he wrote *'Haworth past and present'* (1879) An early guide book for visitors to Haworth it contained a history of Haworth and gleanings on the Brontë family. He also published *Brontëana* (1898) which consists of Patrick Brontë's collected works.
- 1883 **Agnes Mary Francis Robinson.** *Emily Brontë.* The first to write a book about Emily Brontë. She was helped by Ellen Nussey and visited Haworth to gain a first-hand account of Emily's short, self-contained life from those who knew her best.
- 1884 **William Scruton** *The Birthplace of Charlotte Brontë, Thornton and the Brontës* (1898).
Scruton worked as a solicitor's clerk, and was a keen historian and journalist, often contributing to the 'Bradford Observer' and the 'Yorkshireman', as well as to the Bradford Antiquary and later a founding member of the **Brontë Society** and a member of the committee. His writing is a reminder to us all that Charlotte and her siblings were born and lived their early lives at Thornton.
- 1886 **Algernon Charles Swinburne.** *A note on Emily Brontë*
The Poet and dramatist, wrote favourably about Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and praises the sisters as literary geniuses.
- 1886 **Francis A. Leyland.** *The Brontë Family: with special reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë.* Leyland ran a bookshop and a circulating library, he knew Branwell through his brother Joseph Leyland, who was a close friend of Branwell. Unhappy after harsh depictions of Branwell, in Gaskell's and Robinson's books, he set out to write a book that would reveal the better side of Branwell's nature. He got much of the material for his book from correspondence between Branwell and his brother.
- 1887 **Augustine Birrell.** *The Life of Charlotte Brontë.* Birrell was most famous as a politician and barrister. Ellen Nussey had been receiving legal advice from Mr Birrell about her letters from Charlotte Brontë. Ellen had never been quite satisfied with the accounts of Charlotte's life produced so far, thus Birrell wrote this biography at her request .

- 1888 **J. A. Erskine Stuart**, *The Brontë Country: its topography, Antiquities and History*. Stuart's book looked at the Brontës' lives and the places they lived in throughout the West Riding of Yorkshire. It could be called the first guide book for ramblers and literary tourists to the area.
- 1896 **Clement King Shorter** *Charlotte Brontë and her circle*. A prolific writer and editor of several periodicals, Shorter wrote this and the later book '*The Brontës: life and letters, 2 volumes*' (1908) He has been criticised for using unscrupulous means, along with Thomas James Wise, to obtain material for his books. This included the defrauding of Ellen Nussey out of her letters from Charlotte Brontë.

A selected Bibliography of Biographies & Books in our collection

The Brontës

In the footsteps of the Brontës. **Ellis Chadwick (Mrs)**. (1914)

The Brontës and their world. **Phyllis Bentley**. (1969)

The Brontës. **Juliet Barker**. (1994)

The Brontë Myth. **Lucaster Miller**. (2002)

Rev. Patrick Brontë

The father of the Brontës. **W.W. Yates**. (1897)

The father of the Brontës. **Annette B. Hopkins**. (1958)

Man of Sorrow : A biography of Patrick Brontë. **John Lock & Cannon, W. T. Dixon**. (1965)

Father of Genius. **Dudley Green**. (2010)



Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë: the Evolution of genius. **Winifred Gérin.** (1967)

Charlotte Brontë: A life. **Claire Harman.** (2015)

Charlotte Brontë . **Rebecca Fraser.** (2003)

Branwell Brontë



Patrick Branwell Brontë. Alice Law. (1923)

The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë.
Daphne Du Maurier. (1960)

Branwell Brontë. **Winifred Gérin.** (1961)

Profligate son: Branwell Brontë and his sisters.
Joan Rees. (1986)

Brother in the Shadow: Stories and Sketches by Patrick Branwell Brontë. **Mary Butterfield.** (1988)

Emily Brontë

*Emily Brontë .***Charles Simpson.** (1929)

The Life And Eager Death Of Emily Brontë. **Virginia Moore.** (1936)

Emily Brontë. **Winifred Gérin.** (1971)

Anne Brontë

Anne Brontë. **Winifred Gérin.** (1959)

Anne Brontë. **Ada Harrison & Derek Stanford .**(1959)

A life of Anne. **Edward Chitham.** (1991)

Take courage: Anne Brontë and the art of life.
Samantha Ellis. (2016)

In Search of Anne Brontë. **Nick Holland.** (2017)



Where our collection came from

The Keighley Mechanics Institute & John Milligan's Collection

The history of this collection dates back to the nineteenth century and includes the archives and some book stock from the Keighley Mechanics' Institute, of which Patrick Brontë was an active member, and where the family attended lectures and gained art tuition.

John Milligan was born in 1812 at Kildwick, of Scottish descent, he was appointed as 'workhouse doctor' to Keighley Poor Law Union in 1838. He became Vice President of the Mechanics Institute and gave lectures there on health and disease, in manufacturing communities, and the effect of poverty. The doctor was a collector of books and had his own personal library which he lent to Alfred Bottomley, the playwright Gordon Bottomley's father.¹ He died in 1876 leaving his collection of books to the Mechanics Institute (John Milligan collection). These books were transferred to the newly built Keighley Library on its opening in 1904.

Jonas Bradley

Jonas Bradley was the schoolmaster of Stanbury School. He earned wide renown as an educational reformer, natural historian, and local historian. He lectured on the Brontës and knew everything that was worth knowing about Stanbury and its district, he led the 'Haworth Ramblers' for many years. Some of his books and articles are added to the Brontë collection.

The Brigg family

The Brigg family have had a long and intimate association with the Brontë Society, Sir John Brigg was a founding member of the Brontë Society (established in 1893) and its first President.

His son John Jeremy Brigg was also a member of the Brontë Society and assisted in the obtaining of Brontë artefacts for the new museum. He also helped, along with John James Stead, by preserving images and photographs. When their family Archive (*BK10*) came to the library some of the family's books were added to the Brontë book collection.

¹ Alfred Bottomley 1848-1931 by Gordon Bottomley (BK60/1/31)

Donations

We have been lucky to have had many donations to the collection over the years.

Bob Duckett

Former Reference Librarian for Bradford Libraries and one time Editor of '*Brontë Studies*'. Bob was also previously editor of the '*Bradford Antiquity*'. He has been kind enough to donate: a hundred books from his private collection to our Brontë collection.

Joanna Hutton

The library has also been privileged to receive a bequest from the library of the late Joanna Hutton, first female curator of the Brontë Parsonage Museum. A large number of interesting works make an important addition to our collection.

Mrs Ellis Chadwick (Esther Alice Chadwick)

The Author of the book '*In the footsteps of the Brontës* (1914) donated a substantial collection of early Brontë articles and pamphlets, accumulated during the research of her book.

Index

For further information about the Brontë collection, please contact us at the address on the front cover. See also the following leaflets and guides below for further information on the Brontës:-

List of contents to the Brontë archive BK635

Branwell Brontë: Fact Sheet

John Bradley: Keighley's Cultural Champion

Keighley & the Brontë connection a guide to resources

Haworth & the Brontë connection a guide to resources

These leaflets and many more are available at Keighley Local Studies library or online at :

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/libraries/local-and-family-history/local-studies-guides/>

Bradford libraries local studies blog:



<https://bradfordlocalstudies.wordpress.com>

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