

Ferndean Manor

& the Brontë connection



A long tradition connects the Brontë family with Wycoller attracting many visitors each year in search of the Brontë spirit. Charlotte and Emily Brontë are thought to have frequently visited Wycoller village in their many walks around the area. The Hall is believed by many to be 'Ferndean Manor' in Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre" and was used to illustrate the 1898 edition. Were the Hall ruins at Wycoller the source of her inspiration?

" The manor-house of Ferndean was a building of considerable antiquity, moderate size, and no architectural pretensions, deep buried in a wood. I had heard of it before. Mr. Rochester often spoke of it, and sometimes went there. His father had purchased the estate for the sake of the game coverts. He would have let the house, but could find no tenant, in consequence of its ineligible and insalubrious site. Ferndean then remained uninhabited and unfurnished with the exception of some two or three rooms fitted up for the accommodation of the squire when he went there in the season to shoot".

Chapter 37 'Jane Eyre' by Charlotte Bronte

It is interesting to note that Elizabeth Cunliffe became Elizabeth Eyre by her second marriage and that her children were frequent visitors to Wycoller. Few people knew of the Eyre connection with Wycoller Hall but perhaps it had not escaped Charlotte. Finally if we are to believe Mrs Gaskell, Charlotte certainly knew of the cock-fighting squire who lived only a few miles from Haworth. She may also have known that in later years he only stayed in Wycoller during the shooting season.



Although more often associated with Yorkshire, the Brontës spent much of their lives in Lancashire, and indeed a significant section of the Brontë Way long distance walk is actually in Lancashire.

It is a short walk from their family home at Haworth in Yorkshire, across the South Pennine Moors into Lancashire and the picturesque, secluded hamlet of Wycoller, which has been a source of inspiration for poets, playwrights and novelists for many years.

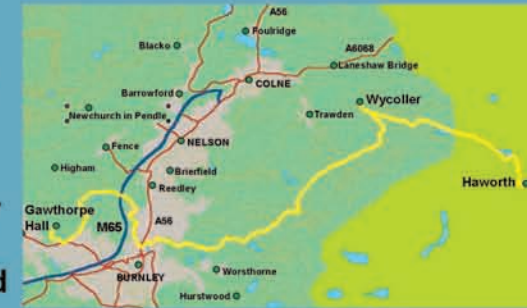


The Brontë sisters undoubtedly knew the area well, so it is appropriate that the journey from Haworth to Wycoller forms one section of the Brontë Way.

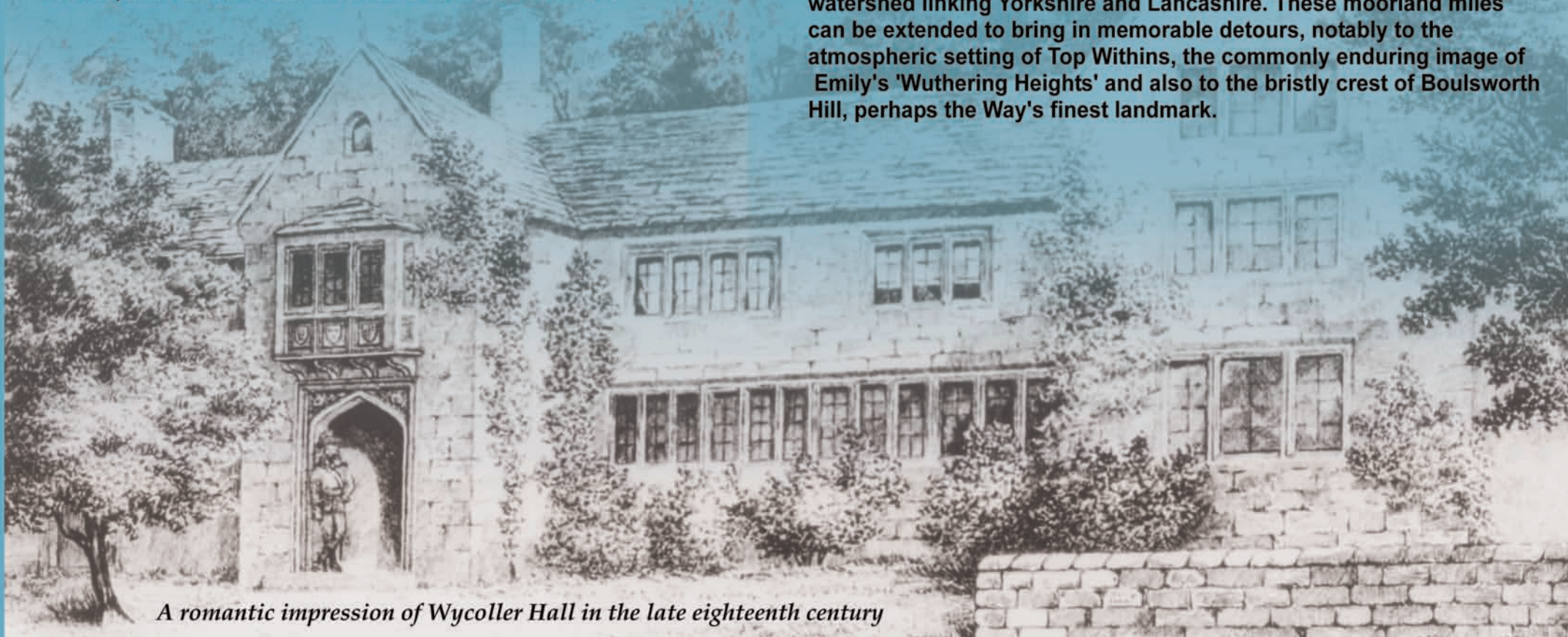
The Walk continues to Gawthorpe Hall, near Padiham, home of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth in the mid-nineteenth century. He was a great friend and admirer of Charlotte Brontë, who visited him there on several occasions.

The 67km Brontë Way enjoys an absorbing theme, linking a host of locations associated with the lives of the Brontë family. The route stretches from Oakwell Hall near Birstall in Yorkshire to Gawthorpe Hall near Padiham in Lancashire. Despite the exemplary theme, walkers with absolutely no interest in the Brontës will still find this a fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable walk.

THE BRONTË WAY



The route of the Way embraces a remarkable variety of surroundings from canal towpath to windswept moor, including historic fieldpaths linking old textile settlements, and surprising wooded valleys so near urban communities such as Coley Beck and Thursden Brook. The central section crosses the backbone of England, the Pennine watershed linking Yorkshire and Lancashire. These moorland miles can be extended to bring in memorable detours, notably to the atmospheric setting of Top Withins, the commonly enduring image of Emily's 'Wuthering Heights' and also to the bristly crest of Boulsworth Hill, perhaps the Way's finest landmark.



A romantic impression of Wycoller Hall in the late eighteenth century