



## BRANWELL BRONTË

### FACT SHEET

#### **PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTË**

**was born in Thornton on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1817, fourth child and only son of Patrick and Maria.** He was largely educated in the classics by his father and received art and music lessons. He made his own contributions to the *Glasstown/Angrian* saga and became an early avid reader of *Blackwood's* magazine of satire, political commentary, prose stories, book reviews, pictures and

poetry. He pursued literary publication throughout his life, experimenting with all forms of the written word but was especially successful with poetry which was published in newspapers.

Branwell also showed early promise as a painter and received lessons from **John Bradley**, a founder of Keighley's Mechanics' Institute and **William Robinson**, a professional Leeds portrait painter. In 1836, in pursuit of a career as a painter, he wrote to study at the **Royal Academy Schools** and was given letters of introduction from Robinson. It is not certain whether he visited the Schools when he went down to London but any application he might have made was unsuccessful and perhaps too much time was spent at The Castle Tavern in Holborn.

**1836-1838** At home, Branwell became a Freemason. An account of this is in Keighley Library's copy of the *History of the Three Graces Lodge, No. 408 Haworth*, pp. 43-44). He played the church organ (having had early lessons from Keighley's parish organist, Abraham Sunderland) and regularly drank at the **Black Bull**, where he was known for his entertaining and witty conversation. He was often in the company of **John Brown, Church sexton**.

**1838-1839** Branwell became a **portrait painter in Bradford**, but apparently only got sufficient commissions to cover his basic costs. For the professional challenges he faced in terms of established competition, see Juliet Barker's *The Brontës*, (Abacus, 2010), p.354. He returned home.

**1840** He became teacher to the sons of **Mr Postlethwaite of Broughton-in-Furness**, and continued to write poetry. He was dismissed in June, however, perhaps for fathering a child out of wedlock.

**1840-1842** Clerk on the **Leeds and Manchester Railway**, first at Sowerby Bridge, then Luddenden Foot. At this time, **Francis Grundy** became a lifelong friend, see biography list. **In March 1842**, Branwell was dismissed from Luddenden Foot after a theft of money by an employee in his charge.

**1842 Dec-1845** Branwell was tutor to the **Robinson family of Thorp Green, York** but, in June 1845, he was dismissed, thought to be as a result of an affair with Mrs Robinson.

**1845-1848** After his dismissal, Branwell attempted to find another job, wrote more poetry and attempted to write a novel, based on his earlier Angrian writings.

**1848** Mrs Robinson's husband died and without any kind of reconciliation Branwell's health declined at home. **Branwell died on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1848**, just 31 years old. His death certificate stated death due to 'Marasmus' which is 'physically wasting away', *The Brontës* by Juliet Barker, 92, p1093.

**Please see over for resources in Keighley Library.**

## **Resources for Branwell Brontë in Keighley Library**

**Keighley Local Studies Library holds a nationally important collection of books and articles on the Brontë family, Society and Museum. Please ask staff for the catalogue and new information booklet.**

### **Biographies**

*Branwell Brontë* by Winifred Gérin (Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) Ltd, 1961)

*The Infernal World of Branwell Brontë* by Daphne Du Maurier (Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1960)

*The Brontë Family with special reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë* by Francis A. Leyland (Hurst & Blackett 1886)

*Pictures of the past: Memories of men I have met and places I have seen* by Francis H. Grundy (Griffith and Farran, 1879)

### **Articles**

Many articles have appeared in the *Brontë Society Transactions* from 1895, including subjects such as Branwell and his connections to the Freemasons, and his possible contribution to *Wuthering Heights* as well as discussions on his letters and works and life generally. For a full list of articles, please ask to see the index. Keighley Library has a near complete run to date of the *Transactions*, available for reference.

**Brontë Scrapbooks of news cuttings** are updated regularly in Keighley Local Studies Library. They are indexed and include articles and news reports from local newspapers and magazines covering all the latest research, Parsonage Museum acquisitions, film, theatre, radio and television productions.

### **Works of Branwell Brontë**

#### **General**

*Brother in the Shadow, Stories & Sketches by Patrick A Branwell Brontë*, Research and Transcriptions by Mary Butterfield, Selection and Editing by R.J. Duckett (Bradford Libraries, 1988)  
**In 2017, Keighley Library should acquire new publications of Branwell's letters and works.**

#### **Art works**

**Books in Keighley Library that show Branwell's art works most clearly and comprehensively:**

*The Art of the Brontës* by Christine Alexander and Jane Sellar (Cambridge University Press, 1995) shows the most comprehensive collection of works, for reference only.

*The Brontës and their World* by Phyllis Bentley (Book Club Associates by arrangement with Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1972)

*The Brontës* by Juliet Barker, photograph of the lost oil painting of sisters with Branwell, 'gun' portrait, plate 16.

#### **Portraits of friends and places frequented**

William Robinson of Leeds from a self-portrait, *Branwell Brontë* (Winifred Gerin), plate 7  
John Brown, Haworth sexton and Hartley Colderidge, Joseph Bentley Leyland of Halifax, sculptor, one of Branwell's closest friends; The Black Bull, Haworth photo in the Brontës' day; Lord Nelson Inn and Luddenden Inn, all in *The Brontës and Their World* (Phyllis Bentley).

## **National & Local Archive Collections**

Search <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk> for Branwell Brontë for a comprehensive listing

**Haworth Parsonage's Museum and Library** holds amongst other items the **Bonnell Collection**.

Henry Houston Bonnell was a life member of the Brontë Society and collected Brontë material from the 1890s. It includes manuscripts, letters and drawings by Branwell Brontë and annotated books owned by the family. **Leeds University** also has a collection of note: [www.library.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.library.leeds.ac.uk)