

The Brontës in **Pennine Yorkshire**

Discover the Brontë connections in Birstall, Gomersal, Liversedge, Mirfield and Dewsbury

A portrait of Charlotte Brontë, showing her from the chest up. She has dark hair and is wearing a dark brown dress with a white lace collar and a red bow. The background is dark.

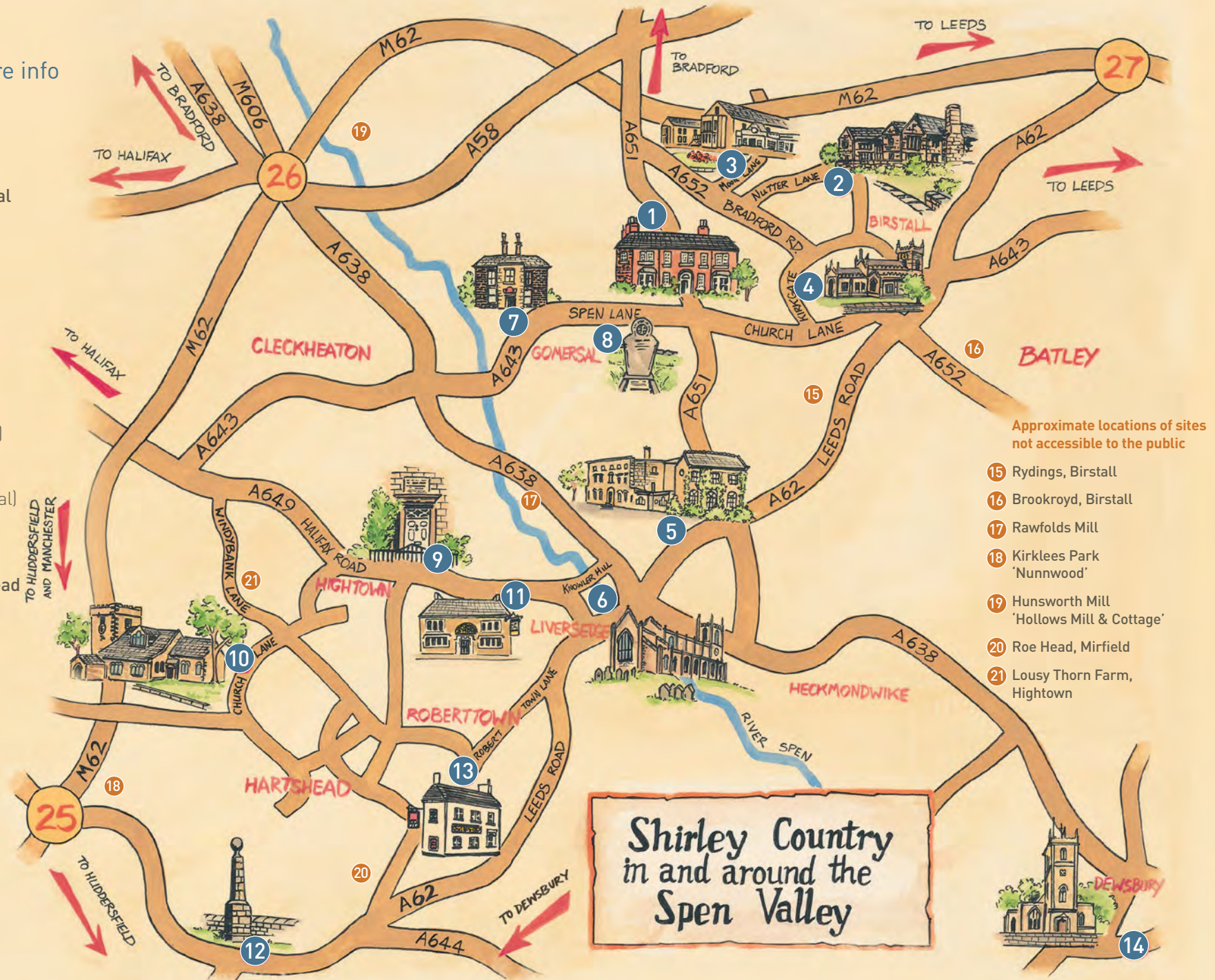
BRONTË
200

Celebrating the 200th
anniversary of the birth
of Charlotte Brontë

Key to map:

Click on number for more info

- 1 Red House, Gomersal
- 2 Oakwell Hall, Birstall
- 3 Moor Lane House, Gomersal (Gomersal Park Hotel)
- 4 St. Peter's Church, Birstall
- 5 Healds Hall, Liversedge (Healds Hall Hotel)
- 6 Christ Church, Liversedge
- 7 High Royd, Gomersal (The Gomersal Lodge Hotel)
- 8 Mary Taylor's Grave (St. Mary's Church, Gomersal)
- 9 Clough House, Hightown
- 10 St. Peter's Church, Hartshead
- 11 Shears Inn, Hightown
- 12 Dumb Steeple, Mirfield
- 13 Star Inn, Roberttown
- 14 All Saints, Dewsbury (Dewsbury Minster)



Approximate locations of sites not accessible to the public

- 15 Rydings, Birstall
- 16 Brookroyd, Birstall
- 17 Rawfolds Mill
- 18 Kirklees Park 'Nunnwood'
- 19 Hunsworth Mill 'Hollows Mill & Cottage'
- 20 Roe Head, Mirfield
- 21 Lousy Thorn Farm, Hightown



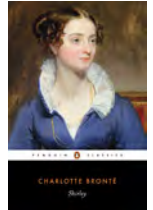
THE BRONTË CONNECTION...

The Brontë connection with West Yorkshire began in 1809 when Patrick Brontë became the Curate at Dewsbury Parish Church and the Brontë family continued to have associations with the area throughout their lives.

Uncover the history of the Brontës in the villages and towns in and around the Spen Valley including Birstall, Gomersal, Liversdege, Mirfield and Dewsbury. Take a journey of discovery through Shirley Country.

Shirley

Charlotte was to immortalise the towns and villages of the area in her novel *Shirley*. Published in 1849, Charlotte Brontë's novel caused quite a sensation. Local people had only just discovered that the quiet visitor from Haworth, parson's daughter Charlotte Brontë, was secretly the famous 'Currer Bell', author of *Jane Eyre*. Now they found themselves and their neighbours appearing in her latest novel.



Charlotte knew the area well from her schooldays in Mirfield and was a frequent visitor, staying with her lifelong friends Ellen Nussey of Birstall and Mary Taylor of Gomersal. When Charlotte's parents were first married they lived in nearby Hightown and her father was minister at Hartshead at the time of the Luddite riots of 1812.

Trace Charlotte's life and inspiration in sites across the Spen Valley and surrounding area, from historic **Red House** and **Oakwell Hall** to churchyards, pubs, hotels and mill sites.





1

Look out for:
Painting of Vesuvius and stained glass windows described in *Shirley*, Chapter 9

‘Those windows would be seen by daylight to be of brilliantly-stained glass - purple and amber the predominant hues...’

Where is it?
Oxford Road, Gomersal, Cleckheaton BD19 4JP

Open:
From April to September:
Tues - Thurs: 11am to 5pm
Sat & Sun: 12noon to 5pm
Monday & Friday: Closed

Admission:
Adult: £2.50
Child: £1.00
Family: £6.00
Annual tickets available
Pre-booked groups welcome.

Contact:
Tel: 01274 335056
red.house@kirklees.gov.uk
www.kirklees.gov.uk/museums

Access:
Wheelchair access to gardens, exhibitions and Red House ground floor. Induction loop to exhibition sound systems.

RED HOUSE GOMERSAL

‘Briarmains’ in *Shirley*

As the home of Charlotte’s close lifelong friend Mary Taylor, Red House played a significant role in Charlotte’s life and in the novel *Shirley*. Charlotte often visited the family in the 1830s and later featured Red House as ‘Briarmains’ and the Taylors, who were woollen cloth merchants, as the ‘Yorke’ family in her novel.

Today this award-winning museum looks much as it would have done in Charlotte’s time. Wander around the period rooms, from the elegant parlour to stone flagged kitchens and imagine taking tea with Charlotte.

Take a turn in the restored 1830s gardens which provide an enchanting setting for the house, with scented old roses climbing arbour and arches, ornamental ‘flower basket’ beds and serpentine paths through tree-shaded lawns.

Find out more about Charlotte’s connections with the Spen Valley in ‘The Secret’s Out’ exhibition in the old Barn. Just what did the locals say when they discovered that they were the inspiration for some of the characters in *Shirley*? Experience local life in the ‘Spen Valley Stories’ gallery in the restored Cartsheds, and browse the museum shop for books, toys, gifts and preserves.



Look out for:

Oak panelling and windows described in *Shirley*, Chapter 11

'...the old latticed windows, the stone porch, the walls, the roof, the chimney stacks, were rich in crayon touches and sepia lights and shades'

Where is it?

Nova Lane, Birstall,
Batley WF17 9LG

Open:

Hall Opening Times
from April to September:
Tues - Thurs: 11am to 5pm
Sat & Sun: 12noon to 5pm
Monday & Friday: Closed

Admission:

Adult: £2.50
Child: £1.00
Family: £6.00
Annual tickets available
Pre-booked groups welcome.

Contact:

Tel: 01924 324761
oakwell.hall@kirklees.gov.uk
www.kirklees.gov.uk/museums

Access:

Wheelchair access to the gardens and visitor centre. Induction loop in the visitor centre.

2

OAKWELL HALL BIRSTALL

'Fieldhead' in *Shirley*

The splendid Elizabethan manor house of Oakwell Hall inspired Charlotte's description of 'Fieldhead' in *Shirley*, the home of heroine 'Shirley Keeldar'.

In the 1840s Oakwell Hall was a young ladies boarding school which Charlotte visited with her friend Ellen Nussey who knew the owners. Today visitors can still see many features Charlotte described.

Built in 1583 and set in 100 acres of parkland, the old Manor House provides a real insight into late 17th century life. Explore period rooms set with a mixture of authentic and reproduction

furnishings. Stroll through the garden or follow waymarked walks and nature trails through parkland. Take a picnic in the park or sample tea and cake in the Oak Tree Café.





Where is it?

Now the Gomersal Park Hotel
Moor Lane, Gomersal
BD19 4LJ

Visit:

www.gomersalparkhotel.co.uk



MOOR LANE HOUSE GOMERSAL

Home of Ellen Nussey

Moor Lane house was Ellen Nussey's last rented home, where she died aged 80 years old in 1897. One of the heroines in *Shirley*, 'Caroline Helstone', is thought to be partly inspired by Ellen.



Look out for:

Ellen Nussey's grave

To the east of the church

Grave of Miss Wooler

Charlotte Brontë's teacher and friend

Tombstone of John Nelson

Methodist preacher

Where is it?

Kirkgate, Birstall WF17 9PB

Contact:

Tel: 01924 478560
to arrange access to the church.

www.stpetersbirstall.co.uk

ST PETER'S CHURCH BIRSTALL

'Briarfield Church' in *Shirley*

Charlotte attended Birstall church when visiting her friends Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey. Reverend W. M. Heald, vicar of Birstall in 1849, inspired Charlotte's character the Rector 'Mr Hall' in *Shirley*. The church was rebuilt in 1865-71, but the old tower remains.

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Where is it?

Now the Healds Hall Hotel and restaurant, Leeds Road Liversedge WF15 6JA

Visit:

www.healdshall.co.uk



HEALDS HALL LIVERSEDEGE

Home of Reverend Roberson,
the Rector 'Mr Helstone' in *Shirley*

Visit the early 19th century home and boys boarding school of the forceful Reverend Hammond Roberson, who actively opposed the Luddites.

Charlotte Brontë saw him only once but heard many stories about him on which she based the strong character 'Mr Helstone' in *Shirley*



Look out for:

Reverend Roberson's grave
Near the churchyard entrance

Where is it?

Church Lane, Off Knowler Hill,
Liversedge WF15 6DT



CHRIST CHURCH LIVERSEDEGE

Grave of Reverend Roberson,
the Rector 'Mr Helstone' in *Shirley*

Reverend Hammond Roberson built this church with his own money in 1812-16. He insisted that all graves in his churchyard should have identical simple headstones, including his own.

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Where is it?

Now the Gomersal Lodge Hotel, Spen Lane
Gomersal BD19 4PJ

Visit:

www.gomersallodge.co.uk

HIGH ROYD GOMERSAL

Home of Mary Taylor, the inspiration for 'Rose Yorke' in *Shirley*

Charlotte featured her friend Mary as strong-minded 'Rose Yorke' in *Shirley*.

Mary had radical and independent views, refusing to conform to the behaviour expected of 19th century women. She emigrated to New Zealand in 1845 and set up her own successful shop. Returning to Gomersal in 1860, she lived at High Royd and spent her time writing or travelling in Europe.



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Look out for:

Mary Taylor's grave
30m left of the churchyard entrance.

Where is it?

Spen Lane Gomersal
BD19 4LS

ST MARY'S CHURCH GOMERSAL

Mary Taylor's Grave

Mary died aged 76 in 1893, three years after the publication of her own novel *Miss Miles*. On her grave you will find a commemoration stone to her sister Martha who died at school in Brussels aged 23. Martha features as 'Jessie Yorke' in *Shirley*.



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Look out for:

Commemorative plaque
above the door.

Where is it?

428, Halifax Road,
Liversdege WF15 8EE

No public acces

Please note this is a private residence. Please respect the privacy of the owners.



CLOUGH HOUSE HIGHTOWN

Home to Patrick and Maria Brontë

Charlotte's newly married parents, Patrick and Maria, lived in this three-storey house from 1812-15 when Patrick was minister at nearby Hartshead. Their first two children, Maria and Elizabeth, were born here – both died of tuberculosis at an early age.

Look out for:

Dead Yew Tree

said to be many centuries old

Stocks

across the road from the entrance gate

Where is it?

Church Lane, Hartshead
WF15 8ET



ST PETER'S CHURCH HARTSHEAD

Nunnely' Church in *Shirley*

Charlotte's father was minister here at the time of the Luddite attack on Rawfolds Mill in 1812. It was also where Charlotte's eldest sister, Maria, was baptised. The church, set in tranquil countryside, was rebuilt in 1881 but the old tower remains.

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Look out for:

Date stone

in the wall above the doorway

Where is it?

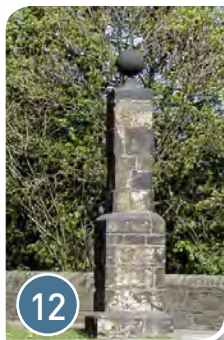
Halifax Road
Hightown, Liversedge
WF15 6NP

THE SHEARS INN HIGHTOWN

Favoured drinking place for the croppers

The introduction of new machinery in the early 19th century saw many woollen cloth shearers, also known as croppers, losing their jobs. In protest, some formed a secret group (the Luddites) intent on forcibly preventing the introduction of shearing machines.

A dramatic scene in Shirley describes an attack by machine breakers on 'Hollows Mill'. Charlotte based her story on a Luddite attack at Rawfolds Mill, Liversedge in 1812. The Shears Inn was a favoured drinking place for the croppers, and it is thought the group planned their attack from an upstairs room at the Inn.



DUMB STEEPLE MONUMENT GOMERSAL

Luddites meeting point
before their attack on
Rawfolds Mill

Where is it?

Cooper Bridge roundabout
on the A62 Leeds Road/A644
Wakefield Road.

Parking adjacent is impossible

*glimpse it on passing or after
parking safely elsewhere, walk
back for a closer look.*

At midnight on 11 April 1812 the Luddites met here before attacking Rawfolds Mill, Liversedge. Imagine the scene as they formed into ranks – some in masks, others with their faces blackened – marching across the fields to Rawfolds carrying muskets, hammers and other weapons.

Over 100 Luddites attacked Rawfolds Mill, smashing windows and battering at the door, intent on breaking the hated shearing machines inside. Mill owner William Cartwright and a handful of men prevented entry and after a furious 20 minute battle the Luddites withdrew leaving two dying men behind. William Cartwright inspired the character 'Robert Moore' in Shirley. A blue plaque on the monument details its history.

Where is it?

Roberttown Lane,
Roberttown
WF15 7LR



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THE STAR INN ROBERTTOWN

Wounded Luddite refuge

Two wounded Luddites were taken to this Inn after the attack on Rawfolds Mill. They died from their injuries, having refused to reveal the names of other rioters to Reverend Hammond Roberson, who was questioning them.

Reputedly one of the dying Luddites whispered to him "Can you keep a secret?". When Reverend Roberson eagerly agreed, the man said "So can I"!

Where is it?

Rishworth Road
Dewsbury WF12 8DD

Open:

Daily 09.00 - 15.00

Services:

Wed 12 noon

Sun 10.30 and 18.30

Admission is free

Tel: 01924 457057

www.dewsburyminster.org.uk



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ALL SAINTS DEWSBURY (DEWSBURY MINSTER)

Patrick Brontë was curate here 1809-1811

The Brontë link with West Yorkshire began in 1809 when Patrick Brontë arrived in Dewsbury to take up the post of curate at the Parish Church.

Visit the heritage centre for refreshments and to find out more.

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A number of locations with Brontë connections in the local area are part of private estates or have been demolished. **Please note that the following locations are not accessible to the public.**

LITERARY LOCATIONS



15 RYDINGS BIRSTALL

This was the early home of Charlotte's great friend Ellen Nussey. On Charlotte's first visit here in 1832, her brother Branwell declared he was leaving her 'in paradise', with lawns, chestnut trees, fruit gardens and a rookery.

Rydings is believed to have partly inspired 'Thornfield Hall' in Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*.

The property is part of what is now the PPG Paint factory and is only partly visible from Leeds Road (A62), near the crossroads with Bradford Road (A652).

16 BROOKROYD BIRSTALL

This was Ellen Nussey's home after Rydings and Charlotte was a frequent visitor. She was staying here when *Shirley* was published in October 1849 and is said to have corrected proofs of *Jane Eyre* in the garden.

Take a look from Brookroyd Lane, Birstall, opposite the junction with Intake Lane. Only the rear and side walls are visible from the roadside.

17 RAWFOLDS MILL LIVERSEDGE

The site of the Luddite attack in 1812, featured in *Shirley*.

The mill has now been demolished and the site now houses a private industrial estate.

18 KIRKLEES PARK MIRFIELD / CLIFTON

Kirklees Hall featured as 'Nunnery Hall' in *Shirley*.

The park includes the site of a nunnery and what is said to be Robin Hood's grave – Charlotte mentioned both in her novel. The park is visible in the distance from Hartshead Lane.



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19 HUNSWORTH MILL

Charlotte modelled 'Hollows Mill', scene of the Luddite attack in **Shirley**, on Hunsworth Mill. The woollen cloth dyeing and finishing mill was owned by her friends the Taylors of Red House. 'Hollows Cottage', home of hero 'Robert Moore', may have been inspired by Hunsworth House which stood next to the mill.

Hunsworth House was the home of Mary Taylor and her brothers after they left Red House in 1840. The mill and house have long been demolished and the site is now a private industrial estate. They were originally located on the A58 Leeds Road, just off Junction 26 from the M62.



20 ROE HEAD MIRFIELD

(now Hollybank Trust)

In 1831, 14 year old Charlotte attended Miss Woolers private boarding school at Roe Head, where she met her lifelong friends Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey. A kindly school with only ten pupils, the girls were happy and successful there.

In 1835 Charlotte returned to the school as a teacher, a position she held for three years. During this time, Emily Brontë attended as a pupil but suffered terribly from homesickness so soon returned to Haworth and Anne Brontë took her place at the school. During her time at Roe Head, Charlotte got to know many local people, places and stories which she drew on for **Shirley**. Her teacher and friend Miss Margaret Wooler, is thought to have inspired the character 'Mrs Pryor'.



21 LOUSY THORN FARM HIGHTOWN

Patrick Brontë lodged here when he first became minister of nearby Hartshead Church. During this time he published his literary work 'Cottage Poems'

The farm, now called Thornbush, can be seen in the distance from Windybank Lane.



THE FULL BRONTË

Other places with Brontë connections in the kirklees area

HEALDS HOUSE

Healds Rd, Dewsbury WF13 4HT

Early in 1828, Miss Wooler's moved her school from Roe Head to Healds' House, Dewsbury Moor. Charlotte Brontë was a teacher here with Anne as a pupil. Anne became quite ill whilst at the school and had to return home to Haworth, with Charlotte following shortly afterwards.

Private residence, no public access

ST JOHN'S CHURCH

Boothroyd Lane, Dewsbury Moor, WF13 2JA

Whilst teaching at Healds House, Charlotte would regularly attend the morning and evening services at the church. It is thought that Patrick also returned to Dewsbury at this time in order to visit his daughter at the school.

BLAKE HALL, MIRFIELD

(now demolished)

In April 1839, Anne Brontë acquired her first employment, becoming a governess to the Ingham family at Blake Hall, Mirfield.

The Ingham children were apparently spoilt and wild and the experience was very traumatic for Anne. She described it in her novel, *Agnes Grey*; where Blake Hall became 'Wellwood House' and the Inghams were depicted as the 'Bloomfield family'.

MIRFIELD PARISH CHURCH

Church Lane, Mirfield WF14 9HX

Just beside Mirfield Parish Church are the ruins of the old church which was attended each Sunday by Charlotte, Emily and Anne whilst they were at school at Roe Head. Anne later worshiped at the church whilst she was employed by the Ingham family.

GOMERSAL MORAVIAN CHURCH

Quarry Road, Gomersal BD19 4JB

In the 1840s, minister Rev Lauten was a regular visitor to the Red House, home of Charlotte Brontë's friend Mary Taylor and her family. He was probably the inspiration for the Moravian Minister portrayed in Charlotte's novel *Shirley*. Ellen Nussey, attended the chapel's girls' school before meeting Charlotte and Mary at Roe Head.

WHITECHAPEL CHURCH

Whitechapel Rd, Cleckheaton BD19 6HY

Whilst he was the minister at Hartshead, there is evidence to suggest that Patrick carried out services at Whitechapel Church.

In the churchyard is the grave of Rose Ann Heslip, a cousin of Charlotte Brontë. The only Brontë buried in Spen Valley, the grave was rediscovered in 2006.

DEWSBURY TOWN HALL

Wakefield Old Rd, Dewsbury WF12 8DG

The Brontë Society was formed in 1893 and is one of the oldest literary societies in the world. The first annual address of the Brontë Society was held at Dewsbury Town Hall in December 1894-- the speaker was Mr. W.W. Yates (Editor of the Dewsbury Reporter) on "The Brontës of Dewsbury"

One of the aims of the newly formed Brontë Society Committee was to collect together material and artefacts belonging to the Brontë family and to create a museum. --- locations in Dewsbury, Bradford and Haworth were all considered before vote 6:4 in favour of Haworth




*The making of the silent film Shirley in 1921 at Oakwell Hall.
Reproduced by permission of the National Film Archive, London*


Kirklees Museums & Galleries

The Stables
Ravensknowle Park
Wakefield Road
Huddersfield
HD5 8DJ

Tel: 01484 223210

Website: www.kirklees.gov.uk/museums

 Bronte 200 - kirklees

 Kirklees Museums & Galleries

 @KirkleesMuseums

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Visit
Huddersfield

 **Kirklees**
COUNCIL