

# Literary Pilgrimages in Britain

## II. The North

Aideen E. Brody

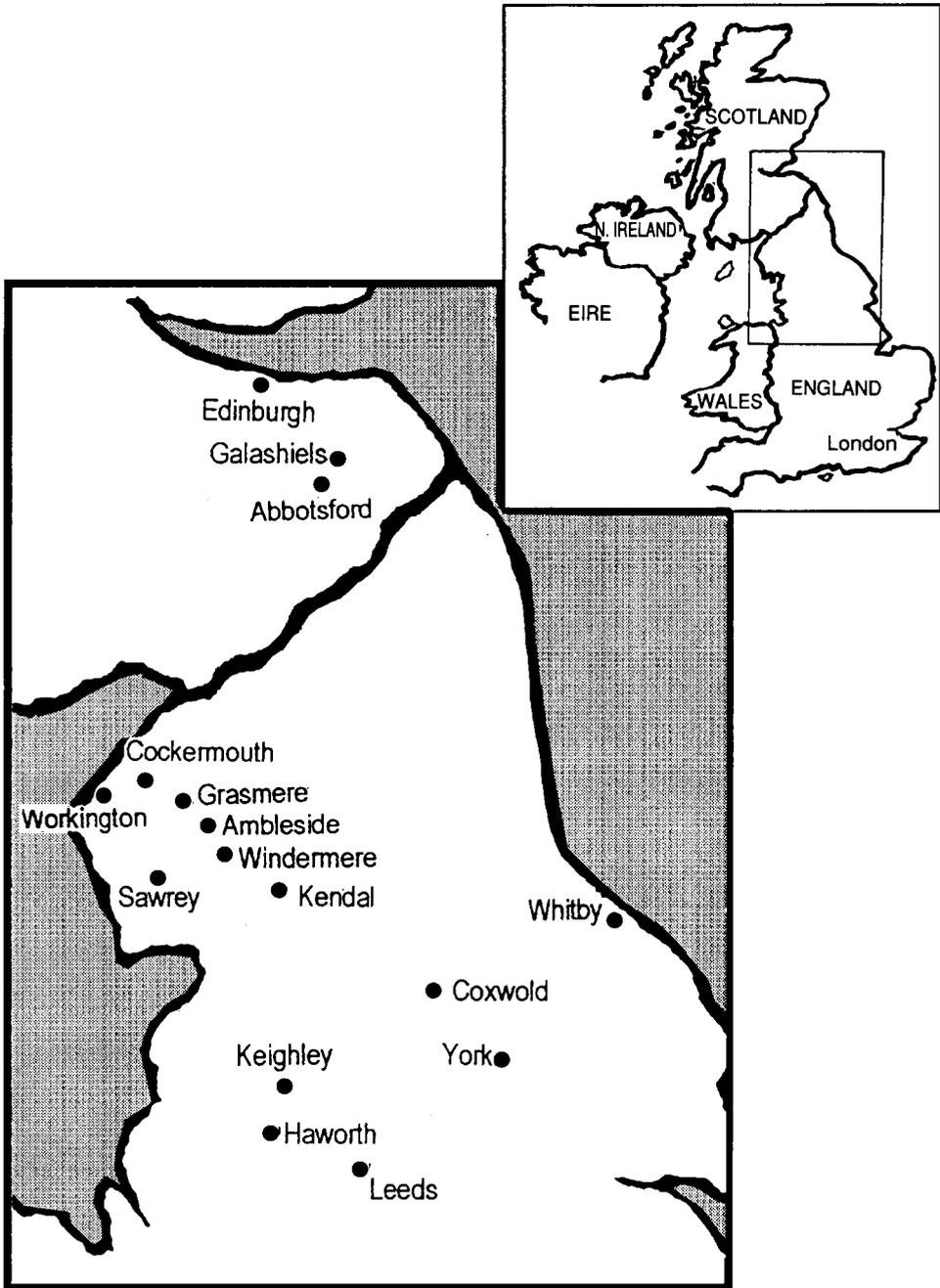
英国における文学の旅 その2：北部

エーディン ブローディ

本稿は前回の「英国における文学の旅」の続編である。前回第一部では英国南部に住む何名かの著名な作家について述べた。今回の第二部ではヨークシャー州からスコットランドにかけての北部が対象となる。英国北部の作家と関連のある場所、建物、博物館などを説明し、そこまでの行き方を示す。R. L. スティーヴンソン、ウォルター・スコット卿、ウィリアム・ワーズワース、ビアトリクス・ポター、ブロンテ姉妹その他を扱う。

In a previous paper [1], various places in the southern part of Britain with strong literary associations were explored, with details of the famous literary figures associated with them, and explanations of how to reach them. In this paper, we move to the north of the country, which, while not quite so rich in its literary associations, has, nevertheless, produced some outstanding writers, some of whom are as famous abroad as they are at home. As mentioned in the previous article, literary tourism is not just a twentieth century phenomenon. However, with today's ease of travel, there has been a huge increase in the number of tourists, both from Britain and from abroad, tracing the buildings or places associated with British authors. In some areas, saturation point has already been reached, especially in the peak summer holiday season. The Lake District, the Yorkshire moors, Stratford-upon-Avon—these are all places where the local authorities and residents would just as soon have tourists stay away as come, at certain times of the year. Nevertheless, both the Lake District and the Yorkshire moors are on the itinerary in this article. If any reader should want to go to these places, please try and time the visit for any month except August!

We will begin our journey at its furthest point from London, namely, in Scotland, birthplace of Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Walter Scott. From there, we will travel directly south into Cumbria and the Lake District, well-known for associations



Places connected with famous writers in Northern England and Scotland

both with the poet William Wordsworth and the creator of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter. Moving south-eastward into Yorkshire, we will end our journey in Haworth, West Yorkshire, home of the Brontë family. We will also briefly mention a few other writers who have northern connections.

### **Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)**

The ancient city of Edinburgh, capital of Scotland since 1437, is well worth a visit in its own right. Dominated by its 11th century castle, which was built on a ridge overlooking the city, it has been shaped by its history of civil and religious strife. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Edinburgh was a leading cultural center in Europe. In our own century, it hosts the annual Edinburgh Festival, a comprehensive mix of music and theater that draws huge crowds during August and early September.

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh at 8 Howard Place in the Inverleith district. His birthplace is still a private house, but there is a plaque on the wall outside commemorating the event. Several other houses in the city have Stevenson connections, his childhood home at 17 Heriot Row, his grandfather's home in the suburb of Colinton, and the family holiday home at Swanston cottage, to the south of the city, but these also are still privately owned. Much more information regarding Stevenson can be obtained at The Writers' Museum, Lawnmarket, in Edinburgh's Old Town. Some of his possessions and the details of his life are on display there.

R. L. Stevenson was not a robust child. He suffered from some kind of bronchial, possibly tubercular, condition throughout his life. His health needed warmth and sunshine, neither of which was to be found in cold, damp and chilly 19th century Edinburgh, so he escaped as soon as he could. He travelled in France and Belgium, went to California, returned to live in Bournemouth in England for a few years, before finally leaving the country to live in Samoa, where he died in 1894. Despite his constant ill health, he was a prolific writer. Much of his earlier writing was in the form of essays, short stories and plays. His travels in Belgium and France gave him material for such works as *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, published in 1879, and he wrote *The Silverado Squatters* (1883) after his visit to California. He became famous with the publication in 1883 of *Treasure Island*, followed by *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and his Scottish romance novels *Kidnapped* (1886) and its

sequel *Catriona* (1893), and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). Two Edinburgh pubs frequented by Stevenson were Rutherford's Bar in Drummond Street (probably during his days as a law student at Edinburgh University), and Hawes Inn in South Queensferry (which he made use of in *Kidnapped*).

Although as an adult Stevenson was unable, because of his health, to live for any length of time in Scotland, he has not been forgotten by his countrymen.

*How to get there :*

Edinburgh : by InterCity express from London's King's Cross Station. The journey takes about five hours. Flights from London (Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted) take about 2 hours.

In Edinburgh, check a city map, or ask at the Tourist Information Office on Princes Street.

### **Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)**

Well-known for the great interest he took in Scotland's turbulent past, Sir Walter Scott is best remembered for his romantic historical novels set in the north, even though these are not widely read today. His name is better known than his work. One reason for this is the frequent use of the Scottish dialect among certain of his characters, and there is perhaps nothing so detrimental to reading enjoyment than having to either look up or guess the meaning of the words before one, as anybody who has tried to read in a foreign language would willingly concede. Anybody reading a Scott novel is advised to check whether their edition contains a glossary, which might help in deciphering sentences such as

*"I haena muckle concern wi' that, Monkbarns," said the old man,  
"for naebody wad trust a bodle to a gaberlunzie."*

(A *bodle*, by the way, is a copper coin, and a *gaberlunzie* is a beggar ; *muckle* means much or great.)

Nevertheless, in his own time, Scott's novels were not only very popular, they also helped to make the reading of prose fiction "respectable". In an age when the reading of novels, especially by young ladies, was considered time-wasting and somewhat sinful, Scott's historical romances gave new prestige to this form of writing, and paved the way to success for later 19th century writers such as Charles Dickens, Mrs Gaskell, Thackeray, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, all of whom were great

admirers of Scott's stories, which drew inspiration from people, places and events in his own country. Prior to Scott, the unrealistic Gothic novel, abounding in haunted ruins and supernatural happenings, had been popular, giving disrepute to this form of writing.

As a writer, Scott was eminently practical. He possessed the gift of storytelling but considered writing as a means of livelihood only justified if money could be made out of it. He worked himself to death in order to turn his home, a farmhouse which he bought in 1812, extremely run-down but magnificently situated on the banks of the River Tweed, into a splendid mansion filled with all manner of antiquities relating to Scottish history, and also to pay a heavy debt incurred when the bookselling business in which he had become a partner went bankrupt in 1826.

Abbotsford House, despite its owner's vicissitudes, has remained in Scott's family, and is today a museum filled with Scott's collections, carefully looked after by his descendants. Abbotsford is two miles west of the town of Melrose. Set in the Scottish Borderlands, this whole area was the scene of violence and destruction in earlier centuries, caused by either English raiders or Border bandits. The ruined abbeys of Melrose, Dryburgh, Jedburgh and Kelso testify to those turbulent times. Scott was buried in the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, which his ancestors owned until the early 18th century. Between Melrose and Dryburgh, near Bemersyde, is the place now called Scott's View, which overlooks the Tweed valley with the Eildon Hills in the distance. Seven miles east of Melrose is the 16th century keep Smailholm Tower, known to Scott from his childhood when he stayed at his grandfather's farm near Roxburgh, and the setting for one of his poems. With its complicated history and its beautiful scenery, it is not hard to understand why this Border country was such an inspiration for Scott's writings.

*How to get there :*

The area is best visited by car from Edinburgh. Take the A7 out of Edinburgh down to Galashiels, turn on to the B6360 for Abbotsford, and the A6091 for Melrose. Turn right on to the A68, then left on the A699 for Kelso, but detour left immediately for Dryburgh and Bemersyde. Abbotsford House is open from mid-March to October, Monday to Saturday 10 am to 5 pm, and Sunday afternoon from 2 pm to 5 pm.

### **Beatrix Potter (1866–1943)**

In a case of creation becoming more famous than creator, *Peter Rabbit* is perhaps better known than his author, Beatrix Potter, at least until the 1960s, when both her Journal (1966) and a biography (1968) were published.

Beatrix Potter, although associated most closely with the Lake District, was born in London to wealthy parents. She was educated at home by governesses and as a child was rather lonely. However, she was always artistic and intensely interested in animals and insects, and kept herself well occupied with drawing and studying them. On family holidays to country areas such as Scotland or the Lake District, Beatrix found herself increasingly enamored of life in the countryside and disenchanted with her restrictive London home. It was not until her mid-forties, when she got married, that she was able to permanently leave London and settle in her beloved Lake District. She was by that time earning considerable sums of money with her books on Peter Rabbit, Samuel Whiskers, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, Benjamin Bunny, and so on.

In 1905, Beatrix bought Hill Top Farm, and in 1909 Castle Cottage Farm, both in Sawrey in the Lake District. Whenever she had money to spare, Beatrix bought land. She was very much aware of and interested in conservation and was unhappy with the increasing tourist industry in the Lake District, brought about in part by the development of the motor car. In 1895, the National Trust was set up to protect the countryside and historical buildings from the encroachment of industrialization. Beatrix Potter was a great supporter of this idea and when she died she left 4,000 acres of land to the National Trust, who now own nearly one-quarter of the Lake District National Park. She also left Hill Top Farm to the Trust, which opened it to the public in 1946. While Beatrix would possibly be less than pleased to see the thousands of visitors to Hill Top and the Lake District generally, she could at least be satisfied that it is still one of the loveliest unspoilt areas of Britain, thanks in part to her generosity.

Hill Top, always a place where Beatrix Potter kept her most precious things, is now a museum still containing her china, furniture, pictures and original drawings. It is not a big house and at peak viewing times visitors may sometimes have to wait their turn. There is a small parking area opposite the house and a larger one past the nearby inn, the *Tower Bank Arms* .

*How to get there :*

Hill Top is in Near Sawrey, which is situated on Esthwaite Water in the south-west corner of the Lake District, between Lake Windermere and Coniston Water. Lakeland is primarily walking country. Those on shorter visits are advised to use a car, or take a bus tour. The B5285 road runs from Coniston across to Hawkshead, then along the shore of Esthwaite Water through Sawrey and over to the Ferry crossing on Windermere to Bowness-on-Windermere. The largest town in the area is Kendal which is on the A6 from Manchester to Carlisle. The train line from Lancaster to Carlisle has a branch line running from Oxenholme (just south of Kendal) to Windermere.

### **William Wordsworth (1770–1850)**

Only to hear the name of this famous English poet is, for many people all over the world, enough to bring into their memories such lines as

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils ;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

William Wordsworth's Cumbrian connection is not limited to the poems he wrote describing its scenery. He was, in fact, born there, at Cockermouth in the northwest, and spent most of his life there. His former home in Cockermouth, Wordsworth House, which now belongs to the National Trust, can be viewed during the summer months. Wordsworth disliked Cambridge, and in 1790 set off on his travels. He went first to France, the Alps and Italy, then returned to France in late 1791 for a year. From 1795, he was reunited with his sister Dorothy, from whom he had been separated in childhood because of the early deaths of their parents. They lived in Dorset, and then Somerset, until they returned to live in the Lake District in 1799. From then until 1808 they lived at Dove Cottage, Grasmere. Both Dove Cottage and the nearby Wordsworth Museum are open for viewing. In 1813 Wordsworth moved to Rydal Mount, Ambleside (also open to the public), where he died in 1850. Wordsworth never lost his love of travel, and, together with his sister Dorothy, made frequent journeys, both in the British Isles and on the Continent. Dorothy Wordsworth kept journals in

which she recorded their various, sometimes arduous, long walks in the countryside, in prose which is quite the equal of her talented brother's verse. Both the Wordsworths were highly sensitive to the beauties of nature.

The Lake District has changed little since Wordsworth's time, much of it being protected as a National Park. Walking there today, it is possible to see it as Wordsworth saw and described it. In his poem, *The Prelude*, he writes that he was

*Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less  
In that beloved Vale to which, ere long,  
I was transplanted.*

Reading his poetry, we cannot help but feel that we also have been much favored in his birthplace, for he has enhanced the beauty of the Lake District for us forever.

*How to get there :*

As mentioned before, the Lake District is first and foremost walking country. There is a train to Windermere (see previous section). From there go by bus or car northwest along the lakeside road to Ambleside. Continue on through Ambleside to the town of Rydal on the east end of Rydal Water. Going uphill from Rydal's main road, you can see Rydal Mount, Wordsworth's home for 37 years. The beautiful gardens were landscaped by William Wordsworth himself. The house is open every day from March to September. The lake road on the north side of Rydal Water continues on past Lake Grasmere to the town of Grasmere, where Dove Cottage and the Wordsworth Museum are located. They are open daily from mid-February to mid-January.

The town of Cockermouth is located on the northwest side of the Lake District National Park. It can either be reached by road continuing north from Grasmere up to Keswick and then west on the A66 or B5292 roads into Cockermouth, or by the train which goes northwards round the Cumbrian coast as far as Workington, and then continuing eastwards by road (bus or car).

**The Brontë Sisters : Charlotte (1816-1855), Emily (1818-1848), Anne (1820-1849)**

Travelling southeast from Cumbria one enters West Yorkshire where a small hilltop village surrounded by heather-clad moors plays host all year round to innumerable visitors drawn there by their fascination with the talented Brontë sisters.

Haworth, home of the Brontë family from 1820 to 1861, was not then the pleasant place it looks today. Bleakly industrial, windy and cold, with harsh winters and a polluted water supply, its inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century died young, at an average age of 25. Of the Reverend Patrick Brontë's six children, Elizabeth and Maria died in childhood, Branwell (the only son), Emily and Anne, all died of consumption (tuberculosis) at the ages of 31, 30 and 29, respectively, and Charlotte died just before her 39th birthday.

Not only was the village of Haworth isolated but the Brontë children in the parsonage were also fairly isolated, by virtue of their social position, within the village. The four surviving children played and studied together. Their imaginations were spurred by the wide variety of books they read from their father's library, and from an early age they began writing down their own stories, of imaginary kingdoms and heroes and heroines, in minute book form, some of which can be seen at the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth.

As adults, Branwell turned to painting, but the three girls continued with their writing, producing first a book of poetry which they published at their own expense under the names Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell (1846). They had all three of them been working at teaching jobs which they none of them enjoyed, but which often gave them material for their books. In 1846, Charlotte completed writing *The Professor* and began *Jane Eyre*, Emily wrote *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne *Agnes Grey*. In 1847, the three latter books were published. Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, was published in 1848. Charlotte, although devastated by the deaths of Branwell, Emily and Anne, continued with her writing, and in 1849, *Shirley* was published. *The Professor* was published posthumously in 1857.

Since Charlotte Brontë was famous in her own lifetime, readers of her books were increasingly attracted to the place where they had been written. As a result, Haworth fairly early on became a literary landmark. The Parsonage was privately bought in 1928 by the Brontë Society and turned into a museum. A gable wing was added to the building by Mr. Brontë's successor, but little else inside the house has changed since the 1860's. The appearance of the house and surrounding churchyard has been considerably softened by the planting of trees. Most of the furnishings and other objects inside the house belonged to the Brontës.

*How to get there :*

From London (King's Cross Station), take a train to Leeds. Change at Leeds for Skipton. Change at Skipton for Keighley, and at Keighley take the steam train (Keighley and Worth Valley Railway) stopping at Haworth. From the station there is a steep walk up the hill to the Parsonage. There are also bus tours in the area. Going by car is a good way to see some of the other places associated with the Brontës that are mentioned (though given different names) in their books: Wycoller Hall ("Fern-dean Manor" in *Jane Eyre*), Ponden Hall ("Thrushcross Grange" in *Wuthering Heights*), Cowan Bridge ("Lowood" in *Jane Eyre*), Stone Gappe, Lothersdale ("Gateshead Hall" in *Jane Eyre*), Red House, Gomersal ("Briarmains" in *Shirley*). Walks across the moors in the vicinity of Haworth are well sign-posted: favorites with the Brontë sisters were the Brontë Bridge and Waterfall, and Top Withens. Care should be taken when walking on the moors. The weather can change suddenly and become misty, and on high ground there are many boggy areas. Visitors should keep to the well-marked paths.

In this article we have described places in the north of the country associated with some better-known British authors. In this last section, we will briefly mention some other writers who have a connection of some kind with the north.

Arthur Ransome (1884-1967), author of several children's novels, the *Swallows and Amazons* series, was born in Leeds but spent many childhood holidays in the Lake District, finally returning to live there when he started to write his stories. Five of his books have Lake District settings, and a favorite occupation of his admirers is to try and match the fictitious names to the real places. The easiest to identify are Lake Windermere, Coniston Water, and the 2635 ft. high peak The Old Man of Coniston. In the town of Kendal, the Abbot Hall Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry has a permanent Arthur Ransome exhibition, and the Windermere Steamboat Museum has some of the boats associated with his stories.

Bram Stoker (1847-1912), the Irish writer of the novel *Dracula*, set part of his story in the fishing port town of Whitby, on Britain's east coast. In the story, Count Dracula bounds ashore at Whitby in the guise of a wolf and claims his first English victim, Lucy Westenra. Stoker was undoubtedly influenced by the configuration of Whitby, with its squat-towered Norman church and ruined Abbey prominently located on a headland, approached from the harbor by the 199 Church Stairs. Whitby is also

known for its connections to Captain Cook, who lived there as a young man, and whose ship, the Endeavour, was built there.

Another writer associated with Yorkshire is the 18th century novelist Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), whose great-grandfather was an archbishop of York and who did part of his schooling in Yorkshire. After graduating from Cambridge University he became a parson and was assigned to a Yorkshire parish. In 1760, he was given his third Yorkshire living, in the village of Coxwold, 20 miles north of York. His home, Shandy Hall (now a Sterne museum) was where he wrote *A Sentimental Journey* and several volumes of his best-known work, the nine volume *Tristram Shandy*.

### Conclusion

It has often been noted that the English literary tradition is rooted in landscape and location. “The British have long been known for their love of landscape, and English literature... is rich in evocations of what Shakespeare patriotically proclaimed as ‘this other Eden, Demi-Paradise’” [2]. In both poetry and prose, descriptions of scenery abound, creating in the reader a desire to see those places so eloquently recorded. Hence the literary tourist of today, following in the footsteps of famous writers, visiting a museum or a birthplace, a house or a church connected with them, and made doubly interesting by that association. Such activities today have been stimulated by adaptations for television or cinema of classic works of literature, or documentaries on the lives of famous writers. The motorways and railway lines crisscrossing the country are both deplored for their blight on the landscape and exploited for the easier access they provide to literary shrines. Despite the overcrowding prevalent during peak travelling seasons, is it not good that the journeying is a response and a homage to literary works and their creators?

Britain has such a rich literary tradition that most parts of it are mentioned somewhere in its literature. It is enjoyable to learn about those places in one’s reading. Seeing them with one’s own eyes increases the pleasure immensely.

### Literature Cited

- [1] Brody, Aileen E., *Literary Pilgrimages in England, I. The South*, 清泉女学院短期大学 研究紀要、第11号 (1993).
- [2] Drabble, Margaret, *A Writer’s Britain*, Thames & Hudson (1979).

**Bibliography**

AA Budget Guide Britain, The Automobile Association, 1992.

AA Lake District Ordnance Survey Leisure Guide, The Automobile Association, 1992.

AA Illustrated Guide to Britain, Drive Publications Ltd., 1983.

Buchan, Elizabeth, *Beatrix Potter*, 篠崎書林, 1987.

Drabble, Margaret, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

Mitchell, W.R., *Haworth and the Brontës*, Dalesman Books, 1986.

Scott, Walter, *The Antiquary*, Everyman's Library, Dent, 1969.

Wordsworth, William, from "Daffodils" and "The Prelude", *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*, Oxford, 1995.