

-Welcome to Red House-

## Red House

### A Yorkshire Cloth Merchant's Family Home



**Red House** was built in 1660 by William Taylor and was owned by the Taylor family until 1920. Unusually, it was built of red brick instead of local stone - hence its name.

In the 18th Century, the interior of the house and its frontage were re-modelled in a more fashionable Georgian style by the Taylors. In the 1920s large window extensions were added to the parlour and dining room.

Red House is set out as a prosperous middle-class home of the 1830s, when Joshua and Anne Taylor lived there with their six children. The family were successful woollen cloth manufacturers and merchants, owning a mill at nearby Hunsworth and exporting their wares to Europe and America.



Visitors can wander around this delightful period home, in which a careful mix of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century furniture, paintings and artefacts, together with reproduction decorations, reflect the designs and tastes of a bygone age.

### The Brontë Connection



Joshua's daughter Mary was a close, lifelong friend of Charlotte Brontë. They were at school together and Charlotte visited Red House often in the 1830s. In her novel *Shirley*, Charlotte used Red House as a model for *Briarmains* and featured the Taylor family as the *Yorkes*, giving us fascinating glimpses of the Taylors and life at Red House.

## The 1830s House Tour

### The Hall

The elegant entrance hall is decorated with historic paint techniques. The walls are stone colour, as fashionable in the 1830s. The pine doors and staircase are 'grained' to resemble mahogany; it was common to paint less expensive woods to imitate the more desirable varieties. Pillared arches are painted to resemble marble. Taylor family portraits adorn the walls, including Joshua's parents John and Anne, his sister Deborah and his father-in-law, Captain Tickell.



### The Parlour



The sunny parlour was the 'best' room of the house, where visitors were formally received and entertained. In *Shirley* it is described as:

'The most cheerful of rooms...there was no splendour, but there was taste everywhere.'

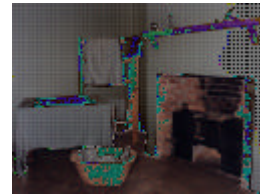
Furniture is arranged in informal early 19th Century style, with protective 'case' covers on the sofa and chaise longue. The carpet is a reproduction of an 1820s design with a looped pile 'Brussels' weave. A figure representing Mrs Taylor sits on the sofa, copying a Berlin woolwork pattern - women of this period were expected to be skilful needleworkers.

The family might read, take afternoon tea, write letters or play cards in this room, often seated around the central table. Music was regarded as very important in the 1830s - a figure representing Mary Taylor sits at the early 19th Century piano. Ladies were also expected to be accomplished at piano playing and to be able to entertain visitors. Mary Taylor, who held strongly independent views, enjoyed music but did not see the value in needlework!

## Scullery - Wash Kitchen

Jobs such as the preparation of vegetables and dish-washing often took place in a separate kitchen to the cooking. At Red House, water was carried in from a pump outside. There is a stone sink, with large earthenware bowls (pancheons) holding vegetables and a well used old chopping table nearby.

Laundry work was also done in the scullery. A table is set out for ironing and a box or 'slug' iron sits on the hob. There is an Italian or 'tally' iron - a small poker was heated on the hob and inserted in the iron, then ribbons and frills were ironed by pulling them over the surface of the hot cylinder. Other 19<sup>th</sup> century household 'gadgets' include carpet beaters, dolly pegs and a washing trough.



## Kitchen



In the 1830s there were two female servants living in Red House. The busy kitchen was the centre of their working life. A typical 1830s kitchen has been recreated, with an original early cast iron Yorkshire open range.

The atmospheric kitchen is filled with a magical array of curious cooking implements. There is a 'hastener' which stood in front of the fire to cook meat suspended from a clockwork 'bottle jack'; a Samovar to hold boiling water for the breakfast tea; a hanging creel for drying oatcakes (a traditional Yorkshire food); and a beautiful Georgian coffee pot on the hob.

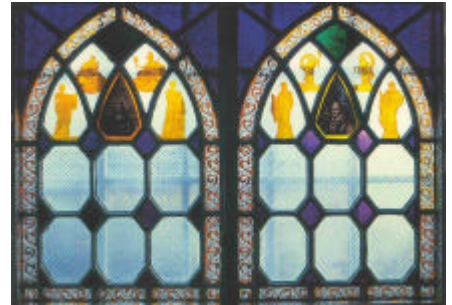
A large dresser is filled with shining copper jelly moulds, carved wooden biscuit and butter moulds, ceramics and pewter as well as a sugar loaf and an unusual spice tower. An oak food cupboard hangs on the wall above an 18<sup>th</sup> century dough trough.

## Dining Room

In the elegant dining room the early 19<sup>th</sup> century mahogany table is set in 1830s fashion for a formal meal for eight.

In this room are two items which made a strong impression on Charlotte Brontë when she visited Red House – she later remembered and described them in detail in her novel *Shirley*.

The first is a pair of painted and stained glass windows, with painted heads of Milton and Shakespeare.

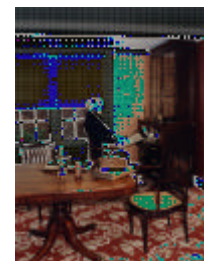


The second is a painting which hangs over the fireplace, of the Eruption of Vesuvius in 1794. It was brought back from Italy by Joshua Taylor.

## Study

The Taylor family specialised in cloth finishing and dyeing. Although Joshua Taylor's office, or 'counting house', was in an outbuilding, this room reflects his life as a working businessman as well as a cultured gentleman who loved books and art.

This room is richly decorated and full of interesting artefacts, including maps and paintings, a celestial globe, a folding carriage table and an 18<sup>th</sup> century corner cupboard painted with 'The Judgement of Solomon'.



A Secretaire-bookcase on display belonged to Ellen Nussey, friend of Mary Taylor and Charlotte Brontë. An early 18<sup>th</sup> century mirror belonged to John Nelson, the Methodist preacher from Birstall.

## UPSTAIRS

### The Governess' Room

This Governess' school and sitting room has books and a globe for teaching, an educational history jigsaw and a very old Fox and Geese board game. An easel stands on the table - watercolour painting was another traditional female accomplishment and children were often privately tutored. The Governess could make tea and toast by the fireside. Staff areas often had older, shabbier furniture than the family rooms and this room reflects that. An oak linen press stands in a corner.

### Main Bedchamber



This elegant room contains fine mahogany furniture from the late 18th and early 19th Centuries. A versatile washstand has towel rails, drawers and cupboards for toiletry items. A bidet stands nearby. Water had to be brought in from outside, heated and carried upstairs by the servants. The house had no toilet or bathroom.

Clothes would have been kept in the mahogany 'chest-on-chest' or tallboy and in the serpentine fronted chest by the bed. Nearby is an early 19th Century leather travelling trunk with camphor wood interior. Reproduction window curtains and bed hangings are of damask and have boldly contrasting linings in fashionable early 19th Century style.

### Girl's Bedchamber

As well as music, needlework and art, reading and letter writing were typical pastimes for an 1830s middle-class girl. A writing slope and quill pen stand on an oak pedestal table and nearby is an early 19th Century spring-loaded candle lamp, with a reflective hood to maximise light.

Ornaments adorn the late 18th Century mahogany bow fronted chest of drawers. At the foot of the bed is a late 17th Century oak chest said to come from 'Top Withens', the farm reputedly featured by Emily Brontë as 'Wuthering Heights'.

-End of 1830s House Tour-

Also inside Red House visitors can see the exhibition *Red House - A Family Home of the 1830s*, which recounts the history of Red House and the Taylors