

Kilkee Arts Festival 2024

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

WALKING THE INVISIBLE

1854 TO 2024 ~ 170 YEARS LATER

AT CULTÚRLANN SWEENEY, KILKEE
Commemorating

Charlotte Brontë & Arthur Bell Nicholls' Kilkee Honeymoon
in July 1854

13 FRIDAY

7.30PM Official Opening by
Pat Dowling, Chief
Executive, Clare Co. Co.

7.45PM Michael & Christine O'Dowd
An Evening with
Charlotte Brontë

LATER Join us for light refreshments
in the foyer

MARTELLO TOWER BOOKS
JAMES SCULLY OF BANAGHER
POP-UP BOOKSHOP IN THE FOYER

14 SATURDAY

11.00AM Talk by Dr Claire O'Callaghan
"The value of sisters'
affections: There is nothing
like it in this world."
Re-examining Charlotte and
Emily Brontë

1.30PM Theatrical Production
"Walking Invisible With You"
Playwright: Jenny Bassett
Performed by:
Hot Potato Productions

2.45PM Join us for light
refreshments in the foyer

3.15PM Dr Michael Stewart
Lost in Brontëland

4.40PM Musical presentation
by The Gúnas all female choir

5.15PM Official Closing by Shay Hynes
Festival Chairman

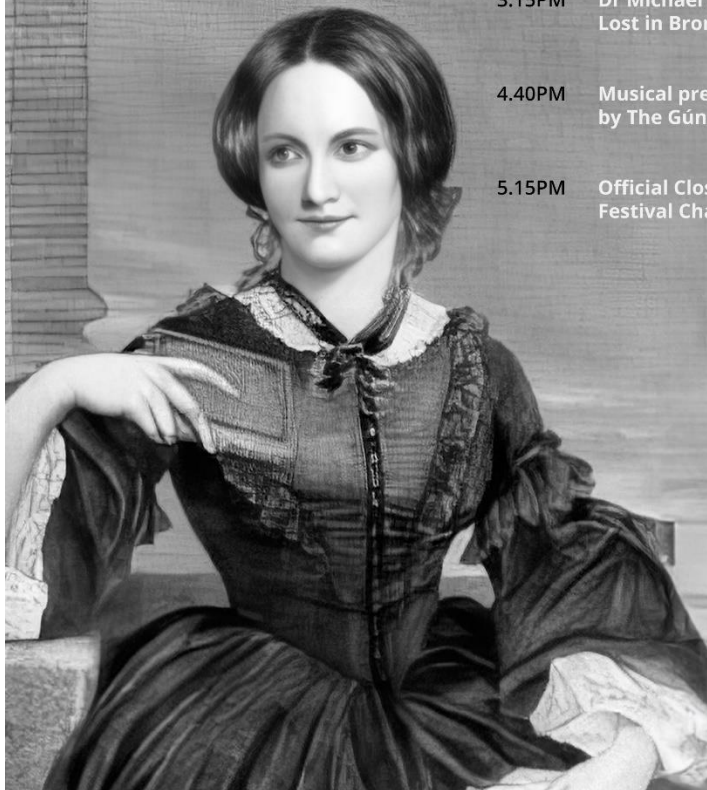
15 SUNDAY

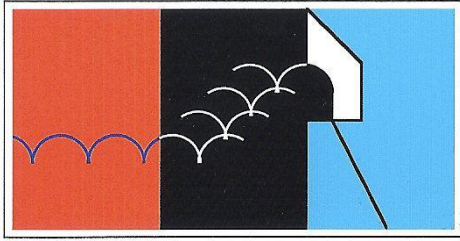
12.00PM Heritage Walk
Led by historian John Williams
Walking in the footsteps
of Charlotte & Arthur

**13 -15
SEPT
2024**

**INDOOR
EVENTS ALL AT
CULTÚRLANN
SWEENEY
FREE ENTRY**

**A
KILKEE CIVIC TRUST
EVENT**





E-mail: secretary@kilkeecivictrust.org

Website: www.kilkeecivictrust.org

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Kilkee Civic Trust

Kilkee Arts Festival 2024

Charlotte Brontë ~ Walking The Invisible

1854 to 2024 ~ 170 Years later

Friday, 13th & Saturday, 14th & Sunday, 15th September

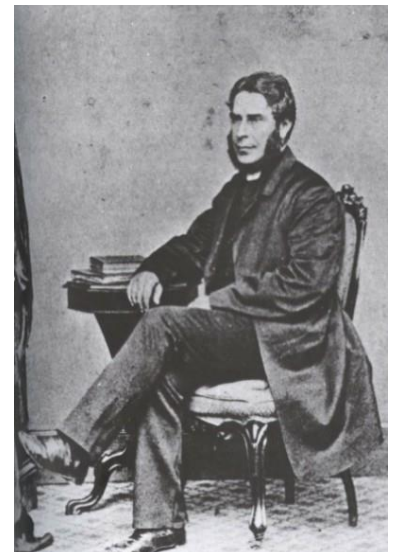
Cultúrlann Sweeney, O'Connell Street, Kilkee V15 P960



Charlotte Brontë



*Commemorative Plaque on the former
Westend Hotel, Kilkee
Kilkee Honeymoon accommodation
~ in July 1854*



Arthur Bell Nicholls

Kilkee Arts Festival 2024

Honouring

Charlotte Brontë ~ Walking The Invisible

1854 to 2024 ~ 170 Years later

Introduction by Shay Hynes, Chairman: Kilkee Arts Festival Committee

On behalf of all members of Kilkee Civic Trust, I am delighted to warmly welcome you to our second festival honouring *Charlotte Brontë's Honeymoon in Kilkee*, to be held on Friday 13th, Saturday 14th & Sunday 15th September 2024.

We are very grateful to Mr Pat Dowling, Chief Executive of Clare Co. Co., who has kindly agreed to formally open our Kilkee Arts Festival on Friday evening, 13th of September. We are also very fortunate to have sourced the following specialist speakers, including some singers, who will make presentations during the festival, Michael & Christine O'Dowd, Dr Claire O'Callaghan & Dr Michael Stewart. Further details on the speakers can be found on the following pages.



Shay Hynes
Chairman – Kilkee Arts Festival

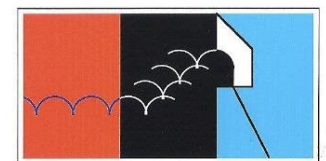
This year, we will enjoy an addition to the programme, with a new play titled: **“Walking Invisible With You”**. The Playwright & Director, Jenny Bassett, lives in Kilkee and is possessed with a passion for all things Brontë.

We will also be treated to a Brontë themed musical presentation by Killaloe based choir *The Gúnas*, under Rhoda Clery, Choral Director. The entire indoor programme will be complemented by an outdoor Heritage Walk titled: **Walking in the footsteps of Charlotte & Arthur**. It will be led by renowned local historian John Williams.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members for their input into making this festival happen. We look forward to seeing all of you, our audience, over the days of this exciting festival in Kilkee.

Kilkee Civic Trust ~ Committee Members

John Williams Chairman, Kilkee Civic Trust
Shay Hynes Honorary Treasurer & Chairman of Kilkee Arts Festival
Joseph J. McCloskey Honorary Secretary



Kilkee Civic Trust

Kilkee Civic Trust Members:

Michael F. Nolan	J. J. Hickie	Fionnuala Murnane	Tom Byrne
Daithí O'Connell	Yvonne McGann	Mary Arthur	Jenny Bassett



All of our events are recorded by our local Community Radio Station *Raidió Corca Baiscinn* for subsequent local broadcast on 92.5 & 94.8 FM, online streaming & later as podcasts available on www.rcb.ie

Kilkee Arts Festival 2024 will be hosted at Cultúrlann Sweeney, O'Connell St., Kilkee V15 P960

**Free of Charge Entry to all KCT Talks, our annual Arts in Focus evening
& our Kilkee Arts Festival honouring Charlotte Brontë in September**

All of our speakers give of their time and energy on a pro-bono basis.
The appreciation of the audience & KCT is expressed by way of presenting each speaker with a Book Token,
or similar, at the end of each KCT Talk.

A Donations Box is provided at KCT Talks / events
to assist us in defraying necessary expenses.

Covid-19: All Health & Government Guidelines will be followed at Cultúrlann Sweeney.
Patrons are welcome to wear face masks, if they so desire.
Hand sanitiser is located throughout the building.



*Modern-day Currach Racing at Kilkee - © William Glynn, Photographer
The Brontë Honeymoon Hotel is in the background above The Alley Walls*



Kilkee Arts Festival 2024

Honouring

Charlotte Brontë ~ Walking The Invisible

1854 to 2024 ~ 170 Years later

Our Festival MC is Yvonne McGann

Early arrival is advised as the events are not ticketed and admission is on a first come, first served basis

Friday, 13th September

- 7:30pm Shay Hynes, Festival Chairman
Official Opening: Mr Pat Dowling, Chief Executive, Clare Co. Co.
- 7:45pm Michael & Christine O'Dowd
- An Evening with Charlotte Brontë
 - Q & A
- Later: Join us for light refreshments in the foyer



*Yvonne McGann
Festival MC*

Saturday, 14th September

- 11:00am Dr Claire O'Callaghan
- "The value of sisters' affections: There is nothing like it in this world."
Re-examining Charlotte and Emily Brontë
 - Q & A
- 1:30pm Theatrical Production – "***Walking Invisible With You***"
- A new Play by Playwright: Jenny Bassett
 - Performed by: Hot Potato Productions
- 2:45pm Join us for light refreshments in the foyer at Cultúrlann Sweeney
- 3:15pm Dr Michael Stewart
- Lost in Brontëland
 - Q & A
- 4:40pm Musical presentation by *The Gúnas*
- Rhoda Clery - Musical Director & Anne Cullen - Accompanist
- 5:15 pm Shay Hynes, Festival Chairman - Official Closing

Sunday, 15th September

- 12:00 Noon Heritage Walk led by John Williams
- Walking in the footsteps of Charlotte & Arthur
 - Assemble outside Cultúrlann Sweeney

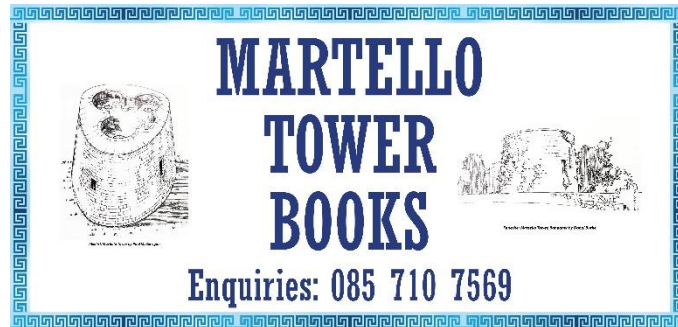
Kilkee Arts Festival 2024

Honouring

Charlotte Brontë ~ Walking The Invisible

1854 to 2024 ~ 170 Years later

Martello Tower pop-up bookshop



James Scully was amongst our speakers at the September 2023 Inaugural Brontë Festival. James has run a pop-up bookshop for the last 10/11 years and has a small exhibition on the Banagher Brontë connection which acts as a backdrop to the bookshop ... both of which he will bring to Kilkee for the Kilkee Arts Festival, honouring Charlotte Brontë.



*James and Eoin Scully
in The Martello Tower pop-up bookshop during
the 10th That Beats Banagher Festival in 2022*

*Our speakers will bring along a supply of their own published books
which will be available for purchase during the festival*

Kilkee Arts Festival 2024

Charlotte Brontë ~ Walking The Invisible

*Official Opening by: Mr Pat Dowling,
Chief Executive, Clare Co. Co.*



Kilkee Civic Trust welcomes Pat Dowling to officially open
Kilkee Arts Festival for 2024
Honouring

Charlotte Brontë

In 1854 Charlotte Brontë and her husband Arthur Bell Nicholls, as newlyweds, spent a significant part of their honeymoon in Kilkee. Hence, the genesis of our vision to host a weekend festival in her honour.

Pat Dowling is a native of West Limerick and a graduate of University of Limerick. He now calls Kilkee his home after he and his wife, Rose, moved there in November 2016. He lives on the Donoughboy Road.

Pat was appointed to the post of Chief Executive, Clare County Council in September 2016. Prior to his appointment in Clare, he was Deputy Chief Executive in Limerick City and County Council.

Pat Dowling has worked in local government for the past twenty-five years and had responsibility for the merger of Limerick City and County Councils as part of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. He worked in a number of areas in local government including responsibility for housing and regeneration programmes in the Limerick city area.

Pat Dowling has overseen a number of key developments in County Clare including rural development, digital hubs, significant increase in capital funding from Government and a particular focus on tourism, especially the transfer of Shannon Heritage sites to Clare County Council.

Clare County Council won the Chambers Ireland Local Authority of the year twice under Pat's leadership. Pat also produced a book on "The Story of Clare and its People".

On publication of the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation on Mother and Baby Homes, Pat took a very personal interest in dedicating a site at Shanakyle Graveyard, (outside Kilrush), in memory of the babies.

Prior to joining local government he has worked with Clare Youth Service, National Youth Council of Ireland, Macra na Feirme and Kildare LEADER Programme.



Bishop's Island on the Coast Road, from Kilkee, travelling towards Dunlickey Castle and Loop Head, much as it was in 1854 when Charlotte & Arthur were on their honeymoon. ~ © William Glynn, Photographer



The Coast Road outside Kilkee, just as Charlotte & Arthur would have experienced these magnificent views

*Illauonearaun / Healy's Island
Near Castle Point & Dunlickey Castle on Coast Road, Kilkee*



Date: Friday, 13th September 2024 at 7.45pm

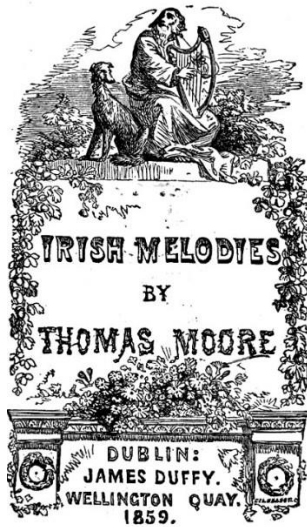
No. 1 of 3 Festival Talks

Speaker: Michael and Christine O'Dowd

Talk Title: An Evening with Charlotte Brontë

Talk Description:

In this illustrated presentation, Charlotte's artworks and poetry along with parlour songs of the era by Thomas Moore and Robbie Burns, recall happy times in the Brontë Parsonage, at Haworth.



Although Charlotte's desire to be an artist was unfulfilled there are 120 illustrations in her artworks collection.

Letter writing, Mementos and Life are themes in her poetry.

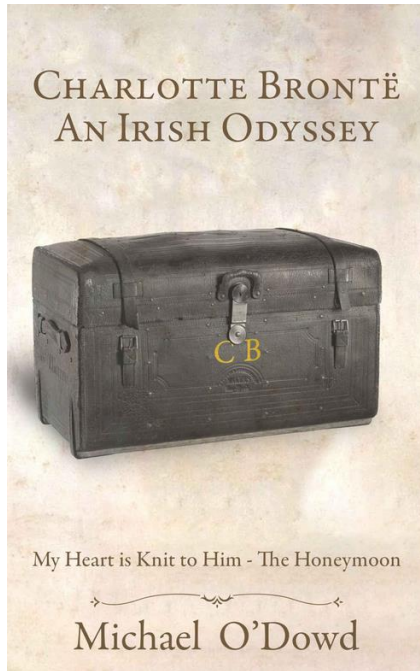
Charlotte's love of music is reflected by songs from Thomas Moore's Melodies, The Last Rose of Summer, The Meeting of the Waters, Love Thee Dearest, and Robbie Burns' A Red, Red Rose and Auld Lang Syne.



The Brontë Piano

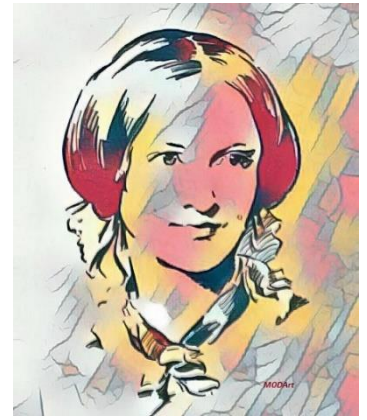
About the Speakers:

Dr Michael O'Dowd is the author of *Charlotte Brontë. An Irish Odyssey* which follows the honeymoon tour by Charlotte and Arthur Bell Nicholls through North Wales and Ireland in 1854.



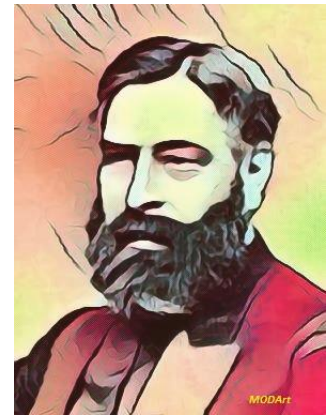
Dr O'Dowd is a consultant obstetrician and medical historian whose other books explore aspects of medical history.

Christine O'Dowd was a member of The Pattersons Folk Group from Donegal who achieved national and international fame in the 1960s and 1970s.



The Pattersons Folk Group made numerous television appearances including the Morecambe & Wise and Nana Mouskouri Shows.

When The Pattersons retired in the mid-1970s Christine became involved in musical theatre and music therapy working in the area of special needs.



Michael and Christine have four children, six grandchildren, and live in Co. Galway.



The Brontë & Bell Nicholls' Kilkee Honeymoon Accommodation, in July 1854, at the former Westend Hotel, Kilkee, can be seen on the left, just above the Sea Wall, of this Lawrence Collection picture. The Lawrence Collection is a collection of photos from 19th Century Ireland. The photos range between the years of 1870 – 1905.

Date: Saturday, 14th September 2024 at 11:00 am

No. 2 of 3 Festival Talks

Speaker: Dr Claire O'Callaghan

Talk Title:

“The value of sisters’ affections: There is nothing like it in this world.”: Re-examining Charlotte and Emily Brontë

Talk Description:

It is often claimed that Charlotte Brontë married Arthur Bell Nicholls out of loneliness following her sisters’ deaths.

And yet Charlotte’s relationship with her sister Emily is one that has been much disputed by scholars and biographers. So, what exactly were Charlotte’s feelings toward her sister?

Drawing on her surviving letters, her novel *Shirley* (1849) and her poetry, Claire’s talk will illuminate how Charlotte Brontë’s varied writings capture the fullness of her love and affection for Emily as much as it shows a sibling rivalry.

And yet, as Claire will also demonstrate, Charlotte’s role as Emily’s first biographer inadvertently paved the way for the damage to Emily’s reputation that persists to this day.

About the Speaker:



Dr Claire O'Callaghan is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Loughborough University.

Claire is an expert in the lives and works of the Brontës. She is the author of *Emily Brontë Reappraised* (2018), a book that explored the major biographies of Emily Brontë.

As well as leading a project with the Brontë Parsonage Museum regarding the publication of Charlotte Brontë’s so-called ‘Parisian little book’, Claire is the current Editor-in-Chief of *Brontë Studies*, the official journal of the Brontë Society.



Dr Claire O'Callaghan



Date: Saturday, 14th September 2024 at 1:30 pm

Theatrical Production – A New Play: *“Walking Invisible With You”*

Playwright & Director: Jenny Bassett

Performed by: Hot Potato Productions

Plot Summary / Description:

This year, 2024 marks the 170th anniversary of Charlotte Brontë’s 1854 Honeymoon with husband Arthur Bell Nicholls, when they stayed at The West End Hotel, overlooking the beach in Kilkee, Co. Clare.

‘Walking Invisible With You’ weaves what little is known about Charlotte’s ten-day stay in Kilkee, whom she may have met, and the scenic places Charlotte & Arthur would have visited. The Playwright explores how these encounters & events may have inspired and shaped her unfinished novel ‘Emma’.



Jenny Bassett ~ Playwright & Director

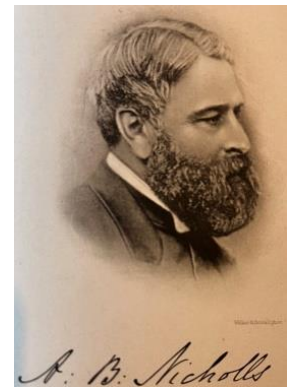


Charlotte Brontë

Come on the journey within the play to discover Charlotte, the writer behind the novels, you’ll be surprised!

Find out more about her husband Arthur; all the while immersing yourself in the local history of 1850s West Clare & Ireland, featuring Fr Michael Meehan, (The Little Ark, Kilbaha), Grace O’Brien, and so much more!

Jenny Bassett says the choice of title for her new Play, was inspired by Charlotte Brontë’s quote to ‘walk invisible’, expressed at a time when she had gained much success as a writer ahead of a visit to London. This stand-alone play is the first of a two-part drama. Hot Potato Productions trust you’ll enjoy this new play as much as they have, while breathing life to the script, creating the long-ago atmosphere and lots of time in rehearsals.



About the Playwright:

Jenny Bassett trained in physical theatre / mime with Adam Darius (ex-teacher of Kate Bush) and Contemporary Dance in London, has a BA (Hons) in Drama and Theatre Studies from Royal Holloway and Bedford New College and Trinity College Dublin, and an MA in Theatre Practice and Production from NUI Galway.

Jenny has performed widely as a dancer and actor in London, the South East of England and the Edinburgh Fringe receiving a five-star review in the New Scotsman. She directed and wrote a large-scale community drama with Fusion Community Carnival Arts (Notting Hill Carnival Outreach) and taught Drama skills, Devising and Debating in secondary schools and Adult Education centres across London.

Since moving to Ireland 20 years ago; Jenny Bassett has continued to enjoy career success; including Best Director in 2019 from Galway based theatre collective Theatre Room & much more.

Saturday, 14th September 2024 at 1:30 pm

Hot Potato Productions

Presents

“Walking Invisible With You”

by

Jenny Bassett

Cast

Fiona Claffey-Kelly
Shannon Ryan
Jenny Bassett

Charlotte Brontë
Arthur Bell Nicholls
Narrator
Mrs Jane Moore
Grace O'Brien
Mary Frawley
Woman in Magistrate Court
Senan
The Magistrate Col. Vandeleur
Fr Michael Meehan
Mannix
William Smith O'Brien
Miss Grimes

Vlad Chornogor

Fr Gerry Kenny
Paul McLoughlin

Margaret Whelan

Playwright & Director

Jenny Bassett

Music

- Astrid Adler
- Paul McLoughlin
- Phil Saatchi
- Jenny Bassett

Plays Harp and Fiddle

Vocals: An raibh tú ar an gCarraig

Producer, musical arrangement and plays all instruments on the track 'Life'

Melody and Vocals: 'Life' a poem by Charlotte Brontë

Stage Management Team:

Daria Dzhabishvili & Tymur Denysiuk



Gratitude:

Hot Potato Productions wishes to say a special **“Thank You”** to Martin & Ann Haugh, at Stella Maris Hotel, Kilkee, for so generously providing a rehearsal space, over the course of several weeks.

*Fiona Claffey-Kelly
plays
Charlotte Brontë*

*Shannon Ryan
plays
Arthur Bell Nicholls*



Date: Saturday, 14th September 2024 at 3:15 pm

No. 3 of 3 Festival Talks

Speaker: Dr Michael Stewart

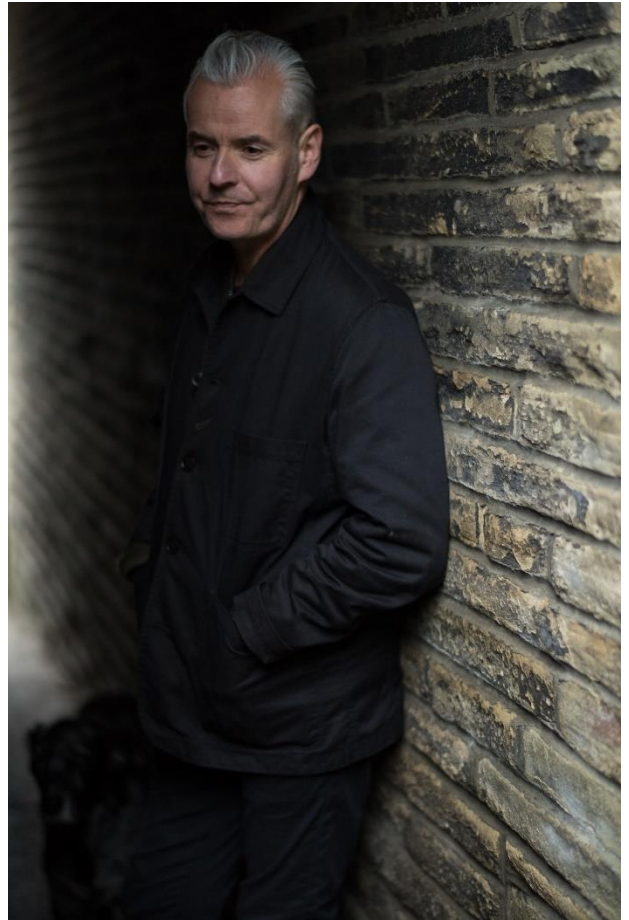
Talk Title: Lost in Brontëland

Talk Description:

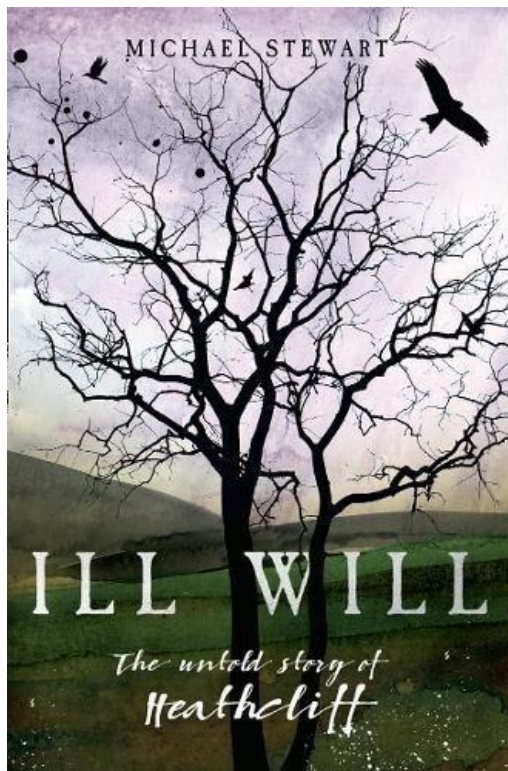
Join award-winning writer, Michael Stewart, as he talks about catching the Brontë bug in his teens, and his lifelong obsession with all things Brontë that led him to write his best-selling, critically acclaimed books, *Ill Will: The Untold Story of Heathcliff*; and *Walking the Invisible: Following in the Brontës' Footsteps*, as well as creating the *Brontë Stones* project.

About the Speaker:

Michael Stewart is the author of four novels: *King Crow* (Bluemoose Books, winner of the Guardian's Not-the-Booker Award, selected as a recommended read for World Book Night); *Café Assassin* (Bluemoose Books); *Ill Will: The Untold Story of Heathcliff* (HarperCollins, optioned by Kudos Films); *Black Wood Women* (HarperCollins, to be published in hardback in November 2024); two short story collections: *Mr Jolly* (Valley Press) and *Four Letter Words* (Wrecking Ball Press); two poetry collections: *Couples* (Valley Press) and *The Dogs* (Smokestack); and a hybrid memoir: *Walking the Invisible: Following in the Brontës' Footsteps* (HarperCollins)



Dr Michael Stewart

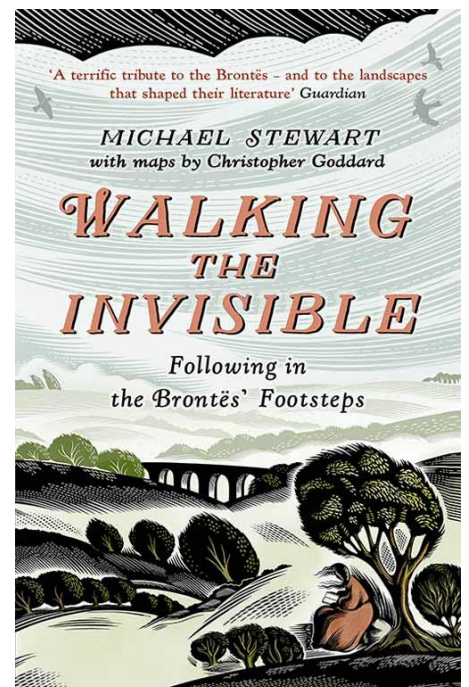


Dr Michael Stewart is also the creator of the Brontë Stones project, four monumental stones situated in the landscape between the birthplace and the parsonage, inscribed with poems by Kate Bush, Carol Ann Duffy, Jeannette Winterson and Jackie Kay.

He was head of Creative Writing at the University of Huddersfield for 18 years and now runs the Brontë Writing Centre.



The Pollock Holes at West End, Kilkee. Evidence of nature's magnificence and remaining much as Charlotte & Arthur would have experienced them.



Date: Saturday, 14th September 2024 at 4:40 pm

The Gúnas

Rhoda Clery - Musical Director & Anne Cullen – Accompanist



The Gúnas are an all-female choir based in Killaloe, Co. Clare. This small initial gathering of seven voices began as an intimate acapella group. From those humble origins *The Gúnas* have flourished into a successful and motivated musical ensemble and has become widely recognised as an important contributor to the musical and cultural life of Killaloe, and across the wider Clare & Limerick regions.

The Gúnas have had the pleasure of performing in many local events in Killaloe and Limerick regions, in addition to various fund-raising initiatives and Christmas events. Last year the choir performed for the Remembrance services for both Limerick Maternity Hospital and University Hospital Limerick. The choir have regularly performed at Limerick Sings Choral Festival and last September 2023 performed at the Inaugural Brontë Festival in Kilkee. The choir are delighted to be invited back again to perform at this prestigious festival.

In December 2023, *The Gúnas* travelled to Vienna to sing at The Advent Choral Festival, a most memorable experience for the choir. *The Gúnas* recently collaborated with Seoda Chamber Choir for a Spring Serenade concert in Kilbane Co. Clare to mark International Women's Day. Other recent performances include The Tuamgraney Arts Festival and The Killaloe Music Festival.

The Gúnas have come to share a deep connection between their repertoire and their audiences through the driving vision of musical director Rhoda Clery.

At the heart of this choir is an abiding love for performance. *The Gúnas* love to perform and the ethos of the choir is to entertain and have fun whilst doing so.

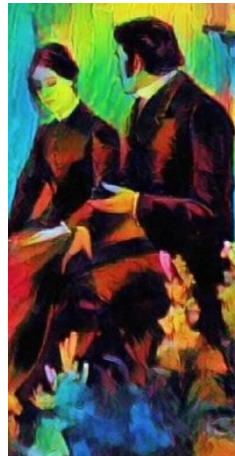
Date: Saturday, 14th September 2024 at 5:15 pm

Speaker: Shay Hynes, Festival Chairman Festival Closing Ceremony



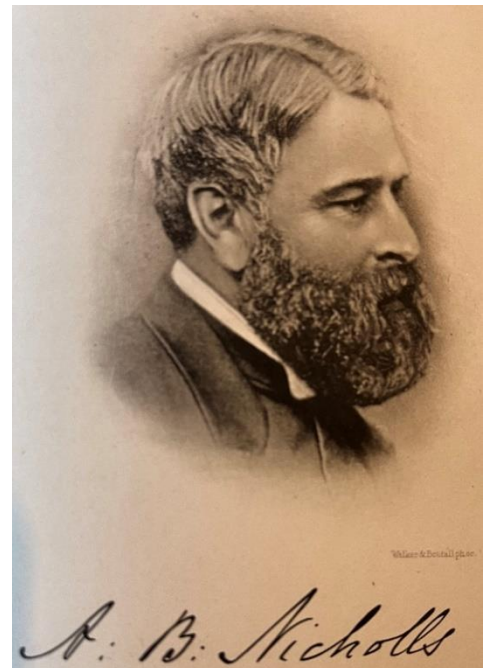
Circa 1840: English novelist Charlotte Brontë (1816 - 1855), author of 'Jane Eyre' and sister to Anne and Emily Brontë

"I ask you to pass through life at my side – to be my second self, and best earthly companion"
~ Charlotte Brontë, (*Jane Eyre*, 1847)



*Former West End Hotel, Kilkee ~ in modern times.
Charlotte & Arthur's Honeymoon accommodation in 1854.
The electricity cables, captured overhead, are but further evidence of the passage of 170 years and modernity.*

*Arthur Bell Nicholls
of Banagher,
(c.1819-1906)*



A. B. Nicholls

Date: Sunday, 15th September 2024 at 12:00 / Midday

Heritage Walk: Walking in the footsteps of Charlotte & Arthur

Historian: John Williams

Heritage Walk Details:

Advisory: This event will be entirely weather dependent

Where: Assemble at Cultúrlann Sweeney,
O'Connell Street, Kilkee

Time: 12:00 / Midday.

The Walk will depart at 12:10pm



*John Williams,
Chairman, Kilkee Civic Trust*

Event Description:

This Heritage Walk will be led by one of our well known and respected local historians, John Williams. His knowledge and account of events as passed down through generations, will bring you back in time to the Kilkee of 1854, and tell you the story of the streetscape from that time.



*A Lawrence Collection photo
Showing the striking difference between the attire of the local woman
and the well-to-do visitors.
The photos range between the years of 1870 – 1905.*



*A Lawrence Collection photo
The Beach & East End, looking towards George's Head; much as
it would have looked at the time of the honeymoon in 1854.*

Whilst looking seawards is very much as Charlotte & Arthur would have experienced it, John will tell you about the Sea Wall and buildings that were already there in 1854.

At that time, Kilkee was frequented by many visitors. On this walk you will hear about their journey to Kilkee, long before the days of the motor car.



*The Heritage Walk, led by John Williams,
at Kilkee Bandstand, during the 2023 Brontë Festival*

News Of Upcoming Brontë Events



SAVE THE DATE

Autumn Gathering 2024 - Saturday 5th October 2024
Second Anaghlonge Presbyterian Church,
21 Sentry Box Road, Banbridge, BT32 5BD

11:15	Tea, Coffee and Scones and an opportunity to buy surplus books from the Library
11:45	Annual General Meeting
12:30	Anne Brontë - Remembrances 175 years after her death in 1849
13:00	Lunch - Soup, Sandwiches and Pudding
14:00	'The Brontës in Bricks and Mortar' presented by Ann Dinsdale & Sharon Wright

Ann Dinsdale is Principal Curator of the Brontë Parsonage Museum.
Sharon Wright is an Author and Journalist and penned the acclaimed 'Mother of the Brontës'.

Banagher Brontë Group

Monday, 7th October 2024

Visiting Banagher and speaking - Ann Dinsdale, Principal Curator of the Brontë Parsonage Museum.

Further details from James Scully of Banagher on 085 710 7569



Established 2023
Banagher Brontë Group

THE GRAYSTON UNITY & THE BOOK CORNER PRESENT

Finding Emily Brontë:

Claire O'Callaghan & Michael Stewart



SUN 20TH OCTOBER, 5pm
at Calderdale Industrial
Museum. £7/£5.

Join authors and Brontë
experts Claire & Michael as
they discuss the aura &
mythology around the most
elusive Brontë sister.



Tickets available at bookcornerhalifax.com

AS PART OF TOWN FESTIVAL OF MUSIC & WORDS

Sunday, 20th October 2024 at 5pm

Venue: Calderdale Industrial Museum, Halifax, England

Join Michael Stewart and Claire O'Callaghan, two acclaimed authors and Brontë experts, in conversation, where they will be talking about the aura and mythology around the most elusive Brontë sister.

Who really was she and what can she teach us about how we live today?

And what exactly was her relation to the moors, to walking, and to nature?