

The reverend Sowdens and the Bronte family of Haworth

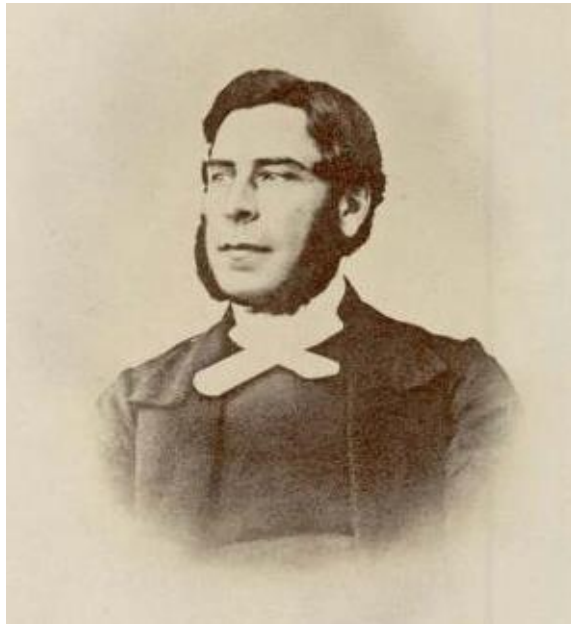
In the decade before the next census Reverend George Sowden would also complete his time at Cambridge University as his brother Reverend Sutcliffe Sowden had done.

Name: George Sowden

College MAGDALENE

More Information: [Adm.](#) pens. (age 20) at MAGDALENE, Jan. 1842. S. of Samuel, merchant, of Halifax. School, Halifax. [Matric.](#) Lent, 1842; B.A. 1846; M.A. 1849. Ord. deacon (Peterb.) 1845; priest (Ripon) 1846; C. of Stainland, Yorks., 1845-53.

Arthur Bell Nicholls and the Brontes



Arthur Bell Nicholls was ordained at Ripon Cathedral at the same time as George Sowden before becoming one of Patrick Bronte's curates at Haworth in 1845.

Born 6th January 1819 in Ireland, one of ten children Arthur Bell Nicholls was adopted by his uncle Rev. Allan Bell, the headmaster of the Royal Free School, Banagher which he attended. He graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 1844.

Through George Sowden's friendship with Arthur Bell Nicholls and the fact that they were relatively close by brother Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden also became a close friend. He would visit the Haworth Parsonage and so knew the Bronte family including the brother Bramwell Bronte.

On 22nd December 1848 the Haworth curate Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls conducted the funeral service of 29-year-old Emily Jane Bronte, author of *Wuthering Heights*, who died of consumption on 19th December 1848.

The Sowden family continued

For the 1851 census, the various Sowden and Freeman households looked like this.

1851 census

Samuel Sowden Head 71 Widower
 Farmer of 31 acres 3 Labourers
William Sowden Son 50 Farmer
Samuel Sowden Son 38 ditto
Mary Sowden Dau 36
Elizabeth Sowden Dau 34
Joseph Longbotham Servant 20
 Farm Labourer

Address **Wood Bottom, Hipperholme cum
Brighthouse**

1851 census

Sutcliffe Sowden Head 34
 Perpetual Curate of Hebden Bridge
Address **Hanging Royd, Heptonstall**

1851 census

George Sowden Lodger 29
 Curate of Stainland Met
Address **Holywell Green, Halifax**

1851 census

Ellen Sowden Head 42 Widow Annuitant
Mary Freeman Sister 47 Annuitant
Address **10 Gerrard St., Halifax**

After the death of her husband Ellen Sowden nee Freeman resided with her unmarried sister in Halifax.

Son George Sutcliffe Sowden was at school but her other son Akeroyd had become a Grocer's Apprentice.

The **Home and Colonial School Society** that Harriet Freeman attended in London was a school founded in 1836 by Elizabeth Mayo, Charles Mayo, J. P. Greaves and J.S. Reynolds. It was for the education of children and the training of teachers especially by then novel methods proposed by Pestalozzi. It was located on Gray's Inn Road in London. It would seem that Harriet was training to be a teacher like her sister Emma Freeman

1851 census

Ackroyd Sowden Apprentice 17
 Grocer's Assistant
Address **21 Old Market Place, Halifax**

1851 census

George Sowden Boarder 15 Scholar
Address **Rishworth School, Rishworth**

1851 census

Joseph Freeman Head 48 Tanner
Rachael Freeman Wife 49
Joe Freeman Son 15 ditto
Fred Freeman Son 12 Scholar
Sophia Freeman Dau 9 ditto
Emma Freeman Dau 20
 Schoolmistress

Address **16 Thornton Rd, Bradford**

1851 census

William Rhodes Head 26
 Overlooker Worsted
Hannah Rhodes Wife 24
William Sutcliff Visitor 20 Dyer
Samuel Freeman Visitor 19 Overlooker
Address **23 Tumbling Hill, Horton, Bradford**

1851 census

Harriet Freeman Boarder 23 Student
Address **Home and Colonial School
Society, Grays Inn Road, London**

The Brontes again

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England marriages and banns, 1813-1855 for Arthur Bell Nicholls
Haworth, St Michael and All Angels > 1854

1854. Marriage solemnized at *Haworth* in the Parish of *Bradford* in the County of *York*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
346	<i>June 29th</i>	<i>Arthur Bell Nicholls</i>	<i>full age</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Clerk</i>	<i>Kirkstreaton</i>	<i>William Nicholls</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
		<i>Charlotte Brontë</i>	<i>full age</i>	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>Haworth</i>	<i>Patrick Brontë</i>	<i>Clerk.</i>

Married in the *Church of Haworth* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Established Church* by me, *Sutcliffe Sowden*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Arthur Bell Nicholls* in the Presence of us, *Allen Guppy* and *Mary Ann Nicholls*

As the parish marriage record shows Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden officiated at the wedding of his friend Arthur Bell Nicholls and the novelist Charlotte Brontë on 29th June 1854.

She had already published her novels *The Professor*, *Villette*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Shirley*.

Apparently not long after the marriage Rev. George Sowden stayed with the Arthur and Charlotte at Haworth Parsonage.

Charlotte Nicholls nee Brontë died just a few months later, on 31st March 1855. Initially it was thought that she had suffered from consumption as her sisters had done but according to expert opinion 'the evidence is quite clear that she died of hyperemesis gravidurum, the pernicious vomiting of pregnancy.'

Again Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden travelled to Haworth to take the funeral service for Charlotte Nicholls nee Brontë on 4th April 1855. He also appears to have taken other Haworth funeral services between 3rd and 8th April before the widower "A.B. Nicholls Curate" once again officiated from the 9th April 1855.

Haworth, St Michael and All Angels > 1855

<i>Charlotte</i>	<i>Haworth</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>Sutcliffe Sowden, Off^r Minister.</i>
No. <i>61</i>	<i>Nicholls</i>				

The Sowdens and the Freemans in

Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden officiated at a family wedding when his nephew Samuel Sowden Freeman married Sarah Rhodes on 2nd May 1855 at St. Paul's Church, Manningham. Notice the fathers, their occupations and the family witnesses.

1855. Marriage solemnized at <i>St Paul's Church, Manningham</i> in the Diocese of <i>York</i> in the County of <i>York</i>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
78	May 2	<i>Samuel Sowden Freeman</i>	22	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Merchant's Assistant</i>	<i>Donkey Road, Bradford</i>	<i>Joseph Freeman</i>	<i>Tanner & Fellmonger</i>
		<i>Sarah Rhodes</i>	22	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>Manningham</i>	<i>Sam Rhodes</i>	<i>Butcher</i>
Married in the <i>above Parish Church</i> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by <i>Sutcliffe Sowden</i> or <i>other</i> by me.								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<i>Samuel Sowden Freeman</i>		in the Presence of us,		<i>Joseph Sowden Joseph Haly Freeman</i>		

When their eldest son James Freeman was baptised on 16th April 1856, four days after he was born, father Samuel Sowden was still a "Merchant's Assistant" and the young family lived in Little Horton, Bradford. He was a "Manager" from Manningham when Thomas Rhodes Freeman was born on 14th February 1858. Thomas Rhodes was also baptised in Bradford Cathedral on 24th March 1856

1861 census

Saml Sowden Head 82 Widower Farmer
25 acres & Stone Quarry Employing 25 men
William Sowden Son 60 Farmer's Son
Sam Sowden Son 45 Farmer's Son
Mary Sowden Dau 43 Farmer's Daughter
Eliza Sowden Dau 40 Farmer's Daughter
Frederick Freeman Grd Son 20 Farm Labourer
Address **Sutcliffe Wood Bottom,
Hipperholme cum Brighouse**

Widower Samuel Sowden was recorded as being blind.

1861 census

William Thomas & family Coal Merchant
Sutcliffe Sowden Lodger 44
B.A. perpetual Curate of Hebden Bridge
Address **Hanging Royd, Heptonstall**

1861 census

George Sowden Lodger 39
Curate of Newbottle
Address **Cellar Hill House, Houghton Road,
Newbottle, Houghton le Spring, DUR**

1861 census

Ellen Sowden Head 51 Interest from Monies
Mary Freeman Sister 56 ditto
Address **15 Gerrard St., Halifax**

Again, the widow Ellen Sowden was with her sister in Halifax as were both her sons.

1861 census

Ackroyd Sowden 26 Grocer's Assistant
Address **Market Place, Halifax**

1861 census

John Cooper Head 40
Manager of Hx Commercial Bank
Elizabeth Cooper Wife 40
2 sons
George Sutcliffe Sowden Lodger 25
Clerk in Bank
Address **30 Silver St. Halifax**

1861 census

Rachel Freeman Head 59
 Widow at Home
Harriet Freeman Dau 30
Samuel S Freeman Son 28
 Worsted Spinner employing 50 hands
Joseph H Freeman Son 25 ditto
Sophia Freeman Dau 19 Governess
Address **Cliff Mills, Morton, Bingley**

1861 census

Isaac Rhodes Head 56
 Butcher & Farmer employing 10 Ag Lab
Martha Rhodes Wife 54
4 sons
Sarah Freeman Dau 28 Butcher's Dau
James Freeman Grdson 5
Tom Freeman Grdson 3
Address
33 Skinner Lane, Manningham, Bradford

Rachel Freeman nee Sowden was a widow in the 1861 census, but neither a death record nor a probate record has been found for her husband Joseph Freeman. He was not recorded as being deceased in 1855 when his son married. Therefore, he probably died between then and the census date, 7th April 1861 or maybe he did not! Similarly, neither a death nor a marriage record has been found for their daughter Emma Freeman who has not be found in any census after 1851.

On census night 1861 Samuel Sowden Freeman was with his widowed mother at the family's mill house in Bingley but his wife and two young sons were with her parents in Manningham. Brother Frederic Freeman was with his elderly grandfather Samuel Sowden and some of the unmarried uncles and aunts at Sutcliffe Wood Bottom.

A couple of months later Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden travelled over to Haworth to attend the funeral of 84-year-old Patrick Bronte on 12th June 1861. And then he was found drowned in the Rochdale canal on 8th August 1861. The following article explains the tragic circumstances.

Clergyman Drowned At Hebden Bridge

Published 9th August 1861 in the Halifax Guardian

Yesterday morning the whole of Hebden Bridge and its district was thrown into a state of great excitement and sorrow by the news spreading rapidly that their incumbent the Rev. S Sowden had met with his death by drowning. The sad news proved but to be true. The body was discovered by Superintendent Tucker, of the West Riding Police Force, in the canal just below the iron bridge, opposite Mr Whitley's mill. We learn that early in the morning two young women were going in the direction of Todmorden along the canal side when they saw what they thought to be the body of a

dog in the water and passed on. Not many yards further they found a book with a paper cover, and an umbrella laid beside it. They picked them up and proceeded to Todmorden. On reaching that town they found the Reverend gentleman's name in the book and one of the girls returned with it. Meanwhile Mr Sowden was missed, and the search resulted as above. The body was in an upright position and bore about it no marks of violence. From enquiries we learn that on Thursday night Mr. Sowden had visited Mr. Edwin Binns, at Multure Hall, which is on the opposite hill to where his residence is,

up Heptonstall Bank, the canal running in the valley that intervened. He left to go home about half past ten o'clock, and Mr Binns accompanied him part of the way as far as Sand bed. The night was a dark one, and the wind blew from the west in strong violent gusts. That the unfortunate clergyman intended to get home by a short cut is evident. By the bridge some alterations are going on, and a quantity of loose stone and rubble were left about. One inference is that in stepping among these he stumbled and fell into the water, and, by his struggles and the force of the wind, was carried down the water to the place where he was found, a distance of thirty yards.

Another is that he was seized with a fit of dizziness, to which he was known to be subject. This strengthened by the statement of the Rev T Sutcliffe, late incumbent of Heptonstall, at whose house Mr Sowden had been that day, and who noticed him being rather absent in his manner. However, be that as it may, the painful result was that in a sudden a sad manner the Rev gentleman met with his death. It was half past five o'clock in the morning

when he was found. His watch had stopped at a quarter past eleven, thus showing as near as possible the hour when the sad event occurred.

His remains were removed to the Neptune Inn, and afterwards to his home.

It is not needful to launch into any eulogy of this worthy clergyman, whose untimely death has cast gloom over the whole district. Mr Sowden was about 48 years of age and was first incumbent of St James Church built in 1835. Of a quiet and somewhat retiring disposition, he won the esteem of all churchmen and dissenters alike. In him the Church has lost a diligent servant, and the poor a generous friend. Of a philosophical turn of mind, Mr Sowden was noted as a geologist and an ardent lover of nature. Excursionists into the deep and lovely valleys of this secluded district looked forward to his company with much anticipation and delight. The intelligence of his sad end will cause regret to many distant friends. The inquest was held on the body last night at the Neptune Inn.

Published 17th August 1861 Halifax Courier page 4.

Hebden Bridge

The Rev, George Sowden, MA, of Magdalene Collage, Cambridge, curate of Houghton-Le-Spring in the county of Durham, and formally curate of Stainland in this parish, has been appointed by the archdeacon Musgrave to the incumbency of

Hebden Bridge Church, vacant by the death of his brother; the Rev Sutcliffe Sowden, MA, who was accidentally drowned on the 8th inst., to the great grief of his parishioners and friends.

For the Results of the Inquest Read on.....

THE LATE SUTCLIFFE SOWDEN, MA-

On Friday evening, at the Neptune Inn Hebble End an inquest was held before Mr J.R. Ingram, deputy coroner over the body of the late Rev gentleman. After a somewhat lengthy consultation,

," Found Drowned, but they

The funeral took place on Tuesday afternoon. Many of the principle shops were closed. The procession numbered upwards of 300 persons. First in order of the procession were the public officers, namely the police, the church wardens, and the postmen; next came the lighting and paving committee, of which deceased was a member; next came the committee of the mechanics Institute and gentry of the neighbourhood; following these the congregation of St James's, and preceding the scholars, and next in succession to the congregation were the clergy, the scholars carried in their hands each a small bouquet, which they afterwards threw into the grave of their departed minister and friend; next came the hearse with three of the elder male scholars walking on each side as the bearers; following the hearse were the mourners existing of the deceased's relatives and the family of Mr Thomas of

believed accidentally," was returned. The jury, through their foreman, expressed their admiration of the deceased's character and activity in the performance of his clerical duties, and their deep regret at the sad occurrence

Hangingroyd, the residence of the deceased. The funeral obsequies were performed by Mr Sowdens most intimate friend, the **Rev. A. B. Nicholls** of Haworth.

Mr Sowden's ministerial labours at Hebden Bridge have extended over a period of upwards of 19 years. He was a man beloved by all. The improvement of the people morally and socially was his perpetual aim; he was an indefatigable teacher and minister, and a consistent Christian; he was a companion and guide of youth, and the nurse and protector of age. He commenced on his education at Hipperholme; from there he removed to Oxford, where he graduated and received the title of Bachelor of Arts. His death is deeply lamented by all who knew him, and the scene of sorrow witnessed at St James's on the day of his funeral, speaks to the fact of the deep hold he had taken in the affections of all.

West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813-1985 for Sutcliffe Sowden				
Hebden Bridge, St James and St John > 1861				
Sutcliffe Sowden No. 359 M. 17.	Hebden Bridge	Aug. 13 th .	Years 44	A. B. Nicholls offg. Minst.

The probate record :-

22 August [1861]. The Will with a Codicil of the Reverend Sutcliffe Sowden late of Hebden Bridge in the County of York Clerk incumbent of St. James's Church Hebden Bridge aforesaid deceased who died 8 August 1861 at or near Hebden bridge aforesaid was proved at Wakefield by the oaths of the Reverend Georg Sowden of Houghton le Spring in the County of Durham the Brother and Mary Sowden of Sutcliffe Wood in the said County of York Spinster and Eliza Sowden of the same place Spinster the Executors. Effects under £450

Believed to be Sutcliffe Sowden



Now read what happen to **Samuel Sowden and the extended family.**

D.M.Barker
June 2019