

NEXT MEETING OF THE GASKELL SOCIETY WILL BE IN  
MANCHESTER AT 84 PLYMOUTH GROVE

Date: APRIL 26TH

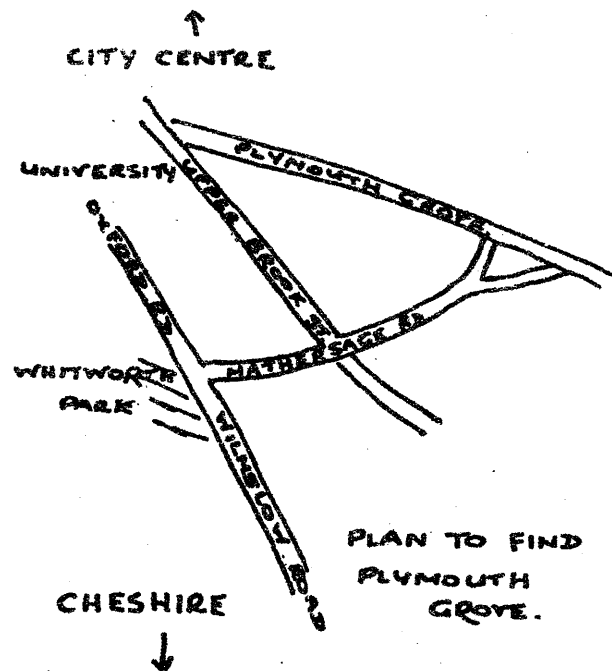
Time: 2.00 p.m.

Speaker: J. GEOFFREY SHARPS

Subject: HOW I BECAME A GASKELLIAN

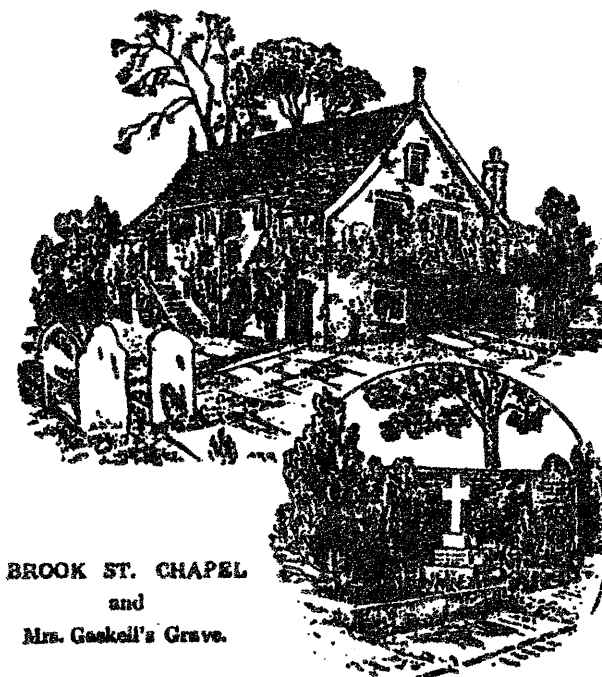
Teas: £1.00

RSVP: MRS J. LEACH - Tel: 0565 4668



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# The Gaskell Society



## NEWSLETTER

### MARCH 1986 NO.1

EDITOR'S LETTER

I have only recently realised how many literary societies there are and what excellent literature many of them produce, so I am rather nervous about venturing into print as editor of this, the first Gaskell Society Newsletter. The Brontë Society was founded in 1893 so I am sure that their first publications must now be collectors' items. Our two Societies share a common interest through the friendship of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë; in the current Brontë Society Transactions Mrs Gaskell's name appears on a third of the pages.

As members of The Gaskell Society we have some missionary work to do, to win better recognition for Elizabeth Gaskell's varied achievements. It is encouraging to note that her novels are now available in several paper-back series: C.U.P., Penguin and Dent.

I was appalled by the inaccuracy of Longman's Outline of English Literature entry for Elizabeth Gaskell which I found on the shelves of my local library; 'Ruth is the sad story of a girl whose parents are dead. North and South is a study of the different lives led by English people, especially the poor in the north and the happier ones in the south'. There is no mention of Cousin Phillis, Sylvia's Lover's or Wives and Daughters; the fact that it was written for overseas students does not excuse such omissions and inaccuracies and I wrote to tell them so.

Our steering committee has met twice since October and now has a draft constitution prepared to present to members at the April meeting. We propose to hold the spring meeting each year in Manchester on the last Saturday in April and the A.G.M. in Knutsford on the last Saturday in September. As I have been asked several times when I am going to do the Cranford Walk again (sounds as if it should be set to music!) I shall repeat it on the last Sunday in September, Mrs Gaskell's birthday being September 29th. If it takes place in the morning, perhaps some of our members from distant places may wish to stay overnight and join us; we Knutsfordians might even treat them to a sanding.

Many societies are trustees of the home of their authors which gives them a sense of purpose and identity, but we

are fortunate in having available to us, for meetings, places with strong Gaskell connections without having the responsibility for upkeep and maintenance. Brook Street Chapel can only be described as Elizabeth Gaskell's spiritual home; one of her ancestors was a witness to the earliest extant trust deed in 1694 and many others are buried close to her in the chapel graveyard. All Gaskellians will cherish Brook Street Chapel.

In Manchester there is Cross Street Chapel where William Gaskell ministered for many years and all the family joined in Sunday School teaching and social work; at the Portico Library William was chairman for many years, and 84 Plymouth Grove, where the Gaskell family welcomed so many visitors. This latter Mecca is where we shall hold our next meeting.

Our membership is increasing steadily and now is nearly sixty. We are pleased to have Dr Edgar Wright (Mrs Gaskell: The Basis for Reassessment, O.U.P. 1965) join us from Ontario, Canada; and Dr Enid Duthie (The Themes of Elizabeth Gaskell, Macmillan 1980) who wrote to me, 'It was a joy to me to live in the Gaskell world when writing my book.'

We are especially pleased to announce that Professor Arthur Pollard has accepted our invitation to be our President. Not only was he joint editor, with J. A. V. Chapple, of the Collected Letters but also author of 'Mrs Gaskell: Novelist and Biographer' (M.U.P. 1965). The idea for a collection of letters was germinated in Knutsford when Professor Pollard attended an event to mark the 150th anniversary. Dr J. K. Walley was Chairman of the Committee for that anniversary and is now Chairman of our Society. Although I am a genuine Knutsfordian, I was living in Kent at that time, or perhaps The Gaskell Society might have originated then; I am sure Mrs Gaskell will still have faithful readers at her 200th anniversary, but I might not have had the necessary drive for a founding secretary if I had left it till then!

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## INAUGURATION OF THE GASKELL SOCIETY

### A Brontë Society Member's Account

On Saturday, 12th October 1985, the small Cheshire town of Knutsford openly recognised a notable historic link by providing the setting for the formation of a new literary society, to be known as The Gaskell Society. It was an event - surprising only in that it had not happened long ago - that is of all the more interest in view of the common ground which the new Society will inevitably share with the Brontë Society, now not so many years short of its 100th anniversary. Apart from the friendship which formed naturally between the two novelists and advocates of women's rights, it was her "Life" of Charlotte Brontë that won Elizabeth Gaskell a place among the great biographers.

In the late afternoon of a bright autumn day, at the southern end of the town, the Brook Street Chapel schoolroom was opened to the public, invited there, in the terms of the prospectus, "to discuss the formation of the Gaskell Society". In the event, the only discussion needed centred on a few practical details, for as had become evident to anyone with even a cursory acquaintance with recent developments at Knutsford, the concept of a Gaskell Society had been steadily growing during the course of 1985, the 175th anniversary year of Mrs Gaskell's birth; the series of events arranged to celebrate this anniversary had, by the end of September, so much taken on the form they would have taken had a Gaskell Society existed, that it needed only the presence of some 45 interested persons in the schoolroom on the 12th October to acknowledge that the Gaskell Society was not just virtually but verily in being.

The Society owes its inauguration to the work of Mrs Joan Leach, herself a Knutsfordian, who at the outset became interested in local history. But as her research proceeded, her findings became so inextricably interwoven with Knutsford's Gaskell associations that inevitably Mrs Gaskell came to occupy a great part of her interest. It was this that led her to celebrate the 29th September, Mrs Gaskell's birthday, by organising and conducting a

"Cranford Walk" (for which she also published an admirably informative and attractive leaflet), and to follow this up the next day with a Literary Luncheon held in the Royal George Hotel.

Mrs Gaskell was brought up in Knutsford from her second year by her aunt, her deceased mother's sister, and she paid her tribute to it in her book "Cranford", by which she is perhaps most generally known. The Brook Street Unitarian Chapel, built in 1689 and lovingly preserved, became her spiritual home. She herself was buried there, together with her husband and two of her daughters; nearby are the graves of her ancestors. It was thus fitting that in the earlier part of the afternoon of 12th October the Chapel should be the scene of a presentation by Barbara Brill, ably assisted by Mary Humphreys and Joe Tindsley, of "An Afternoon with the Gaskells", an account of Mrs Gaskell's life, illustrated by readings from her books and from her own and her husband's letters.

After a break for tea, the inaugural meeting, introduced by Mrs Leach, was held in the schoolroom nearby. Among the founder-members present were Dr Walley, alderman, and previous to his retirement, for nearly 30 years a County Councillor; Mr J. G. Sharps of Scarborough, author of Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention: A Study of her Non-Biographical Works, published in 1970; Barbara Brill, whose biography of William Gaskell was published in 1984; Tessa Brodetsky, author of a book on Mrs Gaskell due to be published in May 1986; and Mrs Thwaite, Custodian of the Gaskell Library, Brook Street Chapel. Other founder-members who had come to contribute their experience of forming and running similar Societies were: Mr Kenneth Oultram, Secretary of the Lewis Carroll and the Randolph Caldecott Societies; and three members of the Brontë Society.

It was proposed and agreed that at least until the next general meeting, provisionally fixed for the week after Easter 1986, and to be held probably in Manchester, the Society's affairs should be administered by a steering committee of eight persons, with Mrs Leach as Secretary and Treasurer. The yearly subscription was provisionally fixed at £4, with a life membership at around ten times

this amount. Mrs Leach had already obtained subventions from local bodies for the anniversary celebrations, and thought that more could be done in this direction. It was envisaged that two general meetings would be held each year: a September meeting, probably combined with a Literary Luncheon, at Knutsford, and a spring meeting, most probably in Manchester. Other mooted activities included the publication of an annual magazine or journal, and visits to places connected with Mrs Gaskell, such as Gawthorpe Hall, Silverdale, and the Lake District. The aim of the new Society, as stated on the day's programme, is to link all those with an interest in Mrs Gaskell, and to promote connected activities and research, as well as a wider appreciation of her achievements.

Between now and the April 1986 meeting, the steering committee will have much to consider and decide. It can hardly be expected that the course of the Society's development will become clear before the April meeting has been held. By that time, given effective publicity, it may well have gained new members, among them possibly some who could take a hand in the administration of its affairs or lend it the prestige of their scholarship. It was said at the meeting that interest in Mrs Gaskell was by no means confined to this country. The general mood of the meeting was enthusiastic and confident. Judging by the progress already made, the Gaskell Society would appear to have a promising future.

JOHN NUSSEY

(Editor - John Nussey is a great great nephew of Ellen Nussey, close friend of Charlotte Brontë)

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#### IN GASKELL FOOTSTEPS

If you live near, or visit, any place associated with Mrs Gaskell, I would be pleased to have any information. I intend to keep a reference file.

Also, items on such places and any other Gaskell material will be welcomed for inclusion in future newsletters or journals.

JOAN LEACH

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ANNIE A. AND FLEEMING

So many names are scattered through the COLLECTED LETTERS OF MRS GASKELL, that the reader is grateful to the editors (J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard)\*for the extensive index they have compiled which gives the clues to the backgrounds, with dates, addresses, married names, relationships and professions, of individuals named in the correspondence. This was my starting point in tracing the story of Annie Austin and Fleeming Jenkin.

Annie, referred to by Mrs Gaskell as Annie A., to distinguish her from the other Annies - Green and Holland - has an early mention when she was visiting Plymouth Grove in 1851 (90); Marianne is given permission to visit Mrs Austin and Annie when they are back in London, obviously a family of whom Elizabeth approved. This is confirmed when Annie is described as 'Meta's great friend' (145) and was sharing the grey room with her when the house was full (143). It was a lasting friendship, as Annie joined the family in 1858 when they were on holiday at Silverdale (394) where only close friends were invited.

The first indication there is of Annie's interest in music is when she was coming to stay with the Gaskells just after Christmas in 1851 and Elizabeth hired a grand piano and expected to have 'noise enough' (112). The following Christmas when Annie joined them again the Gaskells bought a new piano. 'I shall want it as soon as we can have it if A. A. comes' (142). While Annie was with them on that occasion she joined Mr Gaskell and Meta at a Halle concert (144).

Annie played a prominent part in a game of charades she 'got up' with Meta and Tottie Fox at Plymouth Grove in March 1851 (92).

That same year a young engineering apprentice, Fleeming Jenkin, who was working in Manchester, was invited to the Gaskells. It appears he did not join the intimate family circle but was on friendly terms with the girls; he was a year older than Marianne. No mention is made of him in the letters until 1855 (259) when he called to say

goodbye before taking up a new position in London 'at Penn's ... as known near London as Fairbairn's here.' He had been invited to tea and afterwards, Elizabeth writes, 'we sauntered in the garden, Fleeming saying how he had counted on his Saturday afternoon calls for nearly 4 years and I saying how hot I used to feel when the tea bell rang and owing to it's being Papa's busy day I could not ask him to stay. He praised you up (Marianne) and Meta ... he staid to supper and then bid us goodbye - really, fairly, finally gone.'

His mother, Henrietta Jenkin, lived in London and wrote two novels, VIOLET BANK AND ITS INMATES and COUSIN STELLA. Mrs Gaskell wrote to George Smith (412) on behalf of Mrs Jenkin when she was looking for a publisher for COUSIN STELLA in 1859.

The names of Annie A. and Fleeming disappear from the letters until 1859 when they come together in a letter Mrs Gaskell wrote to Charles Norton (418). 'Annie Austin is married to another friend of ours, a young engineer employed about ocean cables, Mr Fleeming Jenkin. It was a pretty country walking wedding about a fortnight ago ... they went to Oxford for two days and then to his lodgings at Birkenhead.' Later in the same month the newly married couple dined at Plymouth Grove (422).

The Jenkins were living in London in 1862 and Fleeming, at Annie's suggestion, was looking for suitable lodgings for Mrs Gaskell and the girls to stay during June (505). Fleeming recommended a number of addresses, including one where he and Annie had once stayed and found 'a very nice landlady'. This is where they chose to stay at 32 Belgrave Road, Pimlico.

Fleeming was made Professor of Engineering at London University during these years in London and after Mrs Gaskell's death the Jenkins moved to Edinburgh. Fleeming was offered and accepted in 1868 the new chair of Engineering at Edinburgh University. During their first years in the Scottish capital Annie met a young schoolboy of 15 who was shortly to become one of her husband's students. She was visiting his parents and was hardly

aware of the boy sitting in the corner of the room. When he led her to the door, to see her out, his conversation and appearance made a great impression. When she was back home she said to Fleeming 'I have met a poet'. The youth was Robert Louis Stevenson, who against his own inclination was to take up an engineering course, as he was expected to continue in the family profession of lighthouse building and harbour works. (LIFE OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON by Graham Balfour)

The young Stevenson started his studies under Fleeming but eventually pleaded with his father to switch to legal studies. He did not lose touch with the Jenkins for by that time he had become an intimate friend and regular visitor to their home and was made as welcome there as the youthful Fleeming had been at Plymouth Grove.

Annie aroused in Stevenson for the first time a love of music and also persuaded him to take part in the amateur theatricals which she regularly organised at the house, always well rehearsed and of a high standard. James Pope Hennessey in ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON describes Mrs Jenkin as 'an erudite and charming Englishwoman with a passion for private theatricals' and Margaret Mackay in her biography of Mrs Robert Louis Stevenson, THE VIOLENT FRIEND, writes of Annie as 'an attractive and cultured woman of strong personality, with an expressive face and grand manner, nicknamed by her family and friends 'Madam'. It seems as though echoes of the hubbub of life at Plymouth Grove were heard in the Jenkins' home in Edinburgh which buzzed with music and talk from men and women in all walks of life.

When Stevenson left Scotland for London and then went wandering far afield in search of better health in a more suitable climate, he never lost touch with the Jenkins. He counted Fleeming among his closest and wisest friends and relied on him for advice and criticism (Graham Balfour's LIFE). During 1878 Fleeming was appointed a juror at the International Exhibition in Paris and asked R.L.S. to join him there as his secretary. During that stay they went together to many plays and though Stevenson loved the theatre he was, in Fleeming's

opinion, no more successful as a dramatist than he had been as an amateur actor. When W. E. Henley was pressing him to collaborate with him in writing plays Jenkin wrote: 'I am so thoroughly convinced that while you could write appreciative and admirable things this play business is an ignis fatuus - causing waste of time and brain ... I am not sure that Henley could not write a play but if so you are hindering not helping him.' (ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON by James Pope Hennessey)

Jenkin was responsible for introducing R.L.S. to the Savile Club where he first began to move in literary circles. In those early days of struggling to earn his living as a writer he had success with essays, among them TALK AND TALKERS published in 1882 by the Cornhill magazine, which published Mrs Gaskell's WIVES AND DAUGHTERS, COUSIN PHILLIS, CURIOUS IF TRUE and SIX WEEKS AT HEPPENHEIM. In this essay R.L.S. described some of the brilliant conversationalists he had known, giving them fictitious names. Jenkin was "Cockshot", 'who was vastly entertaining and has been meat and drink to me for many a long evening ... He is bottled effervescency and the sworn foe of sleep. "Three-in-the-morning Cockshot" says a victim.'

Three years later Fleeming was dead, suddenly after a minor operation at the age of 53. R.L.S. wrote immediately to Annie. 'I never knew a better man nor one to me more lovable. I cannot see my poor Jenkin without you, nor you indeed without him, but you may try to rejoice that he was spared that extremity. (I was so much his confidant) he never spoke of you but his face changed, it was - you were - his religion.' (LETTERS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON edited by Sidney Colvin - June 1885)

He started on MEMOIR OF FLEEMING JENKIN within a few months of his friend's death. At this time Stevenson and his wife Fanny were living at Bournemouth and Annie visited them and was able to supply details for the memoir. He worked hard at the book and wrote to Edmund Gosse (LETTERS - Jan 1886) 'I am very full of Jenkin's life; it is painful yet pleasant to dig into the past of a dear friend and find him at every spadeful shine brighter.'

From the MEMOIR other facts emerge that are of special interest in connection with the friendship of Mrs Gaskell and Annie A. and Fleeming. Annie Austin was the only child of Mr and Mrs Alfred Austin. He was a barrister and for a time was Poor Law inspector in Manchester, particularly concerned with the potato famine and Irish immigration in the 1840s, work that doubtless brought him in touch with the Gaskells. He then went to London and distinguished himself during the epidemic of cholera and finally became Permanent Secretary of Her Majesty's Office of Works and Public Buildings. Stevenson tells us that Fleeming was given a letter of introduction to Mr Austin by Mrs Gaskell when he went to take up his post at Penn's. It seems as though his and Annie's paths never crossed at Plymouth Grove. Fleeming became a regular visitor at the Austins and two years later asked leave to 'pay Annie his addresses'. They were courting for two years.

The following facts about Fleeming's engineering career are of interest. He was apprenticed to Fairbairns when he first came to Manchester so in view of the Gaskell and Fairbairn friendship it is to be expected that Mrs Gaskell would offer hospitality to one of their young employees, new to the town. When Jenkin went to work for Penn's he was involved with marine telegraphy and moved between London and Birkenhead. It was his work with electrical experiments that led to the offer of a chair at London University. He and Annie made a happy home at Claygate in Surrey where their three sons were born. They made an equally happy home in Edinburgh and his parents and Annie's came to Scotland to live close at hand.

Stevenson was working on the book during a period of ill health when he was often confined to bed and forbidden to write. He passed some of his spare time in studying the technicalities of music and exchanged letters with Mrs Jenkin about studies for the piano and asks her advice about where he can find the easiest works by Bach (LETTERS March 1886). He completed the MEMOIR in 1887 and it was published the following year, first in America. By this time Stevenson and his wife had left

Bournemouth and were themselves in America on the first stage of their journey westward that was to lead them to their final home in Samoa.

The last existing letter that he wrote to Annie was from their island home, Vailima, in December 1892. He pleads with her to come out to stay with them - 'Spare us a month or two for old sake's sake, and make my wife and me happy and proud. ... Do, please, make a virtuous effort and take a glimpse of a new world I am sure you do not dream of, and some old friends who do often dream of your arrival.' (LETTERS)

Annie never made the journey and two years later Stevenson was dead, the second of the literary geniuses who had been her friends, and like Mrs Gaskell, prematurely (R.L.S. was 44) and at the height of his literary powers and with an unfinished masterpiece on his hands - WEIR OF HERMISTON.

Barbara Brill

\*Numbers refer to Collected Letters

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#### GASKELL STUDIES

Members will not be able to attend Keele University Adult Education Weekend on: ELIZABETH GASKELL AND KNUTSFORD - because it clashes with our next meeting! The course is from Friday evening, April 25th to Sunday 27th, for residential and day students. If I arrive at our meeting on April 26th rather breathless, it will be because I am meeting the Keele group at Brook Street Chapel, for a talk, before coming on to Manchester.

Barbara Brill and myself will be conducting a similar course for Manchester University Extra-Mural Department. This is a 2-day Summer Campus course: on July 16th there will be three seminars; followed on July 17th by a coach tour around Manchester and Knutsford area. The course is: MRS GASKELL'S MANCHESTER AND KNUTSFORD.

Joan Leach

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SOME NOTES ABOUT BOOKS

by Mary Thwaite

As custodian of the "Gaskell Collection", donated in 1960 by the late Professor Whitfield to Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford. I have been impressed with the steady increase of interest in the life and work of Mrs Gaskell. Additions to the collection since then have chiefly been donations and these have recently included several works in Italian, presented by Professor Francesco Marroni of Pescara, among them "Cranford" for Italian readers, and his own article on Mrs Gaskell's two social novels, sub-titled "Reflections on Mary Barton" and "North and South". Professor Marroni is expecting to publish a full-length study of Mrs Gaskell's writings this year.

Another donor in Italy is Professor Michele Ingenito of Salerno University who has presented his 150-page study of "Mary Barton", published in 1983, "Mary Barton: il romanzo della denuncia". This is published for the University by Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 80121, Naples, via Chiatamone 7.

"The Gaskell Collection" at the Manchester City Reference Library

Christine Lingard, the librarian responsible for the care of the wide-ranging resources in this collection, has sent me some details of a work recently added which may not be well-known to members:

Frycksett, Monica Correa

"Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton and Ruth: a challenge to Christian England". 1982

This is a Doctoral dissertation (in English) accepted by the University of Uppsala. It is distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell International, S-101 20 Stockholm (Sweden). Its book number is ISBN 91-554-1318-8.

She also mentions a new edition of "Ruth", edited by Alan Sherston (O.U.P. "World's Classics" series. 1985). There are many notes, including the suggestion that Eccleston was founded on Macclesfield, rather than Knutsford or Newcastle.

New Publications

Forthcoming in May is a volume in a new "Women's Series" by Berg Publishers Limited (Leamington Spa), "Elizabeth Gaskell" by Tessa Brodetsky. The cost is £8.95 (hardback) or £3.95 (paperback).

Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. has just issued two Gaskell titles in a new series of "Pocket Classics":

"My Lady Ludlow" £2.95

"The Manchester Marriage" £3.95

This second item includes "An accursed race", "The Doom of the Griffiths", "The Poor Clare", "The Half-brothers", and "Mr Harrison's Confessions".

Editor's note

"My Lady Ludlow" is of particular interest to me as I am sure that her ladyship owes much to Lady Jane Stanley, daughter of the 11th Earl of Derby, who lived in Knutsford. A solicitor in the town keeps a black metal deed box labelled 'Lady Jane Stanley's Charity', which still exists and dates back to her will of 1802, the longest I have ever seen. Perhaps there will be space in a future journal to write about her. She has sometimes been identified with Mrs Jamieson in 'Cranford' but this is less likely.

"Mr Harrison's Confessions" is a delightful prelude to 'Cranford', clearly based on Mrs Gaskell's knowledge through her uncle, Peter Holland's work as a doctor in Knutsford. Although Mr Harrison tells the story it is the ladies who dominate the action and intrigue.

Mentioned in our Book News notes, Professor Francesco Marroni, Christine Lingard and Tessa Brodetsky all belong to our Society and are working to spread wider knowledge and appreciation of Elizabeth Gaskell's works.

MRS GASKELL - A CINDERELLA AT CHATSWORTH

Mrs Gaskell was warned, soon after her sudden rise to fame as the authoress of 'Mary Barton', by an unknown correspondent, 'against being lionised'. She replied, 'I hardly understand what is meant by the term; nor do I think anything could alter me from my own self; but I will be on my guard'. She commented later after a visit to London that she had 'done her duty as a meek, submissive lion, fresh imported from the desert'. (40,48)

Although she shunned publicity it was only natural that she should enjoy some of the rewards of fame. One such occasion was a visit to Chatsworth with her daughter, Meta, in September 1857.

It was in a birthday letter to her eldest daughter, Marianne, that the events were related (Letters: ed. Chapple & Pollard - 372) Chatsworth, Sunday mornng.

... You will be surprized at the date of this; and so indeed am I. I feel more like Cinderella, than anyone else you can imagine. I am writing before breakfast; waiting for Meta, who I heartily wish was ready; for I do not know what room we are to breakfast in or how to find it out in this wilderness of a palace of a house. All yesterday we were driving and going about, so that it was impossible to write a line to any of you but I thought of you often my darling, and of twenty three years ago, when you lay by my side such a pretty wee baby, and I was always uncovering you to look at you, and always getting scolded for giving you a cold by the nurse.'

Mrs Gaskell went on to describe how they had travelled from Manchester on top of the coach, there being no 'inside places', in the pouring rain, 'to the great detriment of our clothes'. After lodging overnight in nearby Rowsley Village, she wrote, 'Directly after breakfast we took a little pony carriage, and we came on here to see the house with our green card; as I expected, I soon had a message from the Duke, who was

not yet up ... so a nice looking housekeeper took us over the house, and the Duke's gentleman came to tell us that 'luncheon would be at two and that rooms were prepared for us'. You may imagine how Meta and I looked at each other remembering our wardrobe'.

Reading this I was puzzled by the 'green card' and why Mrs Gaskell 'expected' the Duke would wish to see her. I photocopied the letter and sent it off to Chatsworth asking for information. I received a fascinating reply from the Duchess of Devonshire who told me that she had known of the visit and the letter but 'was delighted to read it again, so charmingly written and full of interest for anyone who likes this place. I asked Michael Pearman, our librarian, if he could throw any light on the green card. Lo and behold, I found on my table 3 cards, green, blue and buff, beautifully embossed with a wreath of flowers, the word 'Chatsworth' in the middle and 'This card to be presented to the Housekeeper' underneath.

We think the colours meant grades of status, perhaps how long a tour or something like that. I had never seen them so you have been responsible for a lovely surprise!'

Mrs Gaskell went on with her letter, telling Marianne that there were more visitors in the house than they had been led to expect but 'we thought it was a pity to miss seeing and doing many agreeable things for the sake of no gowns - so we bravely consented to stay after sending an apologetic message to the Duke ... We are established in two great rooms, the curtains to my bed being of thick, white satin stamped with silken rosebuds. Meta proposed that we should dress ourselves up in them.'

The Duchess of Devonshire writes that 'the same curtains are still in the best visitors' bedroom on the four-poster bed. Some was re-done by my grand-mother-in-law, hand painted on satin.'

So if you pay a visit to Chatsworth, do look for them and also try to imagine Mrs Gaskell and Meta 'being driven up and down (accompanied by Sir Joseph Paxton, 'almost

like the host') in a little low poney (sic) carriage and four lovely circus-like ponies, postillions etc. and felt like Cinderella, seeing views and improvements and all the fountains playing and all the waterworks going, and ended by driving through the conservatory.'

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#### FORTHCOMING MEETING - APRIL 26TH

The next meeting will be held at 84 Plymouth Grove on April 26th, beginning at 2.0 pm. How delightful it will be to gather in Mrs Gaskell's drawing room and drink tea in her dining room. The house belongs to Manchester University and is used by The International Society which exists to encourage greater understanding amongst peoples of different cultural backgrounds and is a welfare and information centre for overseas students.

The staff of The International Society have kindly agreed to provide us with home-baked teas at £1 each. Please let me know if you will partake; tea and biscuits will also be provided.

We are privileged to have as our speaker at this meeting, J. Geoffrey Sharps who has so enthusiastically supported our endeavours to found The Gaskell Society, nothing daunted by the distance between Scarborough and Knutsford. He will tell us, 'How I Became a Gaskellian'. His book, 'Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention' (Linden Press 1970) involved him in extensive research, collection of material and contact with the elite circle of other Gaskell scholars, all of which he shares with fellow Gaskellians in his indispensable book. He was involved with Chapple and Pollard on the Collected Letters and assisted Chapple with his immensely readable, 'Mrs Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters' (M.U.P. 1980).

This will be an epoch making meeting of the Society. Do let me know if you can come; our numbers are limited to 80 and I would not want any disappointed members - or empty seats!

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### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held on SATURDAY 27th SEPTEMBER 1986  
at La Belle Epoque, Gaskell Memorial Tower,  
King Street, Knutsford

### Programme

12.30 for 1.00 pm

3 course lunch - £5 payable in advance  
(please reply by 16th September)

2.30 pm

A.G.M. Election of officers; annual report,  
discussion and plans for the Society

3.00 pm approx

Address by Professor J. A. V. Chapple:  
'Elizabeth Gaskell and her father'

Tea and talk if desired

### SUNDAY 28th SEPTEMBER

11.30 am

Members will be welcome to attend Brook  
Street Chapel Harvest Festival Service

2.30 pm

Assemble outside 'Heathwaite', Gaskell Avenue,  
for a guided Cranford Walk, finishing at  
Brook Street where tea will be available.

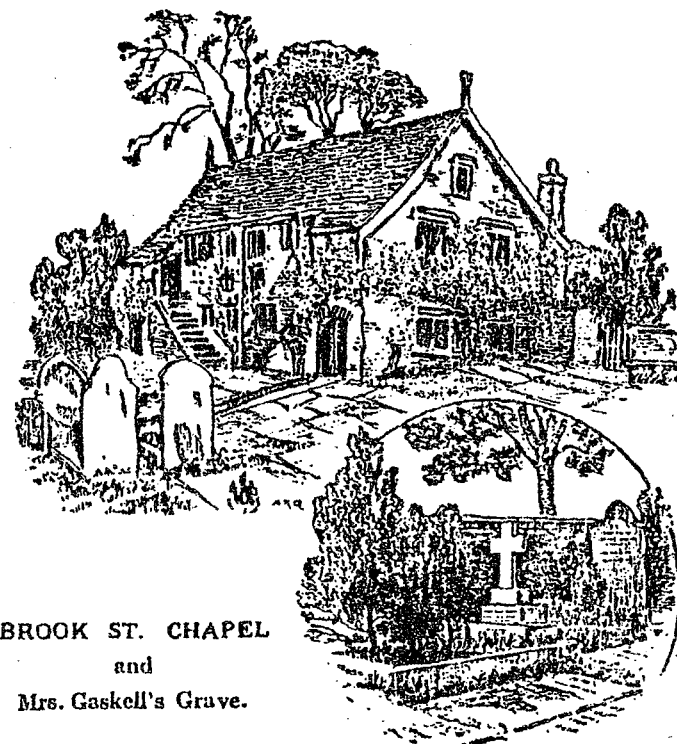
An exhibition of Gaskell Illustrators will be on view  
after both meetings, at the schoolroom, Brook Street

Several of our members will be staying, for one or  
two nights, over 27/28th September at Longview Hotel,  
Manchester Road, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0LX  
Tel: 0565 2119. Prices begin at £18 per single  
room for Bed and Breakfast. All rooms have radio  
and tea/coffee making facilities.

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Comments, contributions and suggestions welcomed by  
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# The Gaskell Society



BROOK ST. CHAPEL  
and  
Mrs. Gaskell's Grave.

## NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1986

NO. 2

SECRETARY'S LETTER

As our first year is nearly completed, the time has come to review progress. I think the advent of our Society has been widely welcomed and well supported, interest being shown around the world. Our membership is growing steadily and will go on increasing with better publicity; our future activities depend on good support.

Our first newsletter seems to have been enjoyed so, I hope, will this second edition. Consideration must be given to an academic journal allowing scholars and students to publish their research material and essays; this would be expensive and might have to be occasional rather than annual.

Nearly sixty members met at 84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester, the Gaskell's home now used by The International Society, for our spring meeting on April 26th. The last Saturdays in April and September for our meetings seem to suit most people, but please make your wishes known at the AGM if you are not in agreement.

It was a great pleasure to meet at Plymouth Grove and to hear Geoffrey Sharps' talk about his experiences in study and research for his book, *MRS GASKELL'S OBSERVATION AND INVENTION* (Linden Press 1970). I hope to have our year's lectures printed at the end of the year. At this meeting we adopted a constitution and elected a committee with Professor Arthur Pollard as President, Professor Francesco Marroni as Vice-President (he is doing sterling work as our Italian ambassador to Mrs Gaskell!), Dr Ken Walley as Chairman, and J. G. Sharps as Vice-Chairman. Also on our committee are:

Mrs Mary Thwaite, librarian of the Gaskell  
Collection at Brook Street Chapel  
Kenn Oultram, founding secretary of the Lewis  
Carroll and Randolph Caldecott Societies  
Mrs I. Stevenson )  
Mrs B. Kinder ) joint treasurers  
Miss M. Leighton, Manchester University Student  
and myself as Secretary

For help and advice with Manchester meetings we have:  
Miss Christine Lingard, sub-librarian,



Manchester City Library, Language and  
Literature Department

Mrs Marion Arnold of The International Society, and  
Mrs Janet Allen of the Portico Library, Manchester

Our summer outing was most enjoyable; now I am researching  
the Gaskell connections with North Wales for next summer.  
I hope to trace their honeymoon tracks and ride on the  
Festiniog Railway, mainly instigated by Samuel Holland  
for his slate quarries. Look out your climbing boots  
and start rallying your friends - perhaps we could  
charter a train!

JOAN LEACH

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#### AN AFTERNOON WITH THE GASKELLS

By special request of Friends of The Royal Exchange  
Theatre Society:

'AN AFTERNOON WITH THE GASKELLS', readings  
from the letters and works of Mrs Gaskell,  
presented by Barbara Brill with Joe Tindsley  
and Mary Humphries.

At Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, at 4.30 pm on

SUNDAY 21st SEPTEMBER

Admission 50p. Pay at the door or by reserved  
advance ticket from Mrs J Leach, Far Yew Tree House,  
Over Tabley, Knutsford WA16 0HN

(Editor's note: Many of our members participated in  
this last year and may wish to come again and bring  
friends)

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#### JOB LEGH AND THE WORKING MEN NATURALISTS

"Learned he was; nor bird, nor insect flew,  
But he its leafy home and history knew;  
Nor wild-flower decked the rock, nor moss the well,  
But he its name and qualities could tell."

ELLIOTT

This verse heads the chapter 'The Mill on Fire' in MARY  
BARTON in which Mary meets for the first time Job Legh,  
the working man naturalist. Mrs Gaskell opens the chapter  
with an account of the enthusiasm shown by many Manchester  
working men in natural history and goes on to cite  
instances she has heard, of those who had acquired  
particular skills in such complex studies as the families  
of Ephemeridae and Phryganidae (may flies and caddis  
flies). She relates an anecdote told in the preface to  
THE LIFE OF SIR J. E. SMITH (founder of the Linnean  
Society of London) who was advised by William Roscoe  
(president of the Liverpool Botanic committee) to seek  
information he needed about the habitat of a rare plant,  
from a handloom weaver in Manchester. When Sir J. E. Smith  
arrived in Manchester by boat from Liverpool and inquired  
from the porter carrying his luggage if he could direct  
him to the botanist the man told him he was a close friend  
and they were fellow botanists, and he himself could give  
him the information about the plant.

I read this chapter with particular interest when I read  
MARY BARTON for the first time 25 years ago. I was at  
the time doing some private research for my own satis-  
faction into the lives of the working men botanists of  
Victorian times. As a lover of wild flowers but not a  
serious botanist I had been thumbing through  
Lord de Tabley's FLORA OF CHESHIRE (1899) and found among  
the list of acknowledgements to those who had helped him  
acquire specimens and verify habitats, were the names of  
several Lancashire men in humble life. They captured my  
imagination and I went on to read more about them in A  
BOTANICAL GUIDE TO FLOWERING PLANTS FOUND WITHIN 16 MILES  
OF MANCHESTER by Richard Buxton (1849), MANCHESTER WALKS  
AND WILD FLOWERS (1852) and COUNTRY RAMBLES (1882), both  
by Leo H. Grindon, and WHEN THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY

by James Cash (c.1878). I tracked down obituary notices and records of botanical societies and field clubs. I found myself wandering round overgrown churchyards, peering for names on lichen-covered gravestones. I visited St George's Church in Hulme, Manchester, and found the very handsome tablet erected in memory of Edward Hobson, 1782-1830, renowned for his knowledge of mosses, and where recorded on stone are the words:

'Humble parentage had afforded him scanty education and the necessary support of numerous family demanded his daily labour. Yet amidst privations and difficulties he had by patient assiduity and fervent zeal rendered himself a skilful naturalist as his scientific works and ample collections lastingly justify.'

I went into the churchyard but was unable to find his grave nor that of his friend, James Crowther, who died 17 years later and at his special request was buried beside Hobson.

Crowther was born in a cellar in Deansgate in 1768, the youngest of 7 children, and had only three years' schooling, starting work as a draw-boy for petticoat weaving at the age of 9. Soon after starting work he was taken to a meeting of the Eccles Botanical Society, one of the earliest, where he met many enthusiastic naturalists and thus began his lifelong interest. He was tireless in his search for specimens and was much loved by his fellows, but never attained their skills in recording and cataloguing the plants he gathered so diligently and was described as 'not learned but very loving'. He went out into the fields and lanes after long days in the weaving shed, staying out so late that on one occasion he was caught with a dredging net in search of water plants at Tatton Mere by the gamekeeper and suspected of poaching. He was able to prove to Mr Egerton that he was plant-hunting and was given permission thereafter to go wherever he liked on the Tatton estate.

He married and had six children but always lived on low wages, and never spent any of his earnings on his botanical pursuits, but earned extra money by working additional hours as a porter for passengers arriving at Knott Mill from Liverpool.

This is the story of James Crowther as told by James Cash and surely he is the botanist to whom Mrs Gaskell refers. He died the year before MARY BARTON was published, so would never have seen the reference to himself. In his last illness he was in need of a nourishing diet beyond the family purse, but he was made an allowance of 3/- a week from the Society for the Relief and Encouragement of Scientific Men in Humble Life founded by Mr Binney in 1843, certainly a society with which the Gaskells would have been sympathetic.

To round off this comment on Mrs Gaskell and the botanists, I must refer to the circumstances that led me to read MARY BARTON in the first instance. Among the secondhand books I obtained during my researches in the 1960s was an 1879 copy of BEN BRIERLEY'S JOURNAL, and in the column 'Chat round the Table' I read 'A field naturalist writes: "Readers of Mrs Gaskell's MARY BARTON will recollect the powerful picture of Job Legh the botanist weaver. This portrait is so lifelike that many must have conjectured as to which of the artizan botanists had come under the notice of the gifted novelist. Perhaps some of your readers may be able to say."' But no suggestions were forthcoming in subsequent columns.

A novelist of Mrs Gaskell's skill does not draw her characters directly from life, but takes different characteristics from many individuals and welds them into a new and original personality. The description of Job Legh as 'a little wiry man ... with dun-coloured hair lying thin and soft at the back and sides of his head ... his forehead so large ... the absence of all the teeth ... the eyes ... so keen, so observant ... were almost wizard-like' matches closely with a daguerreotype of Richard Buxton taken in 1851 which I have; but this man, author of BUXTON'S GUIDE, was more at home with books and field studies than with the

preparation and stuffing of animals for display in glass cases, as Job is described as working at during Mary's first meeting with him. Jethro Tinker of Stalybridge (1788-1871) was the expert on the preparing of collections, but he was a tall upright man whose early life was spent watching sheep on the moors in Longdendale. The humour that Job Legh displays when he tells the tale of his journey from London with his baby grandchild was an attribute of George Crozier (died 1847), shop assistant in Shudehill, ornithologist and entomologist, who was merry and fond of a joke, but he was tall and patriarchal with a flowing white beard. It seems that Job was a composite portrait created by Mrs Gaskell from her knowledge of this fraternity, much of it no doubt gleaned from her husband, William, who spent many evenings lecturing at working men's clubs and knew of their thirst for knowledge.

My interest in these nature-lovers has never waned, and I am grateful that through my early readings about them I was introduced to Job Legh and so to MARY BARTON and took the first steps towards becoming a Gaskellian.

BARBARA BRILL

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#### MASTERMIND

I am sure most of you admired Jennifer Keaveney's brilliant performance in winning this year's contest with 'Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works' as her special subject. Mrs Keaveney wrote to me, saying that she admired Mrs Gaskell's writing which was why she chose this subject, but having to re-read and study for the contest made her appreciation even greater. She is pleased to become a member.

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#### SOME BOOK NOTES

Mrs Gaskell's TALES OF MYSTERY AND HORROR; edited by Michael Ashley. Gollancz. 1978

This interesting collection of seven of Mrs Gaskell's more fantastical and macabre tales is now out-of-print, but it is pleasing to report that a copy has just been donated to the "Whitfield" collection at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, by Mrs Christine Kloet, a member of Gollancz staff.

In a short introduction, Michael Ashley traces Mrs Gaskell's place in horror fiction from its beginnings and the "Gothic" novel, and he expresses his opinion that her "prime contribution to the genre of the horror-story was her ability to describe the emotions and feelings of her characters, to emphasise the personal as opposed to the scientific aspects of the supernatural ..."

The book may claim to be important for its inclusion of Mrs Gaskell's story, THE CROOKED BRANCH, as it was first printed in the 1859 Christmas issue of ALL THE YEAR ROUND. Dickens had planned a ghost-story cycle for his magazine, on the theme "The Haunted House", each room being haunted by a ghost who tells a story. He changed the title therefore of Mrs Gaskell's contribution to "The Ghost in the Garden Room", added a prologue, and made other slight alterations to fit his purpose. These additions were deleted when it was later reprinted, and the author's original title, THE CROOKED BRANCH, was restored. This present collection edited by Ashley seems to be the only edition which has reprinted the original version as it first appeared as "The Ghost in the Garden Room."

The other tales in the volume are: "The Old Nurse's Story"; "The Squire's Story"; "The Scholar's Story" (a translation in verse by William Gaskell from the French, for which Mrs Gaskell wrote the introduction when it appeared in the Christmas issue of HOUSEHOLD WORDS in 1853); "The Doom of the Griffiths"; "Lois the Witch"; "Curious if True".

POCKET CLASSICS, published by Alan Sutton Publishing Co.

Under "New Publications" in the first Newsletter details were given of two Gaskell titles just issued in this new series of POCKET CLASSICS. One of these, MY LADY LUDLOW, was found to be imperfect, with the last page or pages of the introduction missing. Copies have been withdrawn from booksellers and an amended edition is expected shortly. The text of the story is itself complete - the fault is only in the preliminary pages. If you have an imperfect copy your supplier should be able to change it when the reprint is available.

(Editor: Jardine's Bookshop, Knutsford, has the faulty edition on sale at only 95p, instead of £2.95. These will be available at the next meeting or by post from me at £1.30)

ELIZABETH GASKELL by Tessa Brodetsky. (Berg Women's Series) Berg Publishers Ltd, Leamington Spa. 1986. £3.95 (paperback) ISBN 0-907582-83-4

This work just published, by Tessa Brodetsky, is an excellent, easy-to-read, short outline of Mrs Gaskell's writings, set against the background of her life and times. Tessa Brodetsky shows how the novelist combined being "A model par-excellence of a Victorian middle-class woman" with a creativity, ability and a literary output which were long under-rated. It is refreshing to have an account that presents the novels and stories so descriptively, with many quotations, and the book should be welcome as a useful and attractive introduction for the general reader and the student, who may be unfamiliar with novels of a power and variety that range far beyond the popular, endearing CRANFORD which has perpetuated, even obscured, Mrs Gaskell's fame since it first appeared in 1853.

After a chapter on Mrs Gaskell's life and its setting, we are taken through the novels in sequence of their appearance, from "The Industrial Scene - MARY BARTON" to her "Mature Accomplishment - WIVES AND DAUGHTERS".

One chapter deals with her many shorter tales, concentrating on four contrasted and important contributions - HALF A LIFE-TIME AGO, MY LADY LUDLOW, LOIS THE WITCH, and COUSIN PHILLIS (here for me put too much on a level with the others). That on "The Life of Charlotte Bronte" must have been one of the most difficult, but Tessa Brodetsky makes both the biographer and the subject come alive in her perceptive resume. A final "Retrospect" assesses Elizabeth Gaskell's contribution to literature in relation to her strongly held convictions and values, and compares her with her outstanding contemporaries, claiming for her a place "among the important rather than the minor, novelists of her period".

The book is illustrated with four portraits and eleven photographs of places associated with Mrs Gaskell's life and works. A minor query arises here. Was not the drawing of Haworth Church and Parsonage (p.69) the work of Meta Gaskell, not that of her mother?

MARY THWAITE

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Roy Charnock, a member who deals in antiquarian books, would be pleased to buy World Classic editions of the following, offering at least £10 each:

168	Cousin Phillis
175	Lizzie Leigh
203	Right at Last
190	Round the Sofa
88	Ruth

Roy's address:

83 Croft Road  
Swindon  
Wiltshire  
SN1 3DN

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### MRS GASKELL'S COUNTRY HOUSES

Elizabeth Gaskell loved the English countryside all her life, and died in her own just-purchased country house in Hampshire. Her visits to the country houses of others are therefore of particular interest to Gaskellians, and may also lead to identifications of sources for houses in her fiction. In attempting to compile a directory of such houses with descriptions of them, I have found only partial information in some cases. Listed below are three houses and what information I have gleaned about them; if members of the Society have knowledge of their locations, present status (destroyed, in private ownership, in institutional use, open to the public?) and/or their architecture and construction dates, I would be very glad to learn of it through Newsletter replies.

BOUGHTON HOUSE, Worcestershire. When Elizabeth Gaskell visited her cousin Charlotte Holland Isaac at Boughton in 1850, she reported, "This last experience of country air has done me so much good - I am a different creature to what I am in Manchester." (LETTERS OF MRS GASKELL, 1966, Nos. 86, 297, cited hereafter as G.L.). Penguin's BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND volume for Worcestershire contains no Boughton, nor does BURKE'S AND SAVILL'S GUIDE TO COUNTRY HOUSES, vol.II, covering Worcestershire. Mrs Gaskell's Boughton should not be confused with the immense establishment of the Duke of Buccleuch in Northamptonshire, which has the same name. The address Mrs Gaskell gives is "J. Whitmore Isaac's Esq, Boughton near Worcester". John Bartholomew's IMPERIAL MAP OF ENGLAND AND WALES ACCORDING TO THE ORDNANCE SURVEY, 1860?, sheet 11, shows it to the southwest of Worcester.

HULME WALFIELD, Cheshire. Elizabeth Gaskell stayed with the Edward Wilmots December 7th 1852, and wrote to her daughter Marianne, "This house is a large one and full of people; it stands just about Congleton and must be very pretty in fine weather." (G.L. 144)

THE PARK, near Manchester, Lancashire. Elizabeth Gaskell attended a dance at The Park in 1852, and wrote to her daughter Meta about it.

"Friday evening we took Hannah to the Park dance. A large house with very small rooms but any number of them. There were nearly 300 there ... There was a crush and crowd into supper. Mrs Schwabe and I tried 3 times before we got in; it was such a little room. The hosts were two Mr Philips ... very kind and good natured not very gentlemanly ... we came home about 3, found Hearn up, had tea and went very fresh to bed to get up with an awful headache yesterday." (G.L. 118a, letter of 28th March 1852.)

The two Mr Philips were brothers and both members of Parliament; Robert N. Philips owned The Park, while Mark Philips (1800-1873) was supposedly Disraeli's model for Mr Millbank, the industrialist in CONINGSBY. The evening after the dance, Mrs Gaskell reported in the same letter, she went to an affair given by the Fairbairns, and Mark Philips took her in to dinner; she said the occasion was "rather flat" because there were too many Fairbairns present.

JANICE KIRKLAND

(Editor's note: 'The Park' was described by Leo Grindon in 'Country Rambles and Manchester Walks and Wild Flowers' (1882):

'The private grounds are exceedingly pretty and sylvan and up to about half a century ago were used as pheasant preserves ... they are not forbidden to legitimate and respectful request made a few days previously, with the understanding that there shall be no trowels carried.'

The author of this article, Janice Kirkland, is a college librarian in Bakersfield, California. She also wrote details of Sandlebridge, which will be the subject of a further article in a later edition.)

MRS GASKELL'S CHESHIRESummer Outing - June 29th 1986

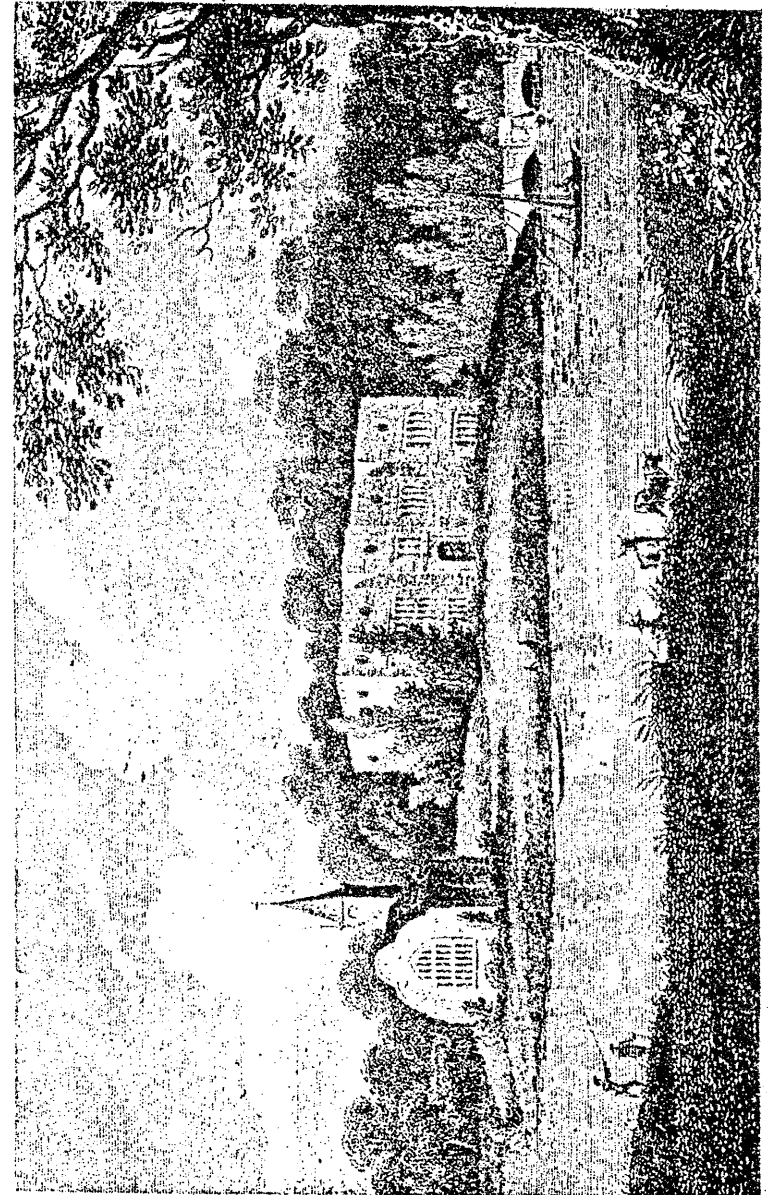
'I was brought up in a little country town, and it is my lot now to live in or rather on the borders of a great manufacturing town, but when spring days first come and the bursting leaves and sweet, earthy smells tell me that 'Somer is ycomen in', I feel a stirring instinct and long to be off into the deep grassy solitudes of the country' (G.L.8)

This letter to William and Mary Howitt, dated May 1838, expressing Elizabeth Gaskell's deep love of the countryside, continued with memories of 'happy scenes' which she recalled from her childhood. Members of our Society set out by coach on a lovely June afternoon to visit scenes she knew and to evoke the spirit of her times.

It was from Knutsford, 'the little, clean, kindly town', that we set out, though our party did not, as did that in 'Mr Harrisc 's Confessions' (Chap.V), bring the shopkeepers and cottagers to their doors pleased 'to see the cavalcade gathering'. Our destination was the same: Tabley Park.

In her letter to the Howitts, Mrs Gaskell described the 'old house with a moat within a park called Old Tabley, formerly the dwelling place of Sir Peter Leycester, the historian of Cheshire, and accounted a very fine specimen of the Elizabethan style. It is beautifully kept by its owner, who lives at a new house built about half a mile off ...' The Leicester family had been settled at Tabley from 1272 until the last of the line died unmarried in 1976. The moated hall built in 1380 retained its stone flagged, galleried hall even after Sir Peter restored it with a Jacobean style front in 1671; sadly it is now only a ruin, too dangerous to be viewed, since subsidence in the 1920s caused its collapse.

So it was only in imagination that we could follow Elizabeth to the island where, with her friends, she 'rambled, lounged and meditated; some stretched on the



TABLEY HOUSE AND CHAPEL

grass in indolent repose half reading, half musing ... lulled by the ripple of the waters against the grassy lawn ... and when the meal was spread beneath a beech tree of no ordinary size ... one of us would mount up a ladder and toll the bell to call the wanderers home' (G.L.8). We were able to sit in this selfsame chapel as we read her letter, for it has been rebuilt adjoining Tabley House, the Leicester's later home. Sir Peter, who built the chapel in 1675, suffered for his royalist allegiance in the Civil War but found consolation in compiling a Cheshire history, 'rescuing the monuments of antiquity from the rubbish of devouring time'. In his neat handwriting the accounts of the chapel building are still preserved - '60 trees fallen for the Roofe of my Chappell ... paid to John Broderick the joyner for the pulpit and railles £10'. This pulpit with its sounding board above was a little too lofty for me to stand in while reading Mrs Gaskell's memories of Old Tabley.

Our chairman, Dr Walley, has known this chapel for longer than he cares to tell as he was baptised here when his father farmed on the estate; it is still used for occasional services such as Harvest Festival, though not in the traditional 'Tabley Chapel Style' - a local saying, after the second Lord de Tabley decreed that men needed a rest from women for an hour each week so in chapel they sat on opposite, facing sides.

A door from the chapel leads into the Old Hall Room where some of the furniture and fittings have been lovingly installed; pictures around the walls show the carved, painted fireplace as it used to be and the enamelled glass windows with coats of arms. We could see them in their new position, look at the pictures around us and recall Mrs Gaskell's description - 'It was galleried with oak settles and old armour hung up and a painted window from ceiling to floor. The strange sound our voices had in that unfrequented stone hall! One or two of Shakespeare's ballads: 'Blow, blow thou winter wind' and 'Hark, hark the lark at heaven's gate sings' etc. were sung by the musical sisters in the gallery above and by two other musical sisters (Mary and Ellen Needham) standing in the hall below.'

Mary Needham had another role to play and we were to 'meet' her later as Mrs Gaskell did.

After walking by the waterside of the old hall and peering across the waterlilies to catch a glimpse of the Old Hall ruins, we left Tabley for Over Peover Church close to the hall of the Mainwaring family. All that remains of them are some splendid marble effigies in the small church where, on 'the twenty-fifth Day of Novem'ber in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety Seven ... appeared personally William Stevenson of the Shire of Mid Lothian in the Kingdom of Scotland Farmer and being sworn on the Holy Evangelists, alledged and made Oath as follows That he is of the Age of twenty-one Years and upwards and a batchelor and intends to marry Elizabeth Holland'.

Our drive to Over Peover Hall and church took as past 'The Whipping Stocks' Inn, once 'The Mainwaring Arms'. In describing Molly Gibson's drive to Hamley Hall (Wives and Daughters) Mrs Gaskell mentions 'the little inn' and the wooden stocks close by the gate, then the drive through the meadow grass to the red-brick hall. It seems the Hamley Hall bore some resemblance to Over Peover where the Mainwarings were so proud of their ancient lineage as to go to law with Sir Peter Leicester over a slight on their ancestor in his history book. The fictional Hamleys were just as proud of their ancestry. Roger Hamley might have been proud too, of the beautiful gardens which the present owner, Mr Randle Brookes, allowed us to saunter through, with hornbeam and lime avenues, herb garden, rose arbours and lily ponds.

Our next call was Capesthorne Hall, which Mrs Gaskell knew over a long period.

12th May 1836

'I rode 18 miles that day and lunched at Mr Davenport's at Capesthorne, such a beautiful place - not the house which is rather shabby but the views from the park' (G.L.14). It is not shabby now but a stately home welcoming visitors and sustaining us with cups of tea.

26th November 1849 (to Eliza Fox)

'Monday I go to Mrs Davenport's, Capesthorne - a place



for an artist to be in - old hall, galleries, old paintings etc, and such a dame of a lady to grace them: you would long to sketch her, it and them.' In a later letter she wrote - 'I admire Mrs Davenport more the more I see of her. She is such a queenly woman' (G.L.105). Mrs Davenport became Lady Hatherton on her remarriage, visiting the Gaskells in Manchester and continuing the friendship when she moved to Teddesley Park, Staffordshire.

In the saloon at Capesthorne we were able to see a portrait of her and of her son, Arthur. I wonder if the two mothers ever discussed their children? Arthur seems to have been a problem child from reading the Stanley of Alderley letters<sup>1</sup>. In 1846 his father was writing to the Times 'showing up' Dr Vaughan, headmaster of Harrow who had flogged his son, who was described as 'sulky, morose and ill disposed'. He did not improve and his engagement to a beautiful, titled but poor girl when he was known to be frequently drunk caused much talk.

'November 1857 Arthur Davenport got beastly drunk at the Wrexham Ball and was carried out of the room after having insulted the Duke of Montrose and yet he will give him his daughter! I never knew a more dreadful sacrifice at the altar of Mammon. How difficult it is to congratulate Lady Hatherton properly.' It was believed that the Montrose family hoped that Arthur would quickly drink himself to death, leaving a rich widow to make more satisfactory arrangements. The wedding was called off as a result of Arthur's excesses and he died unmarried at the age of 35, having managed to burn down the central part of Capesthorne a few years before.

I am sure Mrs Gaskell must have been familiar with the Davenport family history. A fine Romney portrait of Arthur's grandmother was sold to the National Gallery in Washington for £60,000 in 1926. She was the lady, who

<sup>1</sup>'The Ladies of Alderley' (Letters from 1841-50)

'The Stanleys of Alderley' (Letters from 1951-65)

Edited by Nancy Milford, published by Hamish Hamilton:

having been bored by her chaplain's sermon one Sunday, said to him the following week, 'We will not trouble you for a further discourse this morning'. Readers of 'My Lady Ludlow' will recall that aristocratic lady using almost the same words.

While staying at Capesthorne Mrs Gaskell had discussed Charlotte Bronte with Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, who arranged for the two writers to meet at Briery Close. Mrs Gaskell wrote of the planned meeting (G.L.72) May 14th 1850 'I am half amused to find you think I could do her good ... I never feel as if I could do any one any good ... I should like to know her very much.' She also wrote to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth about the pro-worker bias of 'Mary Barton' (G.L.72a) 'I know and have always owned that I have represented but one side of the question and no one would welcome more than I should, a true and earnest representation of the other side ... I believe that there is much to be discovered yet as to the right position and mutual duties of employer and employed; ... I think the best and most benevolent employers would say how difficult they, with all their experience, found it to unite theory and practice. I am sure Mr Sam Greg would ...'

Mrs Gaskell often went on to visit Samuel Greg at Bollington after visiting Capesthorne, so we followed in her footsteps. She must have known the Greg family since childhood when her Uncle, Peter Holland was doctor to the apprentices at Styal Mill which provided better conditions than the Manchester cotton mills. Samuel Greg's unitarian beliefs, allied to astute business ability, helped him to found a successful, humanitarian factory system owning mills at Styal and Bury; his son, Samuel (1804-1876) was more of an idealist and less of a business man. At Bollington he tried to set up an ideal mill community which he named 'Goldenthal', that is 'Happy Valley'. He wrote to the inspector of taxes that he aimed 'to show to my people and to others that there is nothing in the nature of their employment or in the condition of their humble lot that condemns them to be rough, vulgar, ignorant, miserable or poor; there is nothing forbids them to be well-bred, well-informed, well-mannered and



and surrounded by every comfort and enjoyment that can make life happy'. Believing this fervently, he built schools, library and reading room, rebuilt the stone cottages with gardens, paying gardeners to help maintain them and even had a dormitory and playroom attached to the mill. It was, as Mrs Gaskell wrote 'a stinging grief to him' (G.L.72a) when his workers 'surprised and grieved him by a turnout' when he attempted to introduce a new type of machinery for stretching cloth. He had believed that such a relationship existed between himself and his workers that they could discuss problems and not resort to strikes. It was, to him, a betrayal of his trust; thereafter he never went in the mill again, his health suffered and he even considered emigrating to New Zealand! (G.L.114). The family rallied round with financial support and, for a time, William Rathbone Greg took over the management, before leaving the business of cotton mills for journalism. Mrs Gaskell certainly thought this story needed to be told and it must have influenced her in writing 'North and South', though Samuel Greg's character, idealistic, religious and sensitive, did not resemble that of John Thornton.

Samuel Greg's home at Bollington Cross is today a nursing home approached from a steep, narrow lane by an attractive, curving drive which our coach driver negotiated with great skill, driving backwards as there was no room to turn in the lane. Mrs Gaskell accompanied by Florence in 1847 arrived in a 'fly', 'a word which puzzled Florence extremely; and which she talked about for an hour I think ... when we got here Mrs Greg was busy and Mr Greg was resting (it must have been soon after his disaster) so we were shown into a charming bedroom with a fire in it and Mrs Greg came very soon to us with her little boy' (G.L.21). The two ladies might well have reminisced about Tabley because Mrs Greg was one of the 'musical sisters', Mary Needham. No doubt she soothed her husband's troubles, surrounding him with a happy family of seven children.

Florence enjoyed making 'friends with the little

ones ... and wanted to be dressed so early this morning - long before it was light that she might be ready to see the garden which delights her.'

These gardens were carefully planted and tended by Samuel Greg, though the sight of his mill in the valley below must have saddened him. The Lowerhouse mill was our last call; today it is a paper mill in a pleasant, semi-rural spot, stone-built like the workers cottages close by, still bearing the imprint of Samuel Greg's hand.

In our progress through Cheshire in Mrs Gaskell's wake we read excerpts of her letters and mingled history with literature on a very pleasant June afternoon. I hope I have managed to put something of this on paper for those of you who were unable to accompany us, to follow in imagination.

JOAN LEACH

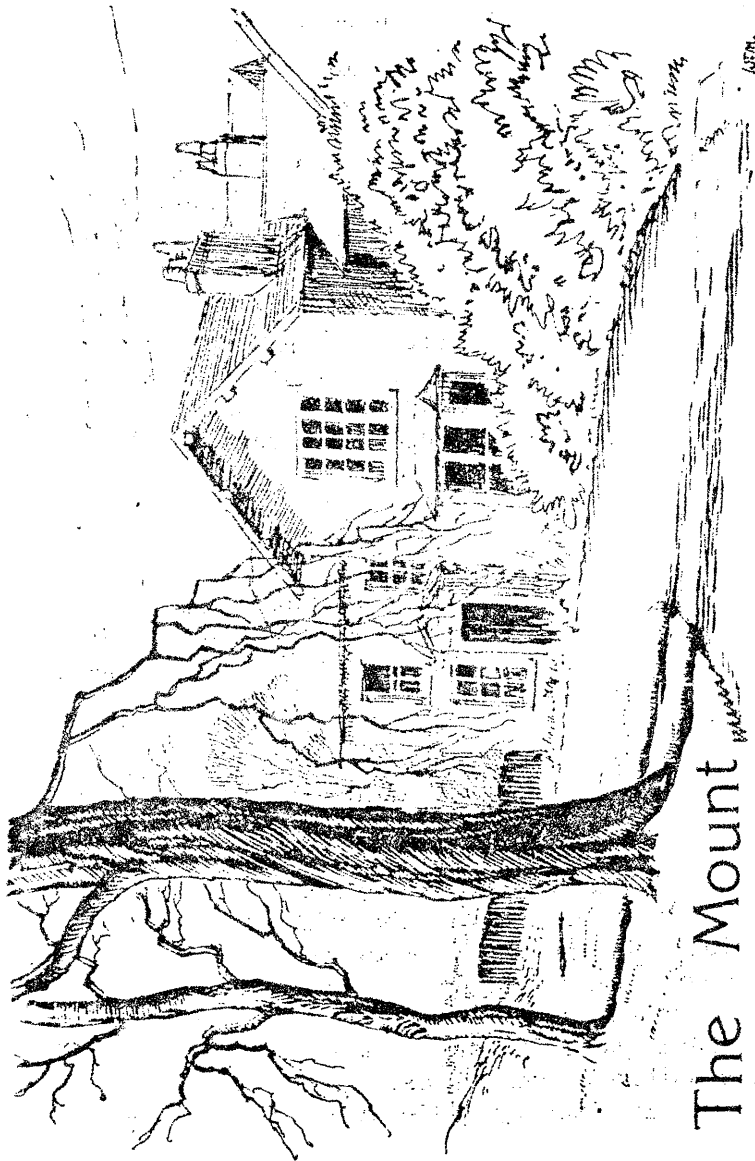
Acknowledgements for details of Samuel Greg to 'Portrait of a Village. The Happy Valley' by Margaret Ingram, illustrated by W. Stirling Martin

-oOo-

#### LETTERS MAKE NEWS

At Sotheby's auction recently three of Mrs Gaskell's letters were bought for £670 by Manchester City Library. These are not in the collected letters and are of considerable social interest concerning the distress in Manchester caused by the effects of the American Civil War on the cotton trade; they are addressed to Vernon Lushington. At our next Manchester meeting it may be possible to show these. Librarian Christine Lingard was invited by Radio Manchester to talk about them.

-oOo-



The Mount

Samuel Greg's home at Bollington

# NOTES FROM MANCHESTER CITY LIBRARY

The growth of the modern feminist movement is reflected in the increasing number of books about women's writing so interest in Elizabeth Gaskell is perhaps inevitable. Therefore it is gratifying to find that she is now being given her rightful place as one of the major writers of the period instead of relegating her to the ranks of the minor figures, as can be seen in a number of recent books:

PROTEST AND REFORM: THE SOCIAL NARRATIVE BY WOMEN, 1827-1867, by Joseph Kestner (Professor of English at University of Tulsa) Methuen, 1985. £15

This integrated study explores the contribution of minor figures - Hannah More, Elizabeth Stone, Frances Trollope, Charlotte Tonna, Camilla Toulmin, Geraldine Jewsbury, Fanny Mayne, Julia Kavanagh and Dinah Craik as well as the more prominent Maria Edgeworth, Harriet Martineau, Brontë, Gaskell and Eliot. It aims to break down the popular conception that the social novel was the preserve of men. A highly complimentary evaluation, it praises her narrative ability in particular. As well as all the full-length novels LIBBIE MARSH and SEXTON'S HERO are mentioned as good examples of her style.

FEMALE FRIENDSHIPS AND COMMUNITIES: CHARLOTTE BRONTE: GEORGE ELIOT, ELIZABETH GASKELL, by Pauline Nestor (Senior Tutor in English, Monash University Melbourne) O.U.P., 1985. £19.50

This interesting book aims to show women writers' depiction of female relationships and women's capacity for friendship. Gaskell's contemporary reputation was more modest than Brontë or Eliot, and consequently she was not overawed by it. She ingenuously solicited the judgement of other authors on her works. There are numerous quotations from her letters to show her relationships with Anna Jameson, Geraldine Jewsbury, Bessie Parkes, Barbara Bodichon, Adelaide Procter and Florence Nightingale. A second chapter deals in detail with the treatment of the relationship between women in all her works including the stories. CRANFORD in particular should not be dismissed for its quaintness.

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S FICTION: MARRIAGE, FREEDOM AND THE INDIVIDUAL, by Shirley Foster (University of Sheffield) Croom Helm, 1985. £17.95

More relevant to feminist issues this book is confined to Craik, Brontë, Sewell, Gaskell and Eliot who it is suggested shared a female voice. Gaskell was the only one of the five to have a normal married life, but her approach to the position of women was ambivalent. She advocated the marital state, while pointing out its limitations, though she does not bring much of her own experience into her novels - there are no working wives in her books. MARY BARTON is no revolutionary view of womanhood but NORTH AND SOUTH is bolder.

VICTORIAN WRITING AND WORKING WOMEN: THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE by Julia Swindells (The Open University) Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1985. £19.50

This book deals with the treatment of working women in literature in general and is not confined to women writers. Gaskell is contrasted with Thackeray under the heading "Gentleman's Club Literature" but Dickens and Eliot are also dealt with. It shows the prejudices Gaskell had, as a woman, to overcome in writing novels. But the book is marred by an important error - the author writes that after her publishers had rejected Gaskell's choice of pseudonym (Stephen Benwick (sic)) her own name appeared on the title page of MARY BARTON. In fact MARY BARTON was published anonymously.

ENGLISH FICTION OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD, 1830-1890, by Michael Wheeler (Head of English Literature at the University of Lancaster), Longman, 1985. £5.59 (paperback)

This is a straightforward uncontroversial literary history, part of a projected 46 volume series aimed at students. It includes biographical notes and a short bibliography.

THE INDUSTRIAL REFORMATION OF ENGLISH FICTION: SOCIAL DISCOURSE AND NARRATIVE FROM 1832-1867, by Catherine Gallagher (Professor of Literature, Berkeley University) University of Chicago Press, 1985. £21.25

An exploration of the structural changes which became

apparent with the industrial novel, with reference to Gaskell, Kingsley, Disraeli, Dickens and Eliot. The Gaskell chapters are confined to MARY BARTON and NORTH AND SOUTH. It mentions the influence of the Martineaus and Francis Newman's CATHOLIC UNION is suggested as a source of inspiration for MARY BARTON. MARY BARTON is shown as a tragedy and attention is drawn to the skilful use of melodrama in the novel. NORTH AND SOUTH is compared to HARD TIMES. The portrait of family life depicted is an analogy of the wider employer worker relationship.

CHRISTINE LINGARD  
(Sub - Librarian)

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### WHERE CAN I FIND MRS GASKELL?

This is the title of a book\* that caught my eye in the window of a bookshop in Hay-on-Wye, the Town of Books.

But before you devotees of Mrs Gaskell rush out to buy this book, be warned, it is not a book about Mrs Gaskell. Nor is it a book about her home town of Knutsford. It is in fact, as the sub-title tells us, "The Diary of a Hay-on-Wye Bookseller" and the title is taken from an anecdote in the book (pages 31 and 32) about a visitor to Hay in search of Mrs Gaskell's books.

But if you haven't yet visited Hay-on-Wye, may I recommend that you do so. It is an experience not to be missed by any book-lover. This little Welsh border town became the secondhand book centre of the world in the 1960s when Richard Booth, a former Oxford undergraduate and local boy, "bought up the town" and filled every vacant premises available with books. The cinema, the fire station, the workhouse, empty shops, all fell prey to the ever-expanding Booth and his books. You could even buy books in the morgue and the castle. The Guinness Book of Records at one time listed Richard Booth as the world's largest secondhand bookseller with 8.49 miles of shelving and a stock of over 1,000,000 books in 30,091 sq ft of selling space.

Hay-on-Wye is also a town of humour. In the mid-70s,

in front of the television crews of Europe, Richard Booth declared Hay an Independent Principality and proclaimed himself "King of Hay", and his horse the Prime Minister! You can buy a passport to Hay, a HAY registration plate for your car, or even a piece of hay from Hay. Every now and then off-beat social events take place. For instance, this year there is to be a "Garden Party for Disappointed People" in the grounds of King Richard's castle.

In recent years there have been changes. In all there are now about fifteen bookshops. Richard Booth is down to one - "The Limited" - and a new figure has appeared on the scene, Leon Morelli of the Quinto Group, known locally as The Great Morelli. He has now built up his holding to five of the other bookshops.

So, do visit Hay, explore its quaint narrow streets (very narrow!), walk along part of Offas Dyke, browse among the books, buy a copy of Hay Wire, the monthly broadsheet (only 10p a copy and a good read). But above all don't forget to ask, when you go into the bookshops, "Where can I find Mrs Gaskell?" Like the character in the book, you might get some funny answers from bookshop assistants who haven't a clue who Mrs Gaskell was!

ROD MONNINGTON

\*WHERE CAN I FIND MRS GASKELL? by Keith Gowen, published by Gomer Press, Llandyswl, 1985. Price £3.95.  
ISBN 0 86383 134 6

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#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that annual subscriptions are due on 1st October. You may like to consider paying by Bankers Order - our account number is 07633660 at the Trustee Savings Bank, Princess Street, Knutsford, Cheshire

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KNUTSFORD

# Mrs. Gaskell would find it worth writing home about!

Mrs. Gaskell knew an interesting story when she heard one. And she could certainly write them, too, using the people of Knutsford as her models. She renamed the town, Hollingford, and Alfred McAlpine Homes are continuing the historic link at Hollingford Place. The styles, standards and methods of building are traditional. The features, reassuringly modern. Large double bedrooms, an en suite bathroom, luxury fitted kitchen, and a wealth of other details which would have kept Mrs. Gaskell's pen working feverishly. But don't take our word for it. Pay us a visit soon and watch Hollingford Place coming alive before your eyes.

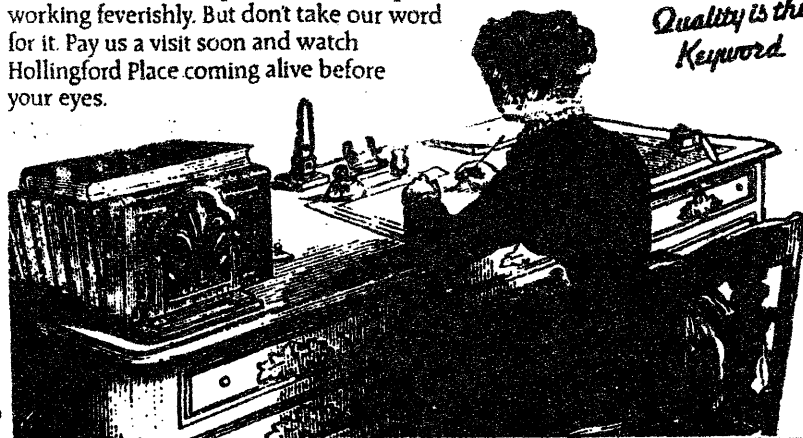
A refined collection of 4 bedroom detached family homes mostly with double garage and all to a superb specification including double glazing. Showhome and Sales Office open shortly. Prices from around £79,000.

For further information, directions and colour brochure, please telephone (0625) 523727 (24 hrs).

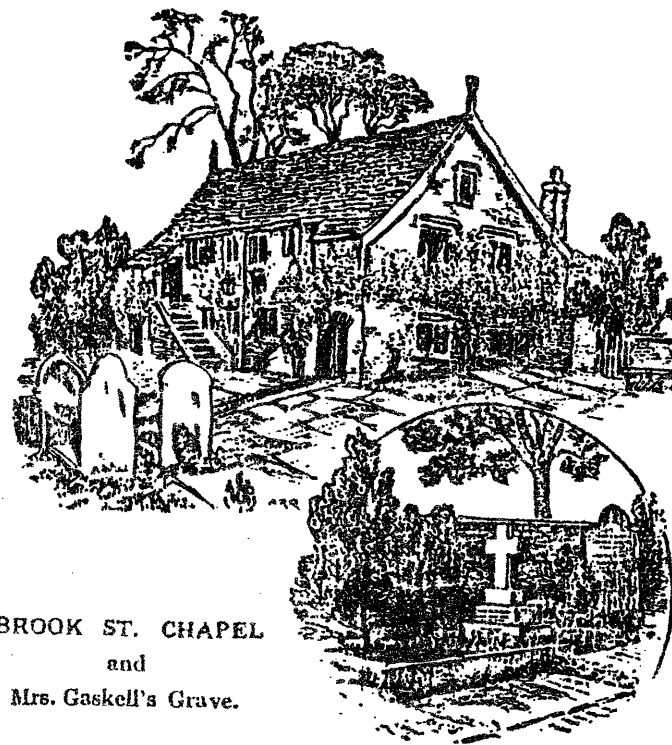


**Alfred McAlpine Homes**

*Quality is the Keyword*



# The Gaskell Society



BROOK ST. CHAPEL  
and  
Mrs. Gaskell's Grave.

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1987

NO.3

SECRETARY'S LETTER

It seems a long time since our last meeting, the AGM on September 29th at Knutsford. For those who were unable to attend I must tell you what an enjoyable occasion this was. The Gaskell Memorial Tower made a delightful venue and La Belle Epoque restaurant provided us with a splendid meal. Do keep the last weekend in September free, members who came from far afield - Edinburgh, Exeter and Kent - found Knutsford pleasant for an autumn break.

Our next meeting is on April 25th at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, 2.00 pm. Bill Ruddick of Manchester University English Department will speak on 'George Du Maurier: Illustrator and Interpreter of Mrs Gaskell', using slides from the original serialisation of 'Wives and Daughters' in The Cornhill, together with some others from illustrated editions which Du Maurier worked on in the 1860s.

We are grateful to Cross Street Chapel for allowing us to meet in this place of so many associations for Gaskell fans; they have also agreed to provide us with tea at £1.25. The Chapel is easily reached by train from Oxford Road Station or Piccadilly but parking is likely to be a problem for drivers. Note enclosed reply form.

Alan Shelston, our journal editor, reports good progress and we hope to have your first copy available to pick up at this meeting.

The collection of Gaskell books from Brook Street Chapel has recently been rehoused in Knutsford Library. This has been a great undertaking by Mrs Mary Thwaite, who has cared for the collection for many years but was concerned to find some deteriorating with damp etc. With the co-operation of Cheshire County Libraries they will be better cared for, with the added bonus of greater accessibility for study. It is hoped to have an exhibition gallery at Brook Street; we hope members will help with fund raising by coming to a coffee morning on April 8th.

No one can doubt that Mrs Gaskell's influence is still felt in Knutsford when they see Hollingford Place being

built by Alfred McAlpine. I am most grateful to them for giving me the air fare to attend the University of Kansas' two-day conference on 'Queen Victoria's Jubilees' from March 24th to 26th. I hope to have the opportunity to promote our Society too.

Manchester Central Library has bought several Gaskell letters which will be the subject of future articles. The Language and Literature Library (4th Floor - good lift which 'chats' to you) has a small display from April 6th to the end of the month: 'Elizabeth Gaskell: fundraiser, background to some recently acquired letters on the Manchester cotton famine, and the fund for Thomas Wright, prison philanthropist'.

It is a little too soon to give details of the summer outing but keep the last Sunday in June free provisionally, to go to North Wales.

Hope to see you on April 25th.

JOAN LEACH

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#### THE COMPLETE ENGLISH COUNTRY ESTATE

Tatton celebrates the visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales exactly one hundred years ago.

The vast cellars are providing the kitchens with food for final preparation.

Re-enactment of Victorian life in the servants rooms, work rooms and in the sumptuous state rooms touches all your senses.

The magnificent mansion contains a collection of fine antiques and furniture, many paintings and superb decor.

The glorious gardens, medieval Old Hall, deer park and farm complete Tatton's picture.

Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN, England



#### CROSS STREET CHAPEL

The history of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, dates back over three and a quarter centuries. It was founded in 1662 by supporters of the Collegiate Church of St Mary (now the Cathedral) for the Preacher, Rev Henry Newcome, M who was deprived on his living, together with over two thousand other Church of England "Ministers of Conscience" who could not take the oath and sign the Covenant at the time of "The Reformation" and were outcast as "Nonconformist".

An Act was passed to prevent them being within five miles of their churches and for ten years he continued to engage in pastoral duties, preaching in private houses, and occasionally illegally in conventicles.

He received a licence for preaching in his own house in April 1672 under an Act of Toleration, and in May one for the adjoining Barn Chapel, thought to be Thomas Stockton's Barn in Shudehill, (probably the first licences to be obtained in Lancashire) ever amongst his people and they were determined on his staying in Manchester. There is reason to believe from the "History" written by Rev H H Johnson that although services for many years in the converted "Cold House" Barn Chapel were irregular, a continuous nucleus of a congregation was maintained under Newcome's ministry and a stated income was raised for him. From July 1687 Rev John Chorlton was appointed as assistant to him and regular timed services at the same hours as the Parish Church were held.

A site near by on Plungon's Meadow, and facing Acres Field, which was then the Annual Fairground but is now St Ann's Square, was acquired by Nathaniel Gaskell (later to become the Grandfather of Clive of India) and other members of the congregation. Further Acts of Toleration were passed and in 1693 building of the Chapel on the present site commenced, being completed and opened June 24th 1694, on which occasion Henry Newcome preached the first religious service in it. He preached his last sermon there on June 13th 1695, and died in the following September.

Since then the Chapel has achieved many wonderful things and been an inspiration to many people in this country and overseas.

Until 1780 the Chapel remained Presbyterian before gradually changing to mainly free Christian and Unitarian. The Unitarians in Manchester and Warrington were in the forefront of moral education from the foundation of Cross Street Chapel until the present day. The Schoolhouse and Chapel room built in 1734 on the lines of Chetham's School, for 40 poor scholars, functioned as a school for over 80 years and is still in use today.

The first suggestion of a Mechanics Institute came from Rev Dr Thomas Barnes DD, who was appointed at Cross Street as assistant minister in 1780. This institute, built later in David Street (renamed Cooper Street), was where Rev William Gaskell took classes in Literature at a Working Men's College started in Manchester in 1858, for students of sixteen and over, able to read and write.

With William's appointment as lecturer at Owen's College, later to become Manchester University, when he took with him his large following of Working Men to increase the serious decline in student entry, the link with Cross Street and education continued.

Elizabeth and her daughters were all teachers at some time, Meta and Julia as superintendents at the large, free Day and Sunday School which stood on the site in Lower Mosley Street, now occupied by the Midland Hotel (one of my aunts was in Miss Julia's class).

Education and scientific discovery is of little use if people do not know the difference between right and wrong, and Good and Evil; Cross Street Chapel and its dedicated ministers and workers have striven to convey that moral code which is the basis of true religion and without which there can be no peace or security.

H HEWERDINE, FRSH

Editor's note: The Chapel was destroyed in the blitz of 23rd December 1940 but services continued without

a break until it was rebuilt in 1959. The Memorial Hall, built in 1864, where William worked with the Home Missionary Board, can still be seen at the corner of Albert Square.

For further reading:

Cross Street Chapel and its College 1786-1915 by Lester Burney (1983)

Cross Street Chapel Schools 1734-1942 by Lester Burney (1977)

William Gaskell 1805-84, a Portrait by Barbara Brill M/c Lit & Phil.

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#### GASKELL ON TAPE

A new venture for the Manchester Central Library is the provision of literature on cassette for home loan. These include two Gaskell items which have also been added to the Gaskell collection for reference use.

Prunella Scales reads from Cranford. Two cassettes, approximate duration 2 hours 27 minutes, produced by Argo Spoken Word Department, London Records Ltd, 15 St George Street, London W1. Kenneth Branagh reads Cousin Phillis, complete and unabridged, three cassettes, duration 3 hours 55 minutes. Produced by Cover to Cover Cassettes Ltd, Dene House, Lockeridge, Marlborough, Wiltshire.

These tapes may be borrowed from the Language and Literature Library, Manchester Central Library, St Peter's Square, for a charge of 10 pence per cassette per week on any public library ticket.

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# ELIZABETH GASKELL IN ITALIAN TRANSLATION

The translation into Italian of the writings of Mrs Gaskell began in 1929 with the publication of La cugina Fillide (Cousin Phillis) by the firm of Sonzogno of Milan. This was ascribed to Gastone Rossi, who may be noted especially for his over-confident attitude and, it might be added, for the excessive assurance with which he confronts the text of the story. Not only does he depart from a faithful adherence to the writer's own words, but where it seems to him that she is too long-winded, he makes drastic cuts, which are often dangerous and misleading in their effect. Yet he does not follow this practice in his epilogue - there it is quite the contrary. Perhaps not being satisfied with the novelist's conclusion, the translator tags on in arbitrary fashion some lines which end the tale in a heavy, moralistic way, pointing out to the reader that Cousin Phillis is pervaded by that "Christian spirit which encourages resignation". Apart from the fact that La cugina Fillide appeared in a series significantly labelled "Cheap Romantic", it should be said that it was perhaps not accidental that it should have been the first Gaskell title to be published in Italy. The references to Dante and Manzoni, as well as the cultural interest shown in the Italian language by the protagonists - ("I had a capital novel by Manzoni, just the thing for a beginner ..." says Holdsworth) - must have had more than a secondary influence at the time this long tale was chosen.

Above all, however, the best known and most read Gaskell book is Cranford. In the histories of English Literature most widespread in Italy (see Mario Praz and Carlo Izzo) it is presented as the summit of Elizabeth Gaskell's art. Due to this critical reputation of Cranford there have been a number of translations of it, seemingly excessive when compared with the neglect surrounding the other Gaskell novels. Apart from a first translation of Cranford in 1935, undertaken by A Gennasi (now practically unobtainable) mention must be made of the accurate version by Mario Casalino,

issued under the title of Il Paese delle Nobili Signore (Milan. Rizzoli. 1050. Collana B.U.R. 211-213). In the anonymous introduction to the volume (probably written by the translator) it is claimed that Cranford is Mrs Gaskell's masterpiece. "It is a novel where one does not look for important adventures, remarkable events, or unexpected stage effects: what animates it and makes it unforgettable is its smiling picture of the characters, simple, modest, quiet folk, a trifle eccentric, but even heroic in their submissive dignity, and exemplary in their honesty and solidarity" (p.6). Only a year separates this translation by Casalino from that by Augusta Grosso for the authoritative series, "Great Foreign Writers", directed by G V Amoretti (Turin. U.T.E.T. 1951). Here the translator seems very intent on interpreting the humorous vein of Cranford, attempting to capture and express the special gifts of Mrs Gaskell's art. In her introduction to the volume Augusta Grosso pointedly observes: "Mrs Gaskell succeeds in being neither pedantic nor tedious, even in the apparently monotonous texture of her story, thanks to her vivifying power and her very particular kind of humour ... (this) arises from a sincere and most vigilant observation of the comic aspect of the traits of her characters; but there is no exaggeration so that they remain living beings, and do not become caricatures" (pp.9-10).

It was necessary to wait exactly thirty years for another Gaskell translation. In 1981, Mary Barton, translated by Fedora Dei, with an introduction by Anna Luisa Zazo, appeared as one of the series of Oscar/Narrativa (Milan. Mondadori. 1981). Although in one respect this Italian version is precise and efficient, partly due to a textual decision which rejected the reproduction of dialect forms and used only normal Italian, from another angle it must be regretted that the beautiful poetical quotations which Mrs Gaskell used as headings for each chapter were omitted. It seems to me absurd that the translator justified such omissions by declaring that the epigraphs interfered with the "smooth flow of the narrative" in the Italian version. It must also be observed that A L Zazo in her introduction

presents a rather subdued image of our writer to the Italian reader. "Let us try to look into her face: this wise woman, good and courteous, who knows how to judge, yet allows herself to be moved. It is a face typically nineteenth century, even more typically Victorian" (p.v). It is difficult to understand exactly what A L Zazo means when she speaks of "typically nineteenth century and typically Victorian", and it is hoped that she does not intend to deny with such expressions the individuality of the artistic talent of the writer. For truly behind A L Zazo's opinion and evaluation we can discover the phantom of David Cecil, who saw Mrs Gaskell as a mild and tender dove when compared with other Victorian writers. But A L Zazo re-establishes the individuality of our writer when she declares that the vein of melodrama and false sentiment does not belong to her art: on the contrary Mrs Gaskell possesses the quality of an intense realism concentrated on a minute and close observation of the domestic universe.

FRANCESCO MARRONI

(Translated by Mary Thwaite)

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### SILVERDALE

We hope to visit this beautiful area for our summer outing in 1988, but if you are in the area and need information Miss Elizabeth Davis, 54 Michealson Avenue, Torrisholme Avenue, Lancs LA4 6SE, would help members to trace the Gaskell associations.

Elizabeth, daughter of Mrs Elsie Davis, a Society member, has devised a fascinating, scenic walk. Send a stamped addressed envelope to me (Joan Leach) for a copy if required. You can reach Silverdale by train from Lancaster.

There is also a booklet, 'In and around Silverdale', by David Peter available from Lunesdale Publishing Group Ltd, 38-42 Market Street, Carnforth, Lancs, price £1.95

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### CLEGHORN

A few months ago I was browsing through an old book of Burns' poems and letters - the print was too small to encourage close reading - when suddenly the name CLEGHORN 'jumped out' of the page. The letter, dated 31st March 1788, was addressed to Mr Robert Cleghorn.

Burns sent a verse he had written to an air, "Captain O'Kean", which he remembered was Robert Cleghorn's favourite, then added:-

'I am so harassed with care and anxiety about this farming project of mine, that my Muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming ...'

Now, here was a thought-provoking association - CLEGHORN and farming was also the Gaskell connection. Elizabeth was given her unusual middle name after James Cleghorn who had helped her father, William Stevenson, to set up in experimental, scientific farming at Laughton (according to W Gerin and the Dict. of Nat.Biog.). But this was James Cleghorn, whereas the Burns letter was to Robert.

Still, it seemed worth investigating, so I wrote to the Burns Society for information on Cleghorn, either or both, James and Robert. Back came details from the Burns Chronicle, 1962, listing 'CLEGHORN, MR ROBERT, SAUGHTON-MILLS. He was a farmer at Saughton who was made a burgess and guild-brother of Edinburgh on 21st September 1786, in the right of his father, JAMES, a brewer at Gairnshall. He was a member of the Crochallan Fencibles, a friend of Burns and the recipient of some of the poet's spiciest prose and verse.'

I am told that it was Robert Cleghorn's step-son, Dr John Allen, who introduced Byron to Burns' poetry.

I can only conjecture that this James, father of Robert, may have been the friend of William Stevenson; only

further research might reveal the facts. More relevant to Gaskell study is the mention of SAUGHTON MILLS. I went back to check Winifred Gerin's biography which gives 'Laughton', as does the D.N.B. and my copy of Ellis Chadwick's 'Mrs Gaskell's Haunts, Homes and Stories'. A Scottish member of my WEA class knew of Saughton Mills, near Edinburgh and that it should be pronounced 'SOCKTON'. I next consulted Mrs Sutherland, an Edinburgh member, who found a map showing Saughton and Saughton Mills and a description of the house which had 'at one time been a pleasant residence on the bank of the Water of Leith, about three miles west from Edinburgh'. It had a 'wheel staircase', cellars, turrets and 'King Charles' room has an ornamental plaster ceiling ... on the wall at the frieze will be seen the insignia of royalty ... over the doorway are the arms and initials of Patrick Eleis, a merchant and burgess of Edinburgh, with the date 1623 and the pious inscription on the lintel beneath:

'BLISIT BE GOD FOR ALL HIS GIFTIS'

This description dates from early this century (I think); I don't know if the house still stands.

Mrs Sutherland noted that the Water of Leith must have been where William obtained out-of-season salmon which he believed to have caused his skin complaint.

Dr John Chapple is inclined to agree with me that 'Laughton' and 'Saughton Mills' are one and the same (unless someone can find us a 'Laughton' near Edinburgh); he observed that Mrs Chadwick has 'Saughton Mills near Edinburgh'. But she didn't in my copy, which had 'Laughton'!

This mystery was solved when I realised that mine was 1910 edition. Professor Chapple's was 1913, new and revised. So I think there can be no doubt that Saughton Mills was the place where both William Stevenson and Robert Cleghorn did their farming.

JOAN LEACH

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BOOK NOTES by Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell by Tessa Brodetsky. Berg (Leamington Spa) £3.95

Members may already be familiar with this book in Berg Women's Series which includes Gertrude Bell, Mme de Staël and Emily Dickinson. This is a short and simple book but very comprehensive and well-balanced. It makes an excellent introduction to the subject for the general student. There is one chapter of biography plus a chapter on each of the six novels, Life of Charlotte Brontë and the main stories. Each chapter contains a summary of the plot as well as general criticism backed up by quotations and bibliographical references. There are about a dozen illustrations.

We must also welcome a new edition of Mary Barton in the Oxford University Press' World's Classics series (£2.50 in paperback). This is a revision by Professor Edgar Wright of the Laurentian University, Ontario, and author of Mrs Gaskell: the basis for reassessment (1965), of the 1906 edition in the same series edited by Clement Shorter. This new edition includes an improved introduction and explanatory notes. It also provides a contrast with the only other edition currently in print, the Penguin edition which is based on the first edition of 1848. The World's Classics edition is based on the third edition of 1849. Mrs Gaskell, in her letters, expresses her displeasure at the numerous errors regarding the part written in Lancashire dialect in the first edition. The bulk of these corrections were made to the third edition so that it may be regarded as closer to Mrs Gaskell's intentions. Other differences between first and third editions are improved footnotes to the dialect terms, the addition of chapter titles and the replacement of the motto in chapter 30.

Professor Wright in his introduction puts the novel into its social and historical context. Mrs Gaskell's observation was accurate but selective. The tendency of critics to divide the book into two parts, the moving story of John Barton with its social realism and the more melodramatic treatment of the story of Mary as the novel

reaches its climax, is an over-simplification. The latter is just as important to the structure of the novel and displays her narrative skills to the full.

In addition Professor Wright has included twenty five pages of explanatory notes, an increase of fourteen over the Penguin edition. Some may argue that to be told that Cumberland is a "northern lakeland county" and that Delilah was Samson's wife is a little superfluous but it reflects an increasingly international audience with diverging cultural backgrounds. However his more detailed biographical notes on minor figures such as Madame Catalani, and Ebenezer Elliott are much appreciated.

(Editor's Note: DR EDGAR WRIGHT and TESSA BRODETSKY are members of our Society)

The following also make mention of Elizabeth Gaskell:

Victorian Idyllic Fiction: pastoral strategies by Shelagh Hunter PhD (University of Warwick) Lecturer, Yale University. Macmillan £29.50

A complex argument on the Victorian idyll, its structure and the inter-relationship with plot and character. Idyll is defined as novels describing the simple life from the traditional pastoral to the Victorian novels of social realism. At the centre of the study are Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy and George Eliot but mention is also made of George Sand and Mary Mitford. As well as Cranford, Mary Barton and North and South the book includes a lengthy and enthusiastic discussion of Cousin Phillis. Reference and comment is made on earlier critics such as John Gross, John Lucas and Raymond Williams.

The novel in the Victorian age: a modern introduction by Robin Gilmour, Senior Lecturer in English in the University of Aberdeen. Edward Arnold £7.95 (paperback) A more general and straightforward survey of the novel with authors from the end of the century well represented eg. George Moore, Mrs Humphry Ward and Henry James. Mrs Gaskell is linked with Disraeli and Kingsley in the chapter "Sense of the present" though there is no

detailed comparison. The author praises her confidence in handling her material which came from personal experience and enabled her to develop her characters more fully than other authors. Mary Barton and North and South are noted for their realism, but he feels that Cranford needs to be defended against a decline in its prestige. Cousin Phillis is confined to a single paragraph but is also highly complimentary.

) Women in the English novel. 1800-1900 by Merryn Williams (PhD Cambridge and former Open University Lecturer) Macmillan £7.95, first published 1984.

) Though intended as a study of the treatment of women in the novel (there are chapters on Scott and Dickens), there is a preponderance of women novelists and the problems they found in pursuing their career. It deals with the whole century from Jane Austen and is stronger on the earlier part. Elizabeth Gaskell warrants a chapter of her own and is described as the novelist who writes most realistically. Her work is much more varied but is here discussed under the headings Working Women, Old Maids, Fallen Women and the Duty of Women. Sylvia's Lovers is considered to be her greatest book.

Also of note a periodical article "Dialect as 'realism': Hard Times and the industrial novel" by Patricia Ingham in Review of English Studies, November 1986. This acknowledges Dickens' debt to Mrs Gaskell in his use of dialect.

) Members may also be interested in a new book by our Vice-President, Dr Enid Duthie, The Brontës and Nature, Macmillan £27.50, which by discussing the different ways the three sisters responded to nature provides a new approach to an understanding of their work.

-oOo-

Manchester Central Library besides buying the Fletcher letter has acquired three very interesting letters addressed to Vernon Lushington and concerning the cotton famine in Manchester caused by the American Civil War. Christine Lingard, Sub-Librarian and G.S. member has arranged a small display of related material: 6th April to end of month (library closes at 5 pm on Saturdays)

LETTER ON BOUGHTON PARK

Dear Editor,

On page 10 of the Gaskell Society Newsletter No.2 you enquired to the public as to the whereabouts of Boughton House, Worcestershire, a house Mrs Gaskell stopped at in 1850. I am pleased to tell you that Boughton House still exists: it is the clubhouse on an exclusive golf course, situated in the Bransford Road, about two miles from Worcester centre.

It would be interesting to know the exact date of her stay, because if it had been Springtime, she would have good cause to "write home" about the air doing her good. In 1850 the cherry and apple orchards (of which there was an abundance in this region) would have exuded the fragrance of their blossoms. (Ed: the date was December 2nd, 1850)

Boughton House is but a few hundred yards from the River Teme, and the walk from Bransford Bridge to Powick Bridge along the river bank was a favourite of both Sir Edward Elgar and W B Leader (artist). Malvern Hills can be seen eight miles away in the distance, particularly beautiful in sunsets - when they seem to transfuse through every imaginable blue.

Mrs Gaskell would have been happy there, then! Now, alas, Worcester is a concrete extension of Birmingham.

Yours faithfully

RICHARD MOON

(Ed: We are pleased to hear from Richard Moon, 'book man' of Hay-on-Wye.

Rod Monnington (Where can I find Mrs Gaskell G.N. No.2) adds "from B rts Gazetteer - 'Boughton Village with halt station, GWR, in county, and 1½ miles SW of, Worcester. Boughton Paril is a seat. On the 1" 7th series O.S. map sheet 143 (453) Boughton village and Boughton Park are no longer named.

-oOo-

THOMAS WRIGHT, THE GOOD SAMARITAN

A few months ago a Knutsford firm of stamp dealers, Sandafayre, brought to my notice an unpublished letter of Elizabeth Gaskell's which they had for sale. I was able to tell them that it concerned not 'Mr Wight a (wrongly?) convicted ex-prisoner' but Mr Thomas Wright, the prison visitor. Manchester Central Library has bought this interesting letter.

Plymouth Grove, Manchester

February 17

(1852 postmark)

My Dear Mrs Fletcher,

The accompanying memorial will show you what has been done in accordance with your advice; but I am afraid Government has little to spare; they talk of a pension of £70 only, which is very well as a recognition of his merits, but it will be but little for him to live upon, he his wife and two children and two fatherless grand children, with his generous disposition. There is to be some public meeting in London, where I do not know. I hope it will be announced in some widely read newspaper. Meanwhile his friends here are collecting subscriptions to be invested in an annuity for him; there was a public meeting held here last week, the Mayor in the chair, and £380 subscribed there and then but little has since then come in, and that principally from poor people, convicts and prison officers, and although their mites are a beautiful testimony, yet we want the knowledge of this subscription to spread far and wide, and be as 'national' a thing as we can. There are many people who know Mr Wright at Gosport - can you my dear Mrs Fletcher interest any of them. He is very feeble and out of health. We are all well, thank God.

Yours very affect(ionate)ly

E C Gaskell

This letter is, without a doubt, one of those which Mrs Gaskell wrote 'without end, till (my) wrist actually swelled with it' (GL 116a) and she felt 'very stupid altogether with writing up and down the kingdom on behalf of our dear Mr Wright' (GL 114a). It has considerable interest for Gaskell students and many implications.

Some of the details emerge in *The Life of Thomas Wright of Manchester: 'The Prison Philanthropist'* with a preface by the Earl of Shaftesbury, written by T W McDermid, grandson of Wright, in 1876, the year after he died.

This tells how he was brought up by an aunt who had attended Cross Street Chapel in the days of Rev Dr Barnes (who was also an influence on William Stevenson). She remembered, as a girl, carrying a stool for Wesley to stand on at one of his open-air meetings in Manchester. She became a Methodist and Wright received a strict moral training under her. Perhaps too strict for when he became a foundry worker, at five shillings a week, he became mixed up with 'the most wicked men and boys ... gave up going to the house of God and ... profaned God's Sabbath'. However he returned to his faith in a 'conversion as dramatic as St Paul's'.

At the foundry he became foreman at the age of 24, rising at five in the morning and working until six. One day a recently employed workman was dismissed when it was discovered that he had spent time in prison. Wright pleaded for him to be given a chance to prove himself, offering to stand bail for him. By the time he had gained his point the man had already collected his belongings and departed. Wright followed him, found him sitting by the roadside, miserable and penniless, then brought him back. Perhaps it was as a result of this incident that Wright inaugurated the discharged prisoners aid society.

He gained the confidence of prison authorities who allowed him to visit the cells, getting to know the men so that when they were discharged he could help them to

find work and lodgings. This often meant guaranteeing their good conduct with deposits of his own money and visiting them every week to render any further assistance.

In his tenth annual report HM Inspector of Prisons (1845) commended Wright's work, noting that out of 96 of his protégés only 4 returned to prison - one of these served 28 days and was now 'following an honest occupation'; the remaining three had been transported, two from Knutsford and a third from London.

As he himself worked long hours his prison visiting was done in the evenings and on Sundays. Besides Manchester's New Bailey Prison, chaplains of other gaols would send for him to visit condemned men. Ragged schools also claimed his time and, at the invitation of Captain Frederick Holland (Mrs Gaskell's cousin) he appeared on a London platform to address an annual meeting of the Ragged School Union.

He and his work were well known to the Gaskells as Susanna Winkworth wrote: 'At the time when I began to know him (he was a frequent and always welcome visitor at the Gaskell's) about 1848, he was a beautiful, white-haired old man, full of interesting experiences, and with almost as much humour as pathos'. (*Memorials of Two Sisters* ed. M J Shaen)

The first mention of him in Mrs Gaskell's letters was in May 1849 (GL 47) when she spared time from being 'lionised' in London following the publication of 'Mary Barton', to visit 'Tot-hill Fields prison to see the silent associated system of which our dear Mr Wright thinks so highly'.

On one of his visits, a year later, Elizabeth commented: 'The said good Mr Wright drank tea here last night, and said 'By jingo' with great unction, when very animated, much to William's amusement, not to say delight'. It was at the time when they were about to move to the Plymouth Grove house and she was worrying about the expenses: 'My dear (to Tottie Fox GL 69) it's £150 a year, and I daresay we shall all be ruined; and I've already

asked about the ventilation of the new Borough gaol and bespoken Mr Wright to visit us'.

It was about this time that Wright's work was becoming recognised. An article in Chamber's Magazine read by the young artist G F Watts inspired him to paint a picture of The Good Samaritan using Wright as his 'model', though it was not to be a portrait which Richard Cobden felt was a disadvantage when it came to fund raising:

London 9th February 1850

My Dear Mrs Gaskell

I hope you will not think me neglectful in not having before replied to your letter which you did me the honour to send me upon the subject of the painting of the 'Good Samaritan' - my first suggestion to Mrs Schwabe on reading your note was that to identify the picture with Mr Wright's philanthropic mission it ought to contain his portrait - This I suppose is not possible - Without this I do not see exactly how it can be identified with his proceedings in Manchester - Further let me add my candid doubts whether his character be sufficiently known and appreciated by the wealthy inhabitants of your city to ensure the purchase of a large historical picture to be placed as a tribute to his virtues in one of your public buildings - To one so profoundly acquainted with human nature as yourself, and especially the human nature immediately surrounding you - I need not say how completely the words 'a prophet is not without honour etc.' apply to a man of Mr Wright's humble sphere of action in Manchester. - I mention this in all candour and confidence hoping I may be mistaken - I will endeavour to accompany Mrs Schwabe at the beginning of the week to see the picture, and at all events will let you know through her my opinion of it, which after all is not worth much, as I am not a connoisseur - Again hoping you will excuse my delay in writing.

Believe me

ever faithfully yours

Rhd Cobden

My kind remembrances to Mr Gaskell

(Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell, ed. R D Waller)



'THE GOOD SAMARITAN' painted by G F Watts



This did not discourage Mrs Gaskell, and a letter from Catherine Winkworth to a friend (Feb 1850, Memorials of Two Sisters) throws further light on the subject: 'One of the things Mrs Gaskell has been busy about is a picture that is going to be painted ... of Mr Wright the prison philanthropist. She got a very hurried note a few days ago, from Mr Tom Taylor, saying that a young artist friend of his, Mr Watts - (does your uncle know him?) Mr Taylor calls him 'one of the noblest natures I ever knew, great genius etc' - having heard of Mr Wright's good deeds, was so struck by them, that he determined to paint a picture of 'The Good Samaritan', the Samaritan himself to be Mr Wright, and to present the picture to some Manchester Institution. Mr Tom Taylor, however and some other friends, knowing that Mr Watts could not well afford to paint for nothing, and wishing to show respect at once to the artist and to the philanthropist, are subscribing to purchase the picture still meaning to give it to some Manchester Institution'.

He showed it at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1850 with the dedication, 'Painted as an expression of the artist's admiration and respect for the noble philanthropy of Thomas Wright of Manchester'.

Mrs Gaskell did not know of Watts either, as he was just starting on his career, but she wrote to Eliza Fox (GL 63) 'Now write and tell me about Mr Watts.

Mr Cobden will be here the end of this week and I want to work him up, but must know about Mr Watts'. Ever thorough, she also set about copying 'Prison reports, by way of statistical information as to Mr Wright' to supply Mr Tom Taylor with information to circulate in London and he immediately started writing to ask people to go and see the picture and 'got Mr Schwabe, the Bishop and Dr Bell all pretty well interested'.

Mr Tom Taylor was a barrister at the time, soon to be appointed to the Board of Health, but his interests were literary and he later became professor of English Literature at University College, clearly of the absent-minded variety.

'That Mr Tom Taylor is born to get me into scrapes I verily believe! Did I tell you (to Eliza Fox GL 70) of his wishing to be introduced to Mr Schwabe (a Manchester calico printer) to plan about Manchester's having the Good Samaritan (which Manchester somewhat contemptuously declines) so I wrote a very proper note of introduction: and the trouble is to me to write a proper (*italics*) note no one can tell save those who have seen my improper ones ...'

She went on to describe how Taylor had missed several appointments with Mr Schwabe who, as a result 'looks on him as not a good person to conduct business affairs, and draws out of the whole, and thinks it a pity Mr Watts has such injudicious friends' - and such a quantity of persuasion and talking as I have wasted!'

However, her efforts were not wasted and the picture did find a home in Manchester where it can still be seen in the Art Gallery. Mrs Gaskell had found some way of making Wright personally known to Watts, for on July 1st 1850, the painter wrote: 'I return you my dear Madam my sincere thanks for the pleasure and the honour you have done me in making me acquainted with Mr Wright. Such noble natures are indeed rare, and proud should I feel in devoting my trifling talent, and the little time I think remains to me (his health was poor at the time) to the object of making known to the world its real but too often neglected riches ...'

Wright himself expressed his appreciation by the gift to Watts of half-a-dozen handkerchiefs!

In the same month as her efforts for Watts' picture, January 1850, Mrs Gaskell was involved by Thomas Wright in prison visiting, an experience which led to her writing 'Ruth'. In a letter to Charles Dickens (GL 61) she described the plight of a sixteen year old Irish girl in the New Bayley prison. She had been apprenticed to a dressmaker 'who was very profligate and connived at the girl's seduction by a surgeon in the neighbourhood who was called in when the poor creature was ill (when she came face to face with him unexpectedly, in his role as assistant prison doctor, she 'fainted dead away' and ...



he was dismissed from his post in consequence').

The girl had been decoyed into becoming a prostitute and 'for four months led the most miserable life'. In the hopes of killing herself, 'for no one had ever cared for her in this world', she drank, 'wishing it might be poison', pawned every article of clothing - and at last stole. I have been to see her in prison at Mr Wright's request'. Dickens knew of Thomas Wright and wrote an article in 'Household Words'; he also helped to arrange for the girl's emigration.

It was typical of Mrs Gaskell that she showed her sympathy practically, by helping to improve the girl's life and then addressing herself to the wider, underlying faults of society, writing 'Ruth' to stir the conscience.

Mrs Gaskell was just one of the 'dear Christian friends' named by Thomas Wright as having 'liberally assisted me in carrying out my object, and who gave me much valuable counsel and encouragement'. I was fascinated and surprised to note that he headed this list with 'Miss Mary Holland and Miss Lucy Holland of Knutsford'; others were 'Miss J E Wedgwood, Mrs Salis Schwabe, Miss Agnes Ewart, Mr D Darbishire, Captain Holland (5 others) ... and some few other Unitarian friends'.

It was two years later in 1852 that Mr Wright's failing health and strength, at the age of 62, caused his friends to start fund raising to enable him to give up his foundry work. The justices of the Salford Quarter Sessions sent a memorial to the First Lord of the Treasury, detailing his valuable work and asking for government support. This was on January 12th 1852; on February 9th a public meeting was held in Manchester with Mayor Robert Barnes in the chair, as Mrs Gaskell explained in her letter to Mrs Fletcher, though she did not add that William, along with J G Robberds, Thomas Greg and William Fairbairn, Charles Dickens and Lady Hatherton were either subscribers or on the committee.

As the fund grew, further attempts were made to obtain public funds when, on May 14th, a deputation waited upon Lord Derby, among them Lord Shaftesbury and Monckton

Milnes (later Lord Houghton). It was deemed that Wright's unofficial work did not qualify him for a civil list pension but £100 was allotted out of the Royal Bounty and with an annuity bought from the subscription fund, was enough for him to retire on. He wrote in his diary: 'May 4th, 1852. I gave up my employment at the foundry. What can render to my God for his especial mercies towards me?' On the same day Mrs Gaskell wrote, 'Mr Wright (came) too last night. He is a gentleman at large now'.

One must admire Wright's determination to go on with his prison work in his own way; he had turned down the offer of £800 a year as a prison inspector. Perhaps, though, fame had a bad effect on him, as it must have been Thomas Wright that Mrs Gaskell wrote of in this letter, although he is not named: 7th November 1859

... 'A very (*italics*) good man in Manchester was a few years ago brought into much notice for his philanthropy, and many people were only too glad to learn something of the peculiar methods by which he certainly reclaimed the erring. So he was asked about his experiences, and told many true (*italics*) interesting histories. Lately I have observed that it was difficult to 'bring him to book' as it were about his cases. He would tell one of a story that made one's heart bleed - tell it dramatically too which faculty is always a temptation, and when unwilling to let emotion die without passing into action one asked for the address etc - it always became vague - in different ways. For some time I have suspected that he told old (*italics*) true stories, as if they were happening now, or had happened yesterday. And just lately I have found that this temptation to excite his hearers strongly has led to pure invention (*italics*).'

How well she understood human frailties and how true was her own charitable nature. In another letter, about the same time she wrote 'Mr Thomas Wright, beautiful as he is in many ways, is not to be quite relied upon for his facts - and not at all for his opinions - which he generalises into two great theories - one that good mothers are all important - true - and another that we are all going to the dogs because 'people think so much about recreation now a days'. (GL 630)

Finally, the interest of this letter is also in the recipient, Mrs Fletcher. It was addressed to her at the home of her daughter, married to Sir John Richardson and living at Haslar, near Portsmouth. Her other daughter was married to Dr John Davy (brother of Sir Humphrey Davy) and the Gaskells enjoyed visiting them at their Ambleside home where they also met the Arnolds. The first mention of Mrs Fletcher and her daughter, Mrs Davy, in the Collected Letters comes in the same letter as the 'good Mr Wright' drinking tea at the Gaskell's and amusing William with his 'By jingo': 'Mrs Fletcher, Mrs Davy were to have come here this week with a maid ... Dear old lady! I wish she had come under our roof, but she was ill and could not'. (GL 69)

She did stay with them later and recorded in her autobiography (1875, Edinburgh) 'At Mrs Gaskell's we had great pleasure next day at breakfast of meeting Thomas Wright, a philanthropist of no ordinary cast of mind, profoundly pious and humble-minded with the most energetic devotion to the principle of doing good. He devotes every hour he can spare from his employment, that of overseer of an iron foundry, to visiting the prison and doing all he can to reclaim convicts from their evil ways ... he seldom allows himself more than four hours sleep'.

Mrs Fletcher had been a friend of William Stevenson when he lived in Edinburgh. His work as a literary editor brought him into contact with the intellectual, social circle which Mrs Fletcher belonged to. She was delighted to find, on being introduced to the authoress of 'Mary Barton', that Elizabeth was the daughter of William Stevenson and both shared a love of Edinburgh. When Mrs Gaskell set 'Tales around the Sofa' in Edinburgh she used Mrs Fletcher's maiden name of Dawson for her narrator.

To complete the research into the story of this letter it needs someone to find out if Mrs Gaskell's appeal to Mrs Fletcher and to the 'many people who know Mr Wright at Gosport' bore any fruit. Did the people of Gosport have reason to know him because of the transportation of prisoners?

The letter was folded and addressed on the outside:

'Mrs Fletcher  
Sir John Richardson's  
Haslar  
Gosport'

A note in the index of 'Letters of Mrs Gaskell' (Chapple and Pollard) to the effect that Sir John Richardson was an Arctic Explorer who searched for Franklin, sent me to look him up in the Dictionary of National Biography where I found a five column entry, which I must resist the temptation to relate here. Mrs Gaskell refers to his wife as 'Lady (North-Pole) Richardson'; she was his third wife, born Mary Fletcher, daughter of Mrs Fletcher of Edinburgh. Richardson was a man of many talents - surgeon, explorer, naturalist and whilst he was physician to the Royal Hospital at Haslar, T H Huxley was his pupil. One story I must relate concerns his early days when he entered Dumfries Grammar School, on the same day as Robert Burns' eldest son, the poet lent him a copy of 'The Faery Queen'. The DNB states that Richardson was a friend of Burns 'who from 1790-96 spent evenings at Nith Place' (his home), but as Richardson was born in 1787 it seems more likely that Burns was a friend of his father.

Who would have thought that one letter of Mrs Gaskell's could have led to so many fascinating connections?

JOAN LEACH

-oOo-

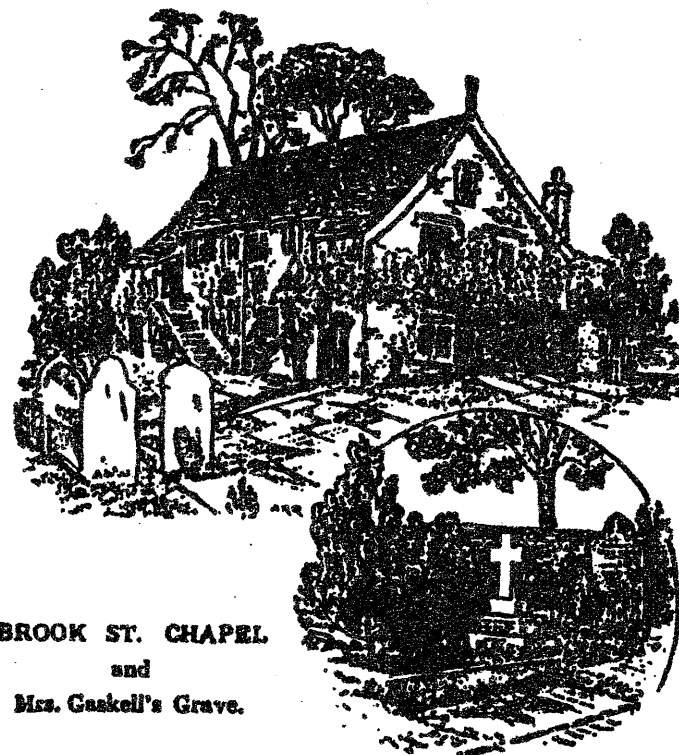
Editor: Mrs J Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

I shall be pleased to receive any information or suggestions for future newsletters.

Annual Membership: £4, to Secretary or Treasurer:

Mrs B Kinder  
16 Sandileigh Avenue  
Knutsford

# The Gaskell Society



BROOK ST. CHAPEL  
and  
Mrs. Gaskell's Grave.

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1987

NO. 4

EDITOR'S LETTER

Our Society has had a busy and successful year, steadily recruiting new members and launching our first Journal. Alan Shelston, our editor, had only recently returned to Manchester University from lecturing in the States when he attended our AGM in September last year, little knowing that he was marked as my target to take on this project; he capitulated with good grace. Janet Allen, librarian at The Portico Library, Manchester, has been invaluable as assistant editor, seeing Gaskell Society Journal Vol. 1 through the presses.

We intend to continue the bi-annual newsletters to go out with details of April and September meetings.

As many of our members live locally, we have held several informal lunch or coffee meetings, which have proved popular. Perhaps one of our London or South-East members would like to plan a similar meeting?

We are indebted to Professor Yuriko Yamawaki of Jissen Women's University, Tokyo, for acting as our Japanese secretary, making our activities known in Japan and enrolling members there. Mrs Yamawaki was able to join us at our Manchester meeting in April and hopes to be with us in September, too. Our Vice-President, Professor Francesco Marroni, expects to join us from Italy, and Dr Edgar Wright plans to come over from Canada - quite an international line-up. Incidentally, the Daily Telegraph will have an article about the Society (though probably in its Northern edition only).

The Gaskell Society has had contacts in various ways with other literary societies. We are especially close to the Brontë Society and Jean Hobson, a member of the Brontë council has agreed to be liaison officer between us. Many Dickensians enjoyed an afternoon in Knutsford, escorted by Gaskellians, while they had a conference at Salford University in July. Barbara Brill and I have corresponded with an active Wirral branch of the Angela Thirkell Society.

The Secretary of the George Eliot Fellowship co-ordinates the Alliance of Literary Societies. This proved its

worth recently when the Nuneaton Free School Building (c1745), mentioned in 'Scenes of Clerical Life', was threatened with demolition; so many other literary groups raised objections that it will be restored instead.

We have planned a weekend of various events around the AGM on 26th September, and hope many members will be able to participate. Please return forms by 12th September.

Our Chairman, Dr Ken Walley, is unfortunately ill in hospital and may not be able to join us at the forthcoming AGM. We wish him a speedy recovery.

By now you should all have received our first Journal which I hope you have enjoyed. Our costs have been kept down by advertising; offers or suggestions for the next edition will be welcome.

JOAN LEACH

\* \* \* \* \*

#### SOCIETY CALENDAR

AGM Etc - last weekend in September in Knutsford

Spring Meeting - last Saturday in April in Manchester

Newsletters - one month before each meeting

Journal - to be ready for collection at April meeting

Outing -- Next year to Silverdale. Please let us know whether the last Sunday in June is the best date (last outing not too well supported on this date), or whether to have it on the Sunday after the AGM in September.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

These are due on 1st September (I mistakenly put 1st October on some cards). If you are not coming to the AGM events, please send £4.00 (£6.00 sterling overseas) with s.a.e. for membership card, to the Treasurer, Mrs B Kinder, 16 Sandleigh Avenue, Knutsford, or the Secretary (address p.24)

#### THE "WHITFIELD" GASKELL COLLECTION

by Mary Thwaite

This valuable collection of books and documents relating to Mrs Gaskell was presented to Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford (where the writer's grave may be visited), by the late Professor A. Stanton Whitfield (1900-1975), on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of her birth in 1960. The library was the result of a lifelong and devoted interest, which went back to the Professor's student days. His thesis for an Oxford B.Litt. degree was upon the subject of Mrs Gaskell's life and work, and later this was the basis for his book published in 1929. This may now strike the reader as somewhat exuberant and romantic in style, but it ranges with scholarly perception over the whole extent of the writer's work, appraising this in detail, and showing how much wider and deeper was her art and achievement than "the fragrant posy of Cranford" which had too often dominated critical comment. In fact, his book hints at the re-assessment that was to emerge in the 1960s.

The preface of Professor Whitfield's book is dated from Niigata-si, in Japan, where he had been teaching English literature since 1925, the date his book had been completed. He returned to England before the outbreak of the war, but his influence in Japan did not seem to fade. While he was there several Gaskell stories were published in editions with notes for Japanese students. One of them is an edition he edited of The Sexton's Hero, and other tales. These have formed part of the collection, and there are also several later studies in Japanese on Mrs Gaskell, the most recent being the thesis by Mrs Yuriko Yamawaki, a visitor whom we were pleased to welcome to the Society's Manchester meeting in April.

Mr Geoffrey Sharps, who has described the Professor as an "old friend and mentor", has told me how he brought the books to the Knutsford Chapel on that day twenty-seven years ago. They were received by the minister, the Rev. Albert Smith, who gave much attention to their care and cataloguing, and who also made further additions by his

appeal for donations. Mr Smith also compiled an interesting series of scrapbooks containing many cuttings, photos etc. relating to the Chapel and Knutsford and the links with Mrs Gaskell, especially during the 1960 birthday celebrations.

Since then various enquirers and scholars have found this collection very useful, and it has been enriched by generous donations of some of their published works. During the last few years, however, conditions in the Chapel vestry, where the books were housed, much deteriorated and the books were becoming increasingly affected by damp and lack of ventilation. Because of this, and also the need to make the material more readily available, a scheme of co-operation has been arranged with the County Library, which came into effect this spring. The "Whitfield" collection has now been transferred from the Chapel to the Knutsford Library (a building just across the road from the Chapel), where it is now kept "on permanent loan", and accommodated in excellent glass-fronted bookcases generously provided by the County Council. The County Library has also given to the Chapel an exhibition case for installation in the gallery, and so it is now intended to develop this, and have on show there a small display of material about Mrs Gaskell and her connection with the locality for the benefit of visitors.

A typewritten catalogue and a revised index on cards may be consulted at the Knutsford Library, and I still act as "custodian" on behalf of the Chapel. As a former professional librarian I find that closer co-operation with the Knutsford library staff is most useful, and it is hoped that we can deal with enquiries more thoroughly than was formerly possible, especially as there is a good deal of Gaskell material at the Knutsford library. Some rare items there are not in the "Whitfield" collection, notably the first edition of Mary Barton, and the first volume of Dickens' new Journal, Household Words, where Mrs Gaskell's first contribution, Lizzie Leigh, began as a serial on the first page on 30th March 1850.

The "Whitfield" collection very much reflects its former owner's keen interest in everything relating to Mrs Gaskell's life and art - there are even contemporary guide books for her Italian journeys. Pencil notes have sometimes been added as comment or correction to some books about the writer, and there are many scarce items. These include My Diary, the (later privately printed) record kept of "the early years of my daughter Marianne", from March 10th 1835 to October 28th 1838; also the account of Clopton Hall, as it appeared in William Howitt's Visits to remarkable places (1840); and first editions of most of her novels. The Life of Charlotte Brontë is well represented by many editions including the first three. Three autographed letters were also owned by Professor Whitfield, who quoted from them in his book long before they were known and published. These are now being deposited in the County Record Office for safe keeping, but excellent photocopies with transcripts have been obtained, and these are at the Knutsford library.

The latest extension to this Gaskell library has resulted from the interest and activity of Professor Francesco Marroni of Pescara University in Italy, who is one of the Society's Vice-Presidents. Now added to the collection are several volumes in Italian, including an Italian version of Cranford by Mario Casalino, a study of Mary Barton by M. Ingenito, and two articles by Marroni himself. It is hoped to add very soon a copy of his study of Mrs Gaskell recently published in Italy under the title of La Fabbrica nella valle.

\* \* \* \* \*

Members may like to know the times of opening of the Knutsford Library, where the "Whitfield" Gaskell collection is now kept:

Monday	9.30-5.00	Thursday	9.30-5.00
Tuesday	9.30-8.00	Friday	9.30-8.00
		Saturday	9.30-1.00

The library is closed on Wednesdays, and also for lunch between 1.00 and 2.00 p.m.

\* \* \* \* \*

WILLIAM GASKELL'S HYMNS

by Barbara Brill

During the time I was engaged on research for my book on William Gaskell nothing gave me more pleasure than hearing from Manchester College Oxford that they had in their possession Mr Gaskell's own copy of the book of hymns which he and Dr John Relly Beard collected and published in 1837. The librarian kindly sent me photocopies of all William Gaskell's own hymns contained within it, and also of the fly leaves with his signature at the front, and an additional hymn in his own small neat handwriting at the back.

William contributed seventy hymns to this collection and in his own copy added written amendments to his own verses in the margin. It was the imprint of his own hand that made the words leap out of the page at me. I felt that I could picture him at his desk in his study at 42 Plymouth Grove in the more leisurely days of his old age, making these alterations to his hymns, many years after their original publication when he had a dead-line to meet and no time to give his verses the necessary polishing. He was thirty-two when he wrote them and at that time living at Dover Street, Manchester, the home to which he had brought his bride, Elizabeth, in 1832. The hymn book was published in the same year as their second daughter, Margaret Emily, was born, two and a half years after their first-born, Marianne. In this same year William and Elizabeth had worked together on a poem which was published in Blackwood's Magazine, entitled 'Sketches among the Poor, No. 1' and obviously intended to be the first in a series, in imitation of Crabbe's Scenes from Humble Life. It would appear that the young couple had too many calls upon their time to continue with their 'Sketches'. Elizabeth's increased maternal responsibilities and the necessity for William to complete his hymns for Dr Beard prevented their further collaboration in poetry.

Two years later William brought out a book of Temperance Rhymes, like his hymns simple rhyming verses,

easy to understand and to memorise. William Gaskell firmly believed in the power of poetry to stir the hearts of the unschooled men and women he met with in daily life and saw it as the ideal vehicle for conveying a message simply and memorably. He was struck by the number of natural poets to emerge among these men of humble birth and prepared a series of lectures on 'Poets and Poetry' which attracted large audiences of working men.

William Gaskell would be the last to claim that his verses were inspired poetry, for his hymns were certainly not prompted by the poetic Muse but by the invitation of Dr Beard to contribute to the collection. In his hymn-writing he aimed to convey a clear and pious message to simple homely people, set in conventional verse forms that were easy to set to a tune, and with words fitting to the atmosphere of worship.

When planning my book I hoped that it would be possible to head each chapter in true Victorian style with verses from the hymns and in this way to introduce readers to these little-known hymns. This idea did not prove practical so I am taking this opportunity to let you read those that I chose, giving my reasons for the selection of specific verses to head appropriate chapters and in this way to introduce you to William as a hymn-writer.

Chapter 1. Early Influences

This describes William's beginnings in Warrington and this verse from Hymn 72 in Dr Beard's Collection expresses thankfulness for the gift of life.

"For life and all its pleasant scenes,  
For all it knows of good and fair;  
For love and hope and tranquil joy,  
O God, to thee our thanks we bear."

Chapter 4. Husband and Father

This relates the meeting with Elizabeth, their marriage and early days as man and wife, both well aware of the importance of partnership in marriage, which this Hymn 403 stresses.

Still hand in hand, their journey through  
Meek pilgrims may they go;  
Mingling their joys as help-meets true,  
And sharing every woe."

This deals with William as poet, hymn writer, adviser to Mrs Gaskell, writer of sermons and funeral addresses, and editor. In Hymn 66 William shows his desire to express God's glory in words.

"I will praise thee, O God, with my heart and  
my voice,  
I will call on the earth and the heavens to  
rejoice,  
There's nothing beneath, and nothing above  
But declareth thy glory and telleth thy love."

The days at Plymouth Grove where the Gaskells removed to in 1850 were extremely busy ones and remained so for William, who continued to live there after Elizabeth's death, working as hard as ever.

William continued as teacher, preacher, committee chairman, editor, lecturer and wise counsellor, until a few months before his death and was held in high esteem. This verse from Hymn 511 expresses his acceptance of death.

I wait, my God, I wait for thee."

(Ed. note: Barbara Brill's biography "William Gaskell 1805-84" is published by Manchester Lit & Phil Society, price £7.95)

by Christine Lingard

The Gaskell Collection in the Language and Literature Library, Manchester, has benefited by the purchase of several American doctoral dissertations which represent original research and fill some noticeable gaps. They are available in hard copy not microfilm.

THE HEART OF ELIZABETH GASKELL: THE UNITARIAN SPIRIT by  
Mary Brooks Howell, CPh.D (Texas Women's University) 1985.  
Thematic discussion of her specific religious beliefs.

THE SHORT FICTION OF ELIZABETH GASKELL by Marie D. Bacigalupo, Ph.D(Fordham University, New York) 1984. The only full length study in the collection devoted exclusively to the shorter works.

ELIZABETH GASKELL'S CHRISTIANITY IN A NEW AGE by June B. Kelly M.A. (Wayne State University) 1983.  
Novel by novel discussion including Moorland Cottage and the Life of Charlotte Brontë.

ADAPTING TO EVOLUTION: THE IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT IN  
THE WORKS OF GASKELL AND TROLLOPE by Erdnut Lerner, Ph.D  
(North Western University, Evanston, Illinois) 1983.  
Perception of time in Cranford and Cousin Phillis, the  
Yorkshire roots of Life of Charlotte Brontë and the  
Darwinian influences in Wives and Daughters.

FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN WOMEN'S NOVELS by Linda Roberta Gupta, Ph.D (American University, Washington DC) 1983  
Father/daughter relationships in a wide range of works from the European fairy story to contemporaries such as Margaret Atwood and Mary Gordon.

THE ROLE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS WOMAN IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH INDUSTRIAL NOVEL by Patrician Ellen Johnson, Ph.D (University of Minnesota) 1985. In particular Shirley, Hard Times, Felix Holt and North and South, the most optimistic of the four.

THE NOVELIST AS BIOGRAPHER: THE TRUTH OF ART, THE LIES OF BIOGRAPHY by Marjorie Cullen Jones, Ph.D (Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois) August 1983.



Critical appraisal of biographical work of Elizabeth Gaskell, Henry James, E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf.

It is hoped to continue to add such material as it comes available.

ELIZABETH GASKELL by Patsy Stoneman (Lecturer in English at the University of Hull) The Harvester Press, 1987 £18.95

This is the major contribution to Gaskell studies in 1987. It is part of the "Key Women Writers" series whose other subjects have ranged from Charlotte Brontë to Angela Carter, from Madame de Lafayette to Alice Walker. Its aim is to challenge previous critics who have maintained that Gaskell's work has suffered because she muddled social and domestic issues, and to show that she is a stronger and more unified writer than is realised.

In an interesting opening chapter the author provides a summary of Gaskell critics to date and categorises them into those who have stressed the social problem novels and those who have dealt with the more genteel works, plus a number of recent feminist and Marxist critics of a more general and theoretical nature. In the second chapter the author applies her theory to Mrs Gaskell's private life and the inter-relationship of career and family.

The crux of this complex argument is that class and gender should not be considered as separate issues when assessing Gaskell's work. It is discussed methodically novel by novel beginning with a chapter on the short stories though it excluded the Life of Charlotte Brontë with constant references to other critics incorporated in the text. The alphabetical list of references runs to eight pages.

BEARING THE WORD: LANGUAGE AND FEMALE EXPERIENCE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY WOMEN'S WRITING by Margaret Homans, University of Chicago Press, 1986. £18.75

A discussion of the inter-relationship of woman's role as mother and as writer as shown by language with particular reference to Dorothy Wordsworth, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Gaskell, George Eliot, Mary Shelley and Virginia Woolf. The first of two chapters devoted to Gaskell aims to show that the death of her still-born daughter in 1833 was a greater stimulus to her writing than the death of her son in 1845 especially to Lizzie Leigh written in 1838 and Lois the Witch. A second chapter deals with the relationship of Mollie Gibson in Wives and daughters to her two mothers - her own already dead mother and her stepmother.

There are also several references to North and South in THE HELL OF THE ENGLISH: BANKRUPTCY AND THE VICTORIAN NOVEL by Barbara Weiss. Associated University Presses 1986. This study includes a factual and historical assessment of the subject as well as a critical one.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### GREEN HEYS FIELDS

"Country Rambles and Manchester Walks and Wild Flowers" was the title of a book by Leo H. Grindon, published in 1882, but the latter part of the title came from an earlier edition.

It is interesting to compare this with the opening scenes of Mary Barton as Green Heys Fields.

The preface to the original work of 1858 contained the following passages:- "No grown-up person who has resided in Manchester even twenty years, is unacquainted with the mighty changes that have passed over its suburbs during that period; while those who have lived here thirty, forty, and fifty years tell us of circumstances and conditions almost incredible. Neighbourhoods once familiar as delightful rural solitudes, are now covered with houses, and densely crowded with population; the pleasant field-paths we trod in our youth have disappeared, and in their stead are long lines of

pavement, lighted with gas, and paced by the policeman. In a few years it is not improbable that places described in the following pages as rustic and sylvan will have shared the same fate ... it is easy to understand how in half a century hence our present 'Walks' will have become as obsolete as their author, and the entire subject require a new and livelier treatment. A descriptive history of the suburbs of Manchester as they were fifty years ago, would be a most interesting and valuable item of our local literature. It would be as curious to the lover of by-gones as this book of to-day may perhaps appear to the Manchester people of A.D. 1900. How extraordinary would be the facts may be judged from the following extracts from De Quincey, whose youth, it is well known, was passed in the neighbourhood of Manchester. Mark first what he says of the 'place' he lived in. 'And if, after the manner of the Emperor Aurelius, I should return thanks to Providence for all the separate blessings of my early situation, these four I would single out as worthy of special consideration, - that I lived in a 'rustic solitude'; that this solitude was in England, that my infant feelings were moulded by the gentlest of sisters; and finally, that I and they were dutiful and loving members of a pure, and holy, and magnificent church.' And now mark where lay this 'rustic solitude'. He is describing the expected return of his father:- 'It was a summer evening of unusual solemnity. The servants and four of us children were gathered for hours on the lawn before the house, listening for the sound of wheels. Sunset came, nine, ten, eleven o'clock, and nearly another hour had passed without a warning sound, for Greenhay, being so 'solitary a house', formed a "terminus ad quem", beyond which was nothing but a cluster of cottages, composing the little hamlet of Greenhill; so that any sound of wheels coming from the 'country lane which then connected us with the Rusholme Road', carried with it of necessity, a warning summons to prepare for visitors at Greenhay'. 'Greenhay' was the centre of the modern Greenheys, and the 'hamlet of Greenhill' the predecessor of the present Greenhill Terrace."



ELIZABETH GASKELL'S childhood home, from a water colour dated 1832, the year she was married in Knutsford - that is, CRANFORD. The scene is set at the beginning of that book:

'For keeping the trim gardens full of choice flowers without a weed to speck them; for frightening away little boys who look wistfully at the said flowers through the railings; for rushing out at the geese that occasionally venture into the gardens if the gates are left open ... the ladies of Cranford are quite sufficient.'

# SUMMER OUTING TO NORTH WALES

by Joan Leach

Elizabeth Gaskell loved the Cheshire countryside surrounding the 'little, clean, kindly town of Knutsford', where she grew up, and the Sandlebridge farm two or three miles away which she first knew as her grandparents' home; her picture of Hope Farm in Cousin Phillis was painted from her lifelong love and knowledge of Cheshire. In later years, living in dirty, smoky Manchester, she yearned for Cheshire's 'deep, grassy solitudes'. By contrast the wild, rugged mountain country of North Wales evoked in her a deep, emotional response.

Wishing she could have been with her sister-in-law, Lizzie, to show her all her favourite haunts she recalled, 'When I first came from spending a very happy fortnight at Plas Brereton (nr Caernarvon, you know) I used to get on a sort of knoll from which I could see the Welsh hills, and think of the places beyond again.' (G.L.9) She consoled herself by adding, 'How I shall enjoy talking over Wales with you' and reminiscing about a visit in 1837 when she and Lucy Holland had called at a cottage to dry their shoes and stockings and had been given oat-cake by 'the woman who could not speak English. I long to be in those wild places again ... I cannot help feeling the feelings for you.' (G.L.9) And these were the same feelings she ascribed to Ruth: 'It was most true enjoyment for Ruth. It was opening up a new sense; vast ideas of beauty and grandeur filled her mind at the sight of the mountains, now first beheld in full majesty. She was almost overpowered by the vague and solemn delight; but by and by her love for them equalled her awe.' (p.64) The deep response felt for wild Wales must have helped Elizabeth to identify with the Brontës' love of the Yorkshire Moors.

On Sunday, June 28th, half a coach load of Gaskellians set off from Knutsford early in the morning to follow the Gaskell trail to North Wales. Sadly the weather was grey and drizzly, and, though this did not dampen our

enthusiasm, it shrouded the mountains from view - but at least it was in authentic style:

(Ruth, p.64 Knutsford edn.) The valleys around were filled with thick, cold mist which had crept up the hillside till the hamlet itself was folded in its write dense curtain and from the windows nothing was seen of the beautiful scenery around'.

This was exactly how we found the inn at Ffestiniog, the Pengwern Arms, which displayed a carved slate plaque with a coat of arms and date, I think, 1728. Here I should explain that for our guide book I consulted the memoirs of Elizabeth's cousin, Samuel Holland, who wrote many details of his exploits in the area, developing the slate quarries. His first journey in 1821 had been on foot from Liverpool to Ffestiniog where his father, 'gave me instructions what I was to do to learn the art of quarrying, look after the men etc. - and added that if I could get lodgings in some decent house, it would be better than staying at the hotel ... he rode off for Liverpool leaving me to my own devices. I was then 18 years old'. He played a large part in the building of the narrow gauge Ffestiniog railway. It was his house, Plas Penrhyn, which welcomed the honeymoon couple and became our place of pilgrimage.

The Gaskells and Hollands became even more closely related when Samuel's brother and partner, Charles, married William's sister Lizzie in 1838. A chart will explain some of the many convolutions of the Holland family tree. (see page 22)

As we set out from Knutsford, passing the Parish church where the Gaskells were married on August 30th 1832, we studied a copy of the entry in the parish register. Of course, Uncle Peter Holland 'gave her away'; the other witnesses were William's sister, and Susan and Catherine Holland; Winifred Gérin identifies these as daughters of Peter Holland by his second marriage but I think the latter must have been cousin Samuel's sister, known to the family as Kate. (G.L.3 identifies Kate as Fanny's sister, both probably then living at Liverpool with their father. The Holland family tree notes 'two sons and one daughter' by Peter's second marriage)

The wedding ceremony, according to a letter written by Elizabeth on her honeymoon, was a happy, almost hilarious, occasion (G.L.2)

'Kate had sent us a long, long letter a few days before and among other things made us laugh exceedingly with telling us one report of which I dare say neither you nor Sam (Gaskell) were aware. Pray ask him, with my love, whether he knew that Sue put his shoulder out of joint by pulling him to her at the altar and that so much force was required on Susan's part because Kate was pulling so at his other arm. Since hearing this Wm. and I have felt rather anxious to hear of his health. As you justly conjecture I have a great deal of trouble in managing this obstreperous brother of yours though I dare say he will try and persuade you the trouble is all on his side. I find he has been telling you I look very well, (this was a joint letter) so I think that is a pretty broad hint that I am to tell you he is looking remarkably well which he really is. Mountains seem to agree with us and our appetites admirably ... If you hear of the principality of Wales being swallowed up by an earthquake, for earthquake read Rev Wm. Gaskell'. This letter was postmarked 'Caernarvon' and we were sorry, from limitations of time and distance, not to be able to include this area and 'dear, little Aber' on our itinerary, as it was here that the couple 'spent a fortnight of our wedding journey and where I spent a very happy month with 17 aunts, cousins and such like once before' (G.L.9)

Her memories of the Port Madoc area also went back a long way as she must have been holidaying there when her brother wrote to her in July 1828 (J.G. Sharps owns this letter): 'You have really made a very pretty story of Captain Barton - it would almost make the foundation of a novel (it suggested her short story 'The Sexton's Hero') - it was indeed a narrow escape of Kitty's (? Kate, who signed the wedding register) and must have given her a tremendous fright, though I have heard many stories of them, I never saw a quicksand and hardly believed them to be so dangerous as was generally spoken of'. Ten years

later she enquired of her sister-in-law, 'You never mention Capn. Barton. Is he to the fore yet?' Samuel also mentions his house in the memoirs.

On our day out we had planned to visit the Gloddfa Ganol Quarry which still has a 'Holland tunnel' for tourists to walk in, but the weather prevented us. We arrived at The Pengwen Arms, Ffestiniog for lunch. This stone built old inn had a range of outbuildings which had been stables, and opposite was the village shop. Some of us ate inn fare while the landlord kindly allowed the rest of us to picnic inside and to think of Mr and Mrs Gaskell staying here in 1832. But their happy memories of it were coloured by the sad death of ten month old Willie in August 1845. Mrs Gaskell had brought Marianne and baby William away from the infection of scarlet fever raging in Manchester but after two weeks at the inn Marianne developed the disease. Sea air seemed the best convalescent treatment, so they moved down to Mrs Hughes guest house at Port Madoc, but here Willie sickened and died. Mrs Hughes did all she could to alleviate their distress and was fondly remembered. When Mrs Gaskell wanted a beautiful setting with sad overtones for Ruth, the inn at Ffestiniog would be an obvious choice, and we could feel echoes all around us. It was raining while we were there so we did not ramble as Ruth did: 'Flitting through the village, trying to catch all the beautiful sunny peeps at the scenery between the cold stone houses, which threw the radiant distance into aerial perspective far away, she passed the little shop...' and there it was opposite the inn. (Knutsford Edn. p.70)

Mrs Gaskell could not resist giving Mr Benson her own love of Welsh legend and tradition and particularly about the foxglove: 'its Welsh name is Maneg Ellyllyn - the good people's glove; and hence, I imagine our folk's glove or fox-glove'; the ones we saw, especially along the lane to Plas Penrhyn, had an extra significance for us.

Moving on from Ffestiniog we found the railway station of Tan-y-Bwlch to ride down to Minfford and Plas Penrhyn. Here we noted Samuel Holland's memoirs; he stayed at Tan-y-Bwlch Hotel in 1825 negotiating quarry leases,

advised by his Uncle Swinton and borrowing money from Uncle Peter in Knutsford and cousin Edward of Dumbleton (later Marianne's father-in-law). Edward also allowed Samuel Holland senior £200 a year so long as he did not speculate; when Lizzie stayed at Plas Penrhyn in 1838 she found father and son not on speaking terms over the definition of speculation. By then father and son were living together at Plas Penrhyn which Samuel junior rented on a long lease and had extended. Nephew, Charles Menzies Holland, later advised on steam locomotives for the narrow gauge Ffestiniog railway in which Samuel played a part in building and developing. He described the grand opening in 1836 when 'there was great cheering and rock cannon firing, all along the line and on our arrival at Port Madoc ... we were met by crowds of people, bands playing and the workmen had a good dinner given them. ... I used the Railway (horse drawn originally) for carrying my slates to Port Madoc for two years nearly before the other companies came upon it.' Today it was carrying Gaskellians, a delightful experience - almost miniature-sized carriages winding along mountainsides and wooded slopes as we steadied our drinks served from a refreshment bar.

We were met at our destination by Mr Smithson, the friendly owner of Plas Penrhyn (known to the Gaskells as PP), who kindly took three of our less mobile members in his car after directing us to the charming, secluded lane leading to the house, too narrow for our coach with which we had rendezvoused. The hedgerows on either side were bright with foxgloves and honeysuckle, intertwined with ivy, bramble and ferns; the botanists among us racked our brains to identify pennywort and wall rue and storks-foot cranesbill.

On a clear day the views would have been superb; Bertrand Russell thought so, as he recorded in his autobiography, 'Plas Penrhyn ... would make a pleasant holiday house for us and the children ... it had a most lovely view, south to the sea, west to Port Madoc and the Caernarvon hills, and north up the valley of the Glaslyn

to Snowdon. I was captivated by it and particularly pleased that across the valley could be seen the house where Shelley lived.' Russell spent the last fifteen years of his life here. Winifred Gerin's biography has two pictures of the delightful white plastered house surrounded by natural gardens merging into the wooded landscape and the old kitchen gardens.

It was here in November 1848 that Mrs Gaskell, accompanied by Emily Winkworth sought refuge from publicity and reviews on the publication of Mary Barton, which had come out anonymously, with even close friends and family left to guess at the author's identity. Emily wrote from PP to her sister: 'What do you think? I'm positive 'Mary Barton, a Story of Manchester Life' is by Mrs Gaskell! I got hold of it last night going to bed, and knew by the first few words it was hers - about Green Hays Fields and the stile she was describing to Kate and me the other day; - but we haven't talked about it yet ... The folks here know it I am sure - they all turned so silent when I began to talk about it at breakfast time, and Mrs Gaskell suddenly popped down under the table to look for something which I am sure wasn't there.'

After their return home Mrs Gaskell mischievously enjoyed the 'mystery', writing to Catherine Winkworth: 'By the way, Emily was curious to know the name of the person who wrote 'Mary Barton' (a book she saw at Plas Penrhyn), and I am happy in being able to satisfy her Eve-like craving, Marianne Darbishire told me it was ascertained to be the production of a Mrs Wheeler ... Marianne gave many proofs which I don't think worth repeating but they were quite convincing' (G.L.30). Elizabeth shared the joke with her publisher Edward Chapman adding, 'I am only afraid lest you also should be convinced and transact that part of the business which yet remains unaccomplished with her. I do assure you I am the author'; thus no doubt shaming him into paying his debts.

Samuel Holland wrote in his memoirs that one of his cousin's novels was written or finished while she stayed with him but gives no date or particulars to verify this. Besides the Welsh section of Ruth Mrs Gaskell wrote two

short stories set in this area; so we said goodbye to PP, strolled back down the lane to rejoin our coach and go in search of other Gaskell scenes from The Doom of the Griffiths and The Well of Pen-Morfa.

We made our way over the toll bridge which spanned the Cof, an embankment built by W.A. Maddocks creating the harbour of Port Madoc where Samuel Holland built a quay to ship his slates brought down by the Ffestiniog railway which had its terminus here. We drove through the busy town, returning later for tea, in search of Tremadoc and Pen-Morfa.

The Doom of the Griffiths is based on an old tradition of Owen Glendower. You will remember how Mr Benson in Ruth said he had 'been inoculated by an old innkeeper at Conway with a love for its people and history and traditions'. I detect that Mrs Gaskell's love dated from the visit there with 'seventeen aunts and cousins' when she was eleven or twelve years old. I have no doubt that given time we should have found the Bodowen farmhouse from The Doom of the Griffiths '... situated in a boggy valley ... running from the mountains, which shoulder the Rivals, down to Cardigan Bay ... It was square and heavy looking with just that much pretension to ornament necessary to distinguish it from the mere farmhouse'. (You can read this story in the Alan Sutton collection, 'The Manchester Marriage', price £3.95. Any member holidaying in this area is invited to spot and photograph 'Bodowen' farmhouse for me!)

We stopped our coach at just such a scene as described in The Well of Pen-Morfa: 'There are rocks high above Pen-Morfa; they are the same that hang over Tremadoc ... Everywhere they are beautiful. The great, sharp ledges which would otherwise look hard and cold, are adorned with the brightest coloured moss and the golden lichen ... crane's bill and tufts of purple heather ...' We also saw 'the great plain (formed by the reclaimed estuary) which stretches out like an amphitheatre, in the half circle of hills'. Here, in the story, was Edward Williams 'picturesque old farmhouse ... called by

some Welsh name which I now forget; but its meaning in English is 'The End of Time'. I found J.G. Sharps had been able to identify this, when writing in 1960, as \* Penamser (and the well as St Bueno). It made my day when I spotted this very name at the gateway of a farm on a rising bank as we turned a corner on the road back to Port Madoc. I was too excited to think of taking a photograph! The story is a sad one; the beautiful Nest Gwynn, engaged to be married to Edward Williams falls at the well, becoming a cripple, whereon he rejects her as unfit to be a farmer's wife. The story was probably rewritten in haste for Dickens, appearing in Household Words in November 1850.

Our expedition to North Wales was completed with a tea-stop in Port Madoc and a pleasant journey home.

\*Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, Linden Press 1970, by J.G. Sharps (The encyclopaedia of Gaskell information)

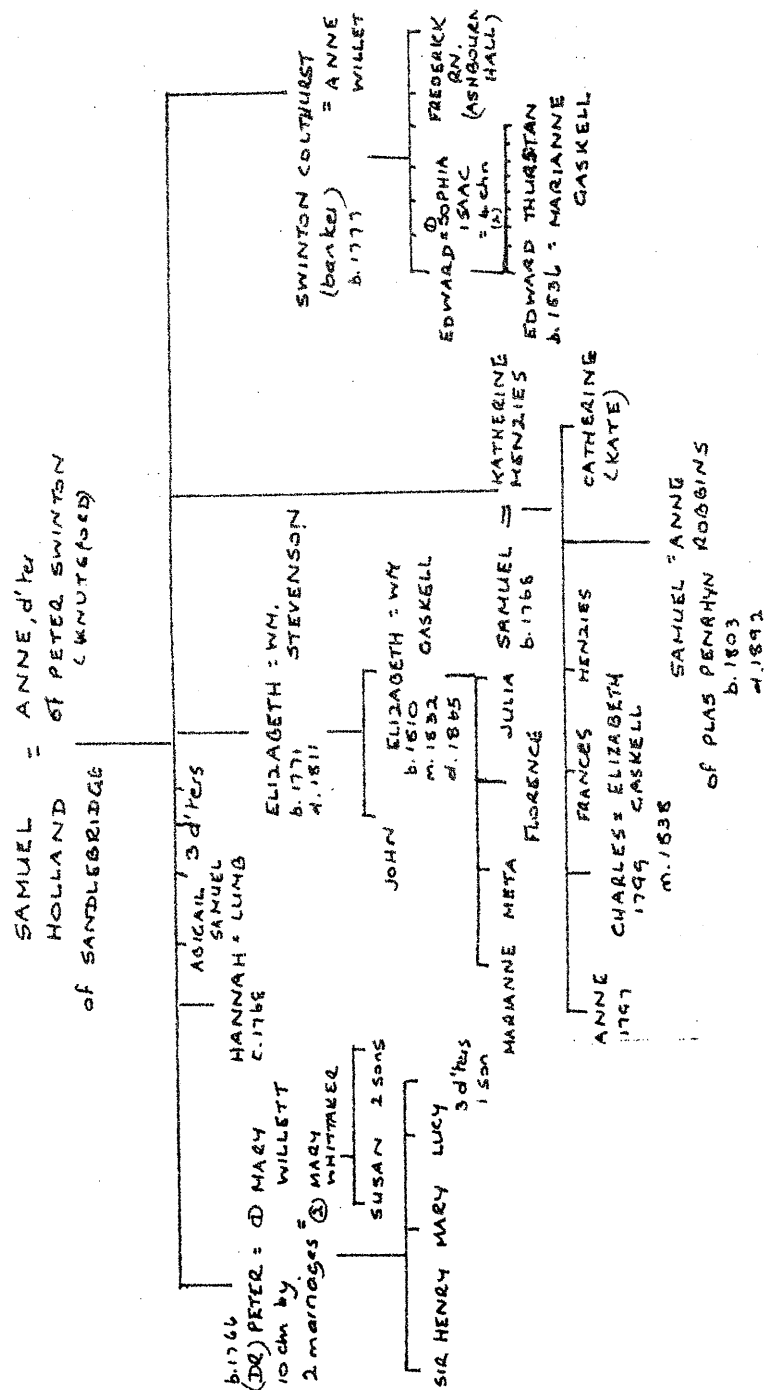
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#### VISITING NORTH WALES?

Plas Penrhyn has a furnished self-contained flat which can sleep five; close to sea, Snowdonia and Portmeirion. Details from G. H. Radcliffe, Plas Penrhyn, Minfford, Gwynedd LL48 6HY

Pengwern Arms, Ffestiniog, Gwynedd LL41 4PB. Fully licensed free house, retaining 18th Century charm - dogs welcome!

\* \* \* \* \*



## A 'CRANFORD' FAN

I was surprised to find that a cavalry officer at the battle front in World War I was reading Cranford!

This excerpt is from 'Letters and Journals of Sir Alan Lascelles from 1887-1920' edited by Duff Hart Davis, published by Hamish Hamilton (1986)

23 September 1918

H.Q.

2nd Cavalry Brigade

Who is my favourite woman in fiction? Helen of Troy? Jane Eyre? Belinda Jorrocks? Diana of the Crossways? Tess - no not even Tess, bless her poor heart, though I would sooner have my hands on that man Angel's throat than any German's. Not even little Kitty Cherbatsky (in Tolstoy's 'Anna Karenina') whom I would marry tomorrow. The prize goes to Miss Matilda Jenkyns.

I have just re-read 'Cranford' for the nth time. To me, it is one of the most remarkable books ever written, because, apart from all its obvious qualities, its gentleness, its mellow Raeburn portrait-gallery, its fun, and so on, I find it intensely exciting. It grips me more than any detective or 'Prisoner of Zenda' romance, and the reason I don't know it by heart is that once I start reading it, I go faster and faster till, when the Aga's return is imminent, I am turning pages like a cinematograph.

Can you tell me why this is? I know perfectly well what is going to happen; the story of Miss Betty Barker's cow has been a chestnut to me for nearly twenty years; Signor Brunoni is no mystery to me; the Hoggins-Glenmire marriage comes as no shock; and I know it's Peter long before even Mary Smith suspects it. And still that book makes me burn more midnight oil than almost any other. I have no explanation, except the crude one that its very sweetness makes one bolt it as a child bolts strawberries and cream. Does it take you the same way? I am willing to stake all my war-savings to a single meat-coupon that you are a devout Cranfordian.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE GASKELLS AND POETRY

William's work for the Chapel, various Manchester institutions, teaching and lecturing left him little time for creative work of his own, but Elizabeth's earliest appearance in print was jointly, in verse, with William in 'Sketches Among the Poor' described by Elizabeth Gaskell in a letter to Mary Howitt as 'somewhat after the style of Crabbe', and appeared in Blackwood's magazine January 1837 (see Barbara Brill's article on William Gaskell, p.6ff). In the same letter (G.L.12) she added 'my husband has lately been giving four lectures to the very poorest of the weavers in the very poorest district of Manchester, Miles Platting, on The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life.' She herself had helped to research the poets (G.L.4).

I found this report in the Macclesfield Courier (which would be Knutsford's local paper then):-

1842 Jan 1st

'Temperance Society Tea Party in the Parochial School Room' (situated just below Brook Street Chapel where the small lawn is now). The following evening Rev W. Gaskell delivered a lecture on 'Poets of Humble Life'. On the succeeding evening at the request of some who were present the reverend gentleman gave a second lecture on the 'Poetry of Burns'. Both lectures were highly interesting and gave general satisfaction.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are grateful to 'The Unitarian' magazine for allowing us to reprint Barbara Brill's article.

Any suggestions or material for future Newsletters will be welcome by the Editor, Joan Leach.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am compiling an accommodation in Knutsford leaflet. If any local members would like to offer bed and breakfast etc. please let me know details for inclusion.

Send s.a.e. for a copy, to the Secretary:

MRS JOAN LEACH, FAR YEW TREE HOUSE, OVER TABLEY, KNUTSFORD  
CHESHIRE WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)



# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1988

NO. 5

EDITOR'S LETTER

I have enjoyed putting this newsletter together and hope you will enjoy reading it. My only problem has been a surfeit of good things - I have enough left over for the next edition. Alan Shelston, editing the next Journal, is having the same problem, which only goes to show that the Society is fulfilling its aims, to stimulate interest and research.

I had intended to give you profiles of our worthy committee members, but cannot find space; I hope to do this when I send out the Summer outing details, in a mini-newsletter.

Perhaps when our Society has grown a little larger we will be able to afford a computer to keep track of membership details. I have to admit to inefficiency in this department so have enrolled an assistant to deal with membership renewals. Please note that these should be sent to: Mrs Lilian Clode, 15 Mereheath Park, Knutsford WA16 6AT. If you have slipped the net send your £4 cheque; renewals due August 31st for 1988/89 can be paid at AGM which will be on Saturday October 1st this year (please note slight change of date).

Would you like to brush up your Italian? We have several members, most of them Professor Francesco Marroni's students, who would like to visit England as paying guests. There may also be UK members who would like to attend the AGM if hospitality could be offered - perhaps on a reciprocal basis? Mrs Gaskell was such a wonderful hostess that it is difficult to emulate her but I like to think we are a friendly Society, with her example to follow.

We are looking forward to welcoming members of the Brontë Society on their annual outing, this year to Knutsford on June 7th.

Best wishes to you all,

JOAN LEACH

Editor



The watercolour by Herbert Smith, dated 1851, and believed to be a portrait of Mrs Gaskell

MRS GASKELL by E Jacobi

In July last year I bought a portrait at a local antiques fair believed to be of "Mrs Gaskell". The painting is a watercolour, by Herbert Smith, and is dated 1851. I have to admit that at the time my attraction to the painting had nothing to do with the fact it was or might be Mrs Gaskell. Despite having studied English Literature at University, I had somehow managed to miss 'Mrs Gaskell'. I bought the painting simply because I loved it.

My curiosity however, began to grow. I began with Mrs Gaskell's short stories, 'Life in Manchester; Libbie Marsh's Three Eras', 'Lizzie Leigh' and 'The Moorland Cottage' and was more than a little delighted by her work. The painting I had bought because I loved it had not only introduced me to the works of Mrs Gaskell but had also given me a wonderful new project - that being to try to prove the sitter in Herbert Smith's portrait is in fact Mrs Gaskell.

I began checking the sources at the local library and compiled a list of interesting 'coincidences'.

Mrs Gaskell would have been 41 when the portrait was done and looks to be about 40 in the painting.

She is sitting next to a writing desk and two books. This would of course be an appropriate pose for an author.

The sitter in H L Smith's portrait bears a striking resemblance to the watercolour drawing of Mrs Gaskell by her daughter Meta in 1865 and to the pastel drawing of Mrs Gaskell by Samuel Lawrence in 1854.

The pose and position in front of a distinctive picture window is very similar to the photograph of Mrs Gaskell taken about 1864 which is housed in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

Mrs Gaskell wrote to Eliza Fox in December 1851 describing a new gown with "blue ribbons all spick and span for Xmas". The gown and bonnet in Herbert Smith's

1851 painting are also trimmed with blue ribbon.

My imagination began to feel a bit stretched when after I showed the painting to a colleague of mine at work, she telephoned a family friend who had taught Mrs Gaskell's novels some 30 years ago. When my colleague described the portrait of Mrs Gaskell in a black silk dress to her friend, the retired school teacher is reported to have said "and she was wearing a white silk bonnet". The woman left me with a reference to chase 'Mary Barton' published by Dent in 1922!

My chances of finding this particular copy through a second-hand book store or inter-library loans was slim, so I went to the British Museum Readers Library in hope of getting a one-day pass. Miraculously, instead of a one-day pass I was granted two weeks! Thankfully my boss was sympathetic and I was given a somewhat unscheduled two week holiday.

Unfortunately, the school teacher's lead did not solve the mystery, though I was convinced she must have seen something. I combed through the British Museum ordering every book I could find which was described in the catalogue as having a portrait. I was sadly not able to find my portrait or even a reference to it in any of the books.

I decided to try a different track. I checked in the catalogue under H L Smith to find he had written a book! 'A Catalogue of Miniatures by H C Ross with Memoirs by H L Smith'. This however was never published. It was a proof. Unfortunately the copy once housed at the British Museum was destroyed during the war. There is reported to be another copy in the Victoria and Albert Museum. On my last visit however, they were unable to find this document.

W C Ross was a miniaturist much employed by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Ross exhibited over 300 paintings in the Royal Academy and produced an estimated 2,200 portraits in his life. He was a painter of historical figures and was H L Smith's cousin. H L Smith and Ross

painted many of the same people and subjects. Perhaps it there is any connection with W C Ross and Mrs Gaskell this could provide the vital clue. H L Smith also exhibited at the Royal Academy and was a copyist for Queen Victoria.

The mystery is still unsolved. I am hopeful that when the memoirs are found that there will be some more solid leads to work from. I am curious to know if W J Thomson, who painted the miniature of Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson in 1832, was acquainted with Ross or Smith. I am still chasing the Victoria and Albert Museum - the search continues.

(Ed. I discovered that Herbert Smith exhibited a watercolour portrait of Prince Albert in 1851 - perhaps this endeared him to Queen Victoria!)

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#### RESIDENTIAL HOLIDAY COURSE

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## NEW BOOKS

by Christine Lingard

Highlight of this season's new books is a new edition of Wives and Daughters in Oxford University Press' World Classics series (£3.95). It means that all seven major novels are now available from this publisher - the only publisher to offer this. The editor is once again Angus Easson of Salford University whose book, Elizabeth Gaskell was published by Routledge in 1979, and who edited North and South and Cousin Phillis in the same series. He claims that this is the first edition to be based on the text of the Cornhill Magazine serialization rather than the original manuscript (now in the John Rylands University of Manchester Library) or the first edition in book form of 1866. This claim however is also made by Frank Glover Smith for the Penguin edition of 1969.

Professor Easson argues that any variations between the manuscript and the Cornhill text would only have been made with Mrs Gaskell's full approval, whereas she was dead by the time the first edition was published. Nevertheless, he has added a ten page text of textual variants from the Cornhill text, some reverting to the manuscript and some editorial. There is a detailed introduction explaining the editorial policy and describing Mrs Gaskell's inconsistency with names.

Once again this edition chiefly scores with its provision of copious textual notes ranging from textual inconsistencies, to biographical details and definitions of obscure and foreign terms: a total of forty-two pages in all, compared with only three in the Penguin edition. The main introduction praises the novel's structure despite the circumstances and pressures under which it was written.

There are only three other books of interest: Nineteenth Century Women Writers of the English-speaking World edited by Rhoda B Nathan. New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1986, £32.50 - a collection of 23 essays which had

their origins as papers given at the Nineteenth Century Women Writers' International Conference in November 1980 under the auspices of Hofstra University, New York. Five of the articles are devoted to George Eliot, five to Emily Dickinson and two to Charlotte Brontë. The Gaskell contribution is The Price of Love: Gaskell versus Eliot by Coral Lansbury, professor of English at Rutgers University, New Jersey, and author of two books on Elizabeth Gaskell. The aim is to contrast the two authors' attitudes to love and marriage. Eliot was not the radical she is often painted. Her domestic arrangement was one of circumstance not choice which she regretted as much as the next man. She had a dread of women who deliberately chose the celibate life. Gaskell on the other hand maintained a relatively independent lifestyle. She placed devotion to God above devotion to any individual person and appreciated the single state. Evidence of this is given by quoting both authors' opinions of Florence Nightingale.

Consuming Fiction by Terry Lovell. Verso (New Left books) £7.95. Ms Lovell is a lecturer in sociology at the University of Warwick. A constant underlying feature of this book is the continual reference to Marxist literary critics. It shows how the standard of the novel, 1770-1820 was debased when it was merely a commodity whereas from 1840-94 when the "Great Tradition" prevailed and the novel was restored to a higher literary status women lost their dominant position. Elizabeth Gaskell and Sarah Grand are the only two people to be named in the chapter sub-headings. The author feels that Mrs Gaskell has received less attention from feminist critics than her contemporaries. Mary Barton belongs to the "Great Tradition" because of its realism, but she challenges accusations that the novel is melodrama akin to modern soap operas.

The Rich Man and the Diseased Poor in Early Victorian Literature by A Susan Williams. Macmillan, £27.50. The author has worked for UNICEF and the Ministry of Health. This book is a discussion of the threat to the rich of infection from the poor in many writers of early

Victorian Britain both actual and fiction but in particular Carlyle, Dickens, Kingsley and Gaskell. References to Gaskell are dispersed throughout the text.

(Christine Lingard is Sub Librarian, Lang/Lit. Library, St Peter's Square, Manchester)

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### HOLLINGFORD ALIAS KNUTSFORD

by Joan Leach

The new O.U.P. edition of 'Wives and Daughters' has most helpful explanatory notes but I cannot agree with Note 2 (p.689) which states 'the town initially is based on Knutsford with Cumnor Towers corresponding to Tatton Hall. The novel's topography later shifts to the Midlands, probably prompted by Gaskell's memories of schooldays in Warwickshire: references are made to e.g. the Malvern Hills, the Birmingham coach and the Birmingham-London railway.'

For the first, Malvern Hills, I feel that Mrs Gaskell would name her favourite hills or the first that came into her head, most likely. She often had a vagueness about names; Knutsford has hills on the horizon from several viewpoints and I am never sure if they are Pennines, Snowdonia or the Peak District.

The note for page 601 - 'the Birmingham coach started at early morning' - cites this as, 'another indication of the Midlands topography'.

A glance at the trade directories of the period in which the novel is set reveals that Knutsfordians could take the Birmingham coach, the Bang-up, at The George Inn (which figures throughout Wives and Daughters) every day at twelve; it went through Newcastle, Stone and Wolverhampton (Pigott's 1829 Directory).

The London-Liverpool coach which called at the George was The Umpire. Cynthia arrived on this coach (p.221). Mr Coxe stayed at The George on his return visit to Hollingford 'bringing his horses and groom'; there are still remains of The George's extensive stable block.

Roger departed on his travels by coach from the same inn.

The setting is so often reminiscent of Cranford and Knutsford: the Assembly rooms at the George where the magician performed for the Cranford ladies is the scene of the charity ball when the Countess of Menteith so disappointed everyone by her lack of diamonds. The Sedan chairs are in attendance again. And tea is socially significant in both books.

I do not think a mention of the Worcester/Three Choirs Festival (p.491 and 284) can be interpreted as stressing the Midlands locale again. On p.491 Cynthia explains that she had to borrow money from Mr Preston to TRAVEL to the festival, away from Hollingford. The other reference is by way of a comparison.

In Knutsford Joseph Jackson (alias Mr Johnson p.253 and in Cranford chapter XIII etc) 'respectfully announces that he is now prepared with a large assortment of NEW GOODS in the various departments of his establishment, suitable for the present and approaching season and of which he solicits an inspection' (Ad. in Warrington Guardian, Jan. 7, 1865).

Mr Jackson's goods included TEA:

'Sound congou at 2/4	Excellent family	3/8
Useful " 2/8	Strong rich	4/0
Very good " 3/0	Very fine	4/4
Capital flavoured 3/4	Very superior	4/8

Those were the facts which turned into fiction - Lady Harriet was 'quite struck' with the Misses Browning's tea (p.177). Miss Phoebe explained, 'I told her we only gave 3s/4d a pound for it at Johnson's (sister says I ought to have told her the price of our company tea, which is 5s/- a pound, only that was not what we were drinking; for as ill luck would have it, we'd none of it in the house.'

In 'Cranford' it was Mr Johnson who was consulted by Miss Matty before she, too, sold congou tea.

Whether consciously or not, Mrs Gaskell drew the Cumnor family from the Egertons of Tatton; the parallels are numerous.

The Charity School, known locally as Lady Mary's School, was supported by the Egerton ladies over a period of nearly a hundred years. It taught the girls 'whatever would render them useful to society'.

In the gardens at Tatton there is still a cedar tree and hothouses with orchids though there is no Lord Cumnor to potter around the estate. I have not the slightest doubt that he was the double of Wilbraham Egerton (1781-1856). On several occasions he entered in his carefully kept accounts, 'Five shillings in half pence to the school children'; or 'Gave £1 to a poor man at Ashley who had lost his cow'. Compare this with Lord Cumnor (p.552), 'If ever a peer was an old woman Lord Cumnor was that peer; but he was a very good natured old woman, and rode about on his stout old cob with his pockets full of half pence for the children, and little packets of snuff for the old people'.

He served the county as M.P. between 1812 and 1832 - 'one of the respectable country gentlemen whose influence is so much more felt than seen' (Annual Register, Obituary 1856). His son, William, followed him into Parliament, becoming the first Lord Egerton in 1859. And Mrs Gaskell's version of their political career:-

'If Lord Hollingford had not been returned for the county on the Whig interest - as his father had been before him, until he succeeded to the title - it is quite probable Lord Cumnor would have considered the British constitution in danger.'

You will meet Wilbraham Egerton again when I introduce you to Captain Hill alias Captain Brown.

Of course, she made sure no one would see the connection for the Egertons were Tories, not Whigs!

I have my theories about the Hamleys, too, but will follow them another time. Mrs Gaskell's advice to a would-be novelist (G.L.420) was to 'imagine yourself a spectator and auditor of every scene and event; I'm sure she and I see 'Wives and Daughters' taking place in and around Knutsford.

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# ADDITIONS TO THE KNUTSFORD COLLECTION

by Mary Thwaite

CRANFORD by Mrs Gaskell. Illustrated by Joan Hassall  
The Black Swan Press, Wantage, 1985, £7.95  
(ISBN 0 905475 06 2)

This edition, the first in a new series of English classics, reproduces illustrations and some of the decorative designs from the wood-engravings made by the renowned artist, Joan Hassall, for an edition published in 1940 by Harrap. This was evidently planned and in hand before war-time shortages hampered good book production, for this earlier edition (long out of print, but now to be seen in the Gaskell collection at Manchester City Library) is altogether a production of high artistic excellence - paper, print, page and pictures designed into a pleasing harmony.



Miss Jenkyns reading *Rasselas*

Although this present volume cannot compete in the quality of book design, it is printed by Letterpress on good paper and bound in buckram. Although not all the Hassall wood-cuts are included it is most welcome as reviving interest in what was a rather different treatment, unsentimental, yet sympathetic in style, and in contrast to some of the earlier fussy and nostalgic delineations of the Cranford world.

This new edition is, on its own merits, most worthy to present this most famous work by Mrs Gaskell.

Black Swan Press have taken pains to reproduce from the original blocks. They are planning to publish 'Wives and Daughters' using the George du Maurier illustrations.

(Ed. Available from good bookshops or direct from The Black Swan Press, 28 Bosley's Orchard, Grove, Wantage, Oxon. It is the only hardback edition of Cranford in print)

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The Great Writers: Their Lives, Works and Inspiration

Elizabeth Gaskell: CRANFORD

No. 24 of a fortnightly series published by Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd, 58 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PA.

Also supplied a hardback copy of "Cranford" 1987. Price £3.95 (inc. postage)

This attractive production (A4 in size) forms pages 554-578 of a fortnightly series begun in 1986, the first twenty-six issues covering 19th century writers. The aim is obviously to interest the general reader, and number 24, devoted to Mrs Gaskell, offers a popular survey, with plentiful pictures, mostly in colour, of the writer's life, art and background. Within its limits it succeeds very well, notwithstanding a few minor mis-statements, and although "Cranford" is made the special feature, it is not allowed to dominate the whole. There are sections on the writer's work, life, and brief summaries of the major

works. "Sources of inspiration", the final part, is devoted almost entirely to "The Poor Man's Charter" and seems to give undue prominence to the history of Chartism, compared with space allowed to other subjects, for example details of the minor writings and short stories. These are only described as they appear in one collection, "Tales of Mystery and Horror", published by Gollancz in 1978, now out of print, a collection of seven items, not thirty as stated on page 569.

The publication is well designed and illustrations are a main feature, covering not only photographs, facsimiles, portraits etc, but supplementary Victorian paintings and illustrations reflecting background or similar episodes to those in the Gaskell novels. For example, Von Herkomer's "Hard Times" is used for the social novels, and contemporary fashion designs are reproduced for the caps and headgear so dear to the Cranford ladies.

No guidance is offered as to further reading, but the work is useful as an introduction which may allure readers not yet familiar with the Gaskell world.

The copy of "Cranford" supplied with the issue of No. 24 in the series is a hardback reprint of the 1911 edition published by Cassell, slightly magnified in size. It is not illustrated except for a frontispiece of a sketch from the Samuel Lawrence portrait.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES SEMINAR

Saturday April 30th at the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

Alan Shelston, J G Sharps, Kenn Oultram and Joan Leach hope to attend this. Let me know if you would like to come. £3 fee

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The Angela Thirkell Society at Birkenhead organised a most enjoyable coffee morning for guest societies which several of us attended. This was such a success that it may be repeated. Send SAE if you would like details.

\* \* \* \* \*



THE GASKELL SERVANTS by Joan Leach

Roy Charnock, one of our book collector and dealer members, sent me the following excerpt from the Manchester Guardian dated 11th of October 1932:

"The Maid's Medicine"

Sir,

A rather curious incident illustrating the regard the Gaskells had for their servants to which Mr Allan Monkhouse refers in his "Book man's Notes" in your issue of October 7, came under my notice in, I think, 1883.

The daughters, Miss Gaskell and Miss Julia, who were living at 84 Plymouth Grove, had as medical attendant a physician whose abilities and fame were considerable. One morning one of the sisters called upon the chemist, a gentleman whose establishment was well known in Oxford Road, to ask him if he would recommend them to some other medical man. The chemist, who was in all things most discreet, did, however, venture to give some indication of surprise. He was told with some little display of feeling that Dr ----'s medicine had not been suiting her sister and the doctor, who had been asked to prescribe for one of the servants, had suggested that the abandoned physic would serve the needs of the maid. Of course, the idea of such a makeshift treatment of their servants was unthinkable.

I don't know whether the senior physician or the fortunate junior who succeeded him ever learned the true inwardness of the transaction; they have both joined the great majority. Yrs. &c

William Kirkby

Old Mill House, Darley Bridge, nr. Matlock. Oct 8

I was curious as to why this letter had appeared in the paper in 1932, so I checked the Manchester Guardian microfilm. On October 7th there was a review of 'The Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton',

edited by Jane Whitehill, which had just been published by O.U.P.

The reviewer noted the frequent appearance of Meta and Julia in the letters written by 'their admiring and devoted mother and there are many among us yet who will recall these gracious hostesses'. Elsewhere I saw a description of soirees held by Meta and Julia as a cross between the court of Louis XIV and Cranford!

In a letter from E.G. to Charles Eliot Norton she wrote, of one of the servants, 'I tell her I am writing to you, she bids (or asks me) to say she wished you would come back here again and adds, 'I liked him before he came into the house, I saw he was a good gentleman of the right sort as he stood on the steps'.

It must have been this quote, in the review, which called forth the memory of the Guardian's correspondent.

Another excerpt concerned Silverdale, where E.G. described the guide 'sitting sternly on his white horse the better to be seen when daylight ebbs', and she related how she had 'contrived to dine fifteen people, as hungry as hunters, on shrimps bread and butter'. Perhaps some of you will be able to sample Morecambe Bay shrimps later this year.

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Professor Marroni reports that two recent translations into Italian have been published of books by Mrs. Gaskell, formerly not available. These are:

Elizabeth Gaskell, La Vita di Charlotte Bronte, tradotta da Simone Buffa di Castelferro. Milano. La Tartaruga Edizione. 1987. pp. 531

Elizabeth Gaskell, Storie di donne, di bimbe e di streghe, racconti tradotti da Marisa Sestito. (Lois the witch, The Old Nurse's story, The Poor Clare, The Well of Pen-Morfa, "Susan Dixon" (Half a lifetime ago). Firenze. Giunti, 1988. (Collana "Astrea" series)

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SILVERDALE

by Elsie Davis

I had an opportunity to visit Silverdale (North Lancashire) a few weeks ago. My daughter lives and works in the area and knows the district well enough to escort me to the village where the Gaskell family first stayed for six weeks in 1850 and fell in love with the place.

Elizabeth Gaskell described it to a friend in these words: 'Silverdale is hardly to be called the seaside as it is a little dale running down to Morecambe Bay, with gray limestone rocks on all sides, which in the sun or moonlight glisten like silver. And we are keeping holiday in the most unusual farmhouse lodgings so that the children learn country interests and ways of living'.

This was written from Lindeth Farm ... but on future holidays they stayed at Lindeth Lodge, which they spoke of as the Wolf House because a wolf figures in the heraldic device over the door; and then at Lindeth Tower, a stone-built folly erected by a retired Preston banker in 1842. This building was four storeys high with a single room on each landing. Elizabeth used the room on the top floor for her writing where, according to farm workers, she was seen at work in the early morning as they were on their way to the fields. 'One is never disappointed in coming back to Silverdale', she wrote, 'the secret is the expanse of view'.

(She stayed here with her daughters during the Summer months to escape from the polluted atmosphere of industrial Manchester where they lived, to enjoy the pure sea and country air of Silverdale, and the Lakeland breezes from the North)

'It is certain that many of her books were conceived, and some may possibly have been written, in Lindeth Tower. It is of interest to note that the title of one of her books, Cranford, which is based on the town of Knutsford in Cheshire, happens to have been the

early name of Carnforth, a mere four miles away from Silverdale. Silverdale itself is Abermouth in her novel "Ruth".

Lindeth Tower is still standing and so is Lindeth Lodge that the Gaskells always spoke of as Wolf House; this is now the Wolf House Gallery of Arts and Crafts and retains its wolf crest.

Mrs Gaskell's own name is perpetuated locally in the name of the Village Hall, The Gaskell Memorial Hall, opened in 1931. There is a large portrait of her on the wall just inside the doorway.

\* \* \* \* \*

JOHN SEELY HART

by Christine Lingard

The Gaskell collection in the Manchester Central Library has acquired a valuable item once the property of Mrs Gaskell - a copy of John Seely Hart's Essay on the life and writings of Edmund Spenser with a special exposition of the Faery Queen, New York, 1847. It is inscribed:-

To the author of "Mary Barton" as a testimony of respect for her genius and for her admirable sentiments expressed in her work.

John S Hart, Philadelphia, Oct. 10, 1849

John Seely Hart (1810-1877) was at that time Principal of Philadelphia High School and the author of a number of books on English grammar and the Sunday School movement. He was also the editor of the journal Sartain's Union Magazine which in July 1849 carried an article entitled 'The last generation in England' by the author of Mary Barton communicated for Sartain's Magazine by Mary Howitt. Much of the material in this essay was reworked and polished to become Our Society at Cranford (Household Words, December 1851). The text of this essay was reproduced as an appendix to the Oxford University Press edition of Cranford (1972) edited by Elizabeth Porges Watson.

How Hart's book came into Mrs Gaskell's possession is recorded in her letter of April 28th 1850 (Chapple and Pollard ed no. 71). The book remained in the household until the sale of 84 Plymouth Grove in 1913. Manchester acquired it from a bookseller in Northern Ireland. It is a rare item in its own right despite the Gaskell connection. There is no copy in the British Library.

Elizabeth Gaskell's letter to John Seely Hart:-

April 28th 1850

Dear Sir,

It is only an hour since I received your 'Essay on the Fairy Queen' &c; but I will not lose any more time before thanking you for the pleasure which I promise myself in reading your book, and still more for the kind feeling towards me, which induced you to send it. I received a note from you, containing an expression of this feeling which gratified me exceedingly, although I am ashamed to think how long a time has elapsed without my answering it. But, owing to some mischance, the book, (the Essay,) was not to be found. Mrs Howitt had sent it to my publishers, who had mislaid it, and forgotten the very fact of its receipt. I have written often to try if I, at this distance, could find out where it was in London; and I did not like writing to you before I could acknowledge it's safe arrival. Will you forgive me?

The pamphlets you name are not to be heard of anywhere, but the fact of your sending them remains the same, and it gives me great pleasure to think of it. The writing of 'Mary Barton' was a great pleasure to me; and I became so deeply, sometimes painfully, interested in it, that I don't think I cared at the time of it's publication what reception it met with. I was sure a great deal of it was truth, and I knew that I had realized all my people to myself so vividly that parting with them was like parting with friends. But the reception it met with was a great surprise to me.

I neither expected the friends nor the enemies which it has made me. But the latter I am thankful to say are disappearing while the former are (some of them) friends for life. A good deal of it's success I believe was owing to the time of it's publication, - the great revolutions in Europe had directed people's attention to the social evils, and the strange contrasts which exist in old nations. However, I must not intrude upon your time, which sounds to be most valuable, and to be devoted to the highest purposes. I have not told you though how I have liked to receive an expression of approval from an American.

Yours very truly

E. C. GASKELL

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Highwayman Higgins was none other than Mr Robinson Higgins of Mrs Gaskell's 'The Squire's Story' - 'quite the gentleman, said the Landlord of The George Inn.'

In Knutsford, where he arrived in 1757 and was married to a respectable local lady at the Parish Church, he was accepted in the best society; at the Assemblies, the card parties and the hunting field but his nefarious career ended on the gallows at Carmarthen in 1767. I hope to tell his story in a book on 'Townfolk', later this year, meanwhile you can buy this charming Staffordshire fairings-type figure for £56, each hand painted.



WHAT THE HOWITTS DID

by Joan Leach

Reading a book about Australian history (Isn't everyone in this bicentennial year?) I was surprised to learn that the Howitt family had played a part.

William and Mary Howitt, you will remember, encouraged Elizabeth Gaskell by printing her first published story 'Libby Marsh's Three Eras', in their Journal. For this she used the pen-name, 'Cotton Mather Mills' - Cotton Mather was a New England divine and scholar and will be the subject of a later article.

Although Elizabeth's success as a writer soon eclipsed theirs, the Howitts long regarded her as their protégée.

At the age of 60, William and two sons, Alfred (22) and Charlton (15) joined the Australian gold rush, hoping, if not to make his fortune, at least to ensure a comfortable old age. Needless to say he returned two years later with no gold, but not disappointed with the experience which provided him with material for several books:

'A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia', 'The Squatters' Home' (three volumes), 'Land, Labour and Gold or Two Years in Victoria' (two volumes), and 'The History of Discovery in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand'.

This type of writing was typical of the steady output from his and Mary's pen; between them they produced over two hundred books! The most successful were, perhaps, 'The Rural Life of England' and 'The Seasons'. Both the Howitts worked hard but were never wealthy; Howitts Journal, launched with idealistic hopes of providing good reading for the masses, had to be abandoned after three volumes, leaving them disappointed and in debt. Elizabeth had contributed an essay on 'Clopton House' for the first volume of 'Visits to Remarkable Places'; there were two other volumes; these and 'Homes and Haunts of British Poets' were successful and have been used as reference books ever since.

The Australian adventure was not forgotten for Alfred

stayed on, becoming famous a few years later when he led the expedition to discover the fate of Burke and Wills, lost while attempting the first South to North coast crossing. Alfred found one survivor to tell the tale. He received a hero's welcome when he brought the bodies back for public burial.

The Howitts shared many of their literary and artistic friends with Elizabeth Gaskell; one was Mrs Frederika Bremer, a Swedish novelist whose books were translated by Mary Howitt. However, her friendship was a doubtful asset. Elizabeth described her (G.L.105) as a 'quaint, droll little lady of 60 ... she had annoyed Mrs Davenport and Mrs Stanley by her habit of - how shall I express it? - spitting right and left at the Exhibition and not entirely sparing private home'.

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If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

We are grateful to The Black Swan Press, Wantage, Oxon, for permission to reproduce the picture on our cover - Joan Hassall's wood-cut which appeared in 'Cranford'

# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1988

NO. 6

EDITOR'S LETTER

Literary societies come in all sizes and styles but have in common a commitment to one particular writer. Members join to share this interest in various ways. Our Society is still developing and our committee welcomes suggestions and comments. Are you getting what you expect from the Society? Participation can be on various levels and many members are happy just to receive our literature, even if distance does not preclude them from attending meetings in person. I sometimes get carried away with enthusiasm and almost chartered a train to go to Silverdale, then found I had difficulty in filling a coach! So we need feedback on what members like and expect.

For local members, I hope we will have regular study/discussion meetings this autumn, but I need to know whether this idea appeals and what times will be suitable.

I hope that through the newsletter and journal all members feel in touch with the Gaskell world. During the forthcoming Gaskell year I hope a London meeting will be arranged - perhaps S.E. members will suggest a venue.

Most of us have wide literary interests, so contact with other societies is enjoyable. We were pleased to welcome a hundred members of the Bronte Society to Knutsford on June 7th. After lunch at The Royal George - the Old Assembly Rooms of Cranford and 'Wives and Daughters' - Gaskell Society members guided them around the town. We all enjoyed meeting and were blessed with a fine day.

The Alliance of Literary Societies has been a loose federation, acting at times as a pressure group, but the meeting held at Birmingham on April 30th resulted in such a useful exchange of ideas that a further seminar is to be held on October 8th to further the formation of a new, closer Alliance of member societies, with a committee to be appointed.

I have a list of many other literary societies, so if you have another favourite writer you might like to check it. I have been sent literature by the newly-formed Ghost Story Society, as Mrs Gaskell's 'Old Nurse's Story' is a fine example of the genre. Elsewhere in this newsletter there are details of the Dickens Fellowship.

Literary Societies seem to be making news: BBC Radio 4 are researching for a programme and a journalist from Harper and Queen magazine came to Knutsford to find out about us.

We have something to look forward to in the shape of a television documentary on Mrs Gaskell and the Gregs of Styal. Julian Farino, who researched for the film, has kindly written about this for us.

Lastly, to wind up our year in style, Professor Yamawaki has written to me with the news that the Gaskell Society of Japan is well on the way to being formed. What a pleasure it is to make friends through literature.

JOAN LEACH

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#### OBITUARY

Just as this newsletter was going to press we received the sad news that our chairman, Dr Ken Walley, had died on August 12th. He had been in poor health for some time but carried on courageously with his interests and commitments; only three days previously he had been at a local council meeting, and the day before he died I had seen him to discuss Gaskell meetings.

When the 150th anniversary of Mrs Gaskell's birth was celebrated in Knutsford, Dr Walley was actively involved. He loved Knutsford and its history and traditions, working on town and county councils for the public good.

We shall miss him in the Gaskell Society.

JOAN LEACH

#### GETTING TO KNOW MRS G.

by Julian Farino

When I picked up Winifred Gerin's biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, I was struck immediately by the quotation chosen as the frontispiece. "I am myself and nobody else, and can't be bound by another's rules".

Unfortunately, the same cannot always be said for the life of a television researcher. We are bound by the rules of producers and executive producers, we work to order; it is not difficult to perceive that researching Blind Date is a far cry from World in Action.

Consequently, when I first heard about a series of films to be made detailing historical individuals of the 19th Century - in the North West, as these were 'local' programmes - I was suitably excited. Whereas a lot of television has a fast turnover rate, this was a meaty subject into which to sink my teeth.

The original idea was a loose one. The films - an hour's length each - would focus on the lives of lesser known philanthropists or radicals. Preliminary reading was done, largely by producer Bill Jones. One film would be about soap king Lord Leverhulme, another about the early women's movement. The third had an original working title of "The Manchester Set", and was to include figures such as Ruskin, Engels and James Kay as well as Mrs Gaskell. The Gregs of Styal were also floating around as a possibility, given the beautiful locations and a story of family intrigue to rival Dallas.

It didn't take long to realise that to do justice to all these notables in a one-hour film was ambitious to say the least. How we came to decide to limit the film to just the Gregs and Mrs Gaskell isn't entirely clear. True, they are connected (William Rathbone Greg's famous review of Mary Barton, Mrs Gaskell's friendship with Samuel Greg junior etc.) and it would open the possibility of exploring the world of the non-conformist Unitarians. Perhaps it was simply that Bill Jones enjoyed Mary Barton so much.

When I joined the production - comprising just three of us, producer, director and researcher - I had five weeks to set up two weeks' filming. That is, to become an expert on Mrs Gaskell, to view all the possible locations, and to decide how we would tell the story. Obviously I wouldn't be idle, my days were to be of William Gaskell proportions.

I had already read Mary Barton and North and South, when I was at University doing a social history paper. Mary Barton I remember particularly; I read it in just over a day, unable to put it down, revelling in the chance to read 'a good yarn' rather than another dense text. I easily forgave the corny ending (North and South I found a tamer version of the same theme), and for a couple of days wandered round saying "It's the poor, and only the poor, as look after themselves" (six years on, this is probably a gross misquote).

Even so, I didn't feel I knew Mrs Gaskell the person at all before this project. Trying to probe her character - not an easy task - was the most enjoyable challenge. Gerin's cogent biography, whilst brilliant on detail, I didn't find that illuminating; if anything, just a touch sycophantic. John Chapple's edited letters I enjoyed much more\*: Mrs Gaskell's energy and impulsive enthusiasm became far more apparent.

Alongside all this reading, plenty was happening. It was decided that the films would include at least ten minutes of 'drama-documentary', so the director was busy casting "Mrs Gaskell". Eileen Tully, who plays her, has a distinctive and extremely Victorian face, and turned out to be excellent. The scene at young Williams's grave in Warrington is very moving, and apart from seeing Eileen smoking off-camera, she was entirely convincing. Later, in the cutting room, we discovered there is an uncanny resemblance between Eileen and Mrs Gaskell's daughter: do watch out for it in the film.

\*Elizabeth Gaskell - A Portrait in Letters.  
J A V Chapple. MUP 1980

As we pieced together the story, draft storylines were written and re-worked. Contacts were made - obviously to Joan for general information at the drop of a hat and for expertise on Knutsford, and to John Chapple, plus several people in connection with the Gregs. We visited Heathwaite, Plymouth Grove, Cross St Chapel, The Portico Library and various other Manchester locations still in existence, but it was at Silverdale where we grew really excited. One could totally empathise with Mrs Gaskell's urge to escape there, and we decided that - with the owner of Lindeth Tower, Mrs Horsley's, permission - we would shoot the bulk of the drama there. When it came, we were blessed with the only sunshine of this miserable summer.

The days preceeding our two weeks filming were hectic. Everything has to be in place, one has to be sure that pictures will match words and justice will be done to the story. We filmed in Knutsford, Manchester and Silverdale for the Mrs Gaskell part of the story. Everybody enjoyed it immensely - always a good sign for the final product.

One never has much time to linger in this business. As the director finished editing the film, I was already well underway researching a film about dogs. In hindsight, I enjoyed working on 'Voices for Change', as the three films are to be collectively known, immensely. When Joan asked me to write these notes, she suggested I say how I thought of Mrs Gaskell both before and after. Well, perhaps a little cheekily, I'll leave you to see the film to find out, for my impressions are accurately reflected there. It now looks as though transmission won't be until January, since the schedules have been thrown by the Olympics. I hope you enjoy it, and feel we give a fair appraisal. As they say, you've read the books, now ...

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THE PORTICO LIBRARY and THE GASKELLS. While researching the Portico Library records for her book on William Gaskell, Barbara Brill noted that these show books borrowed by William and, no doubt, read by ELIZABETH. Barbara plans some further research.



# OUTING TO SILVERDALE

by Joan Leach

On a fair morning, on July 3rd, a group of intrepid Gaskellians set forth from Knutsford by coach en route for Silverdale with me as guide - that is why I call them 'intrepid' for, as I had not had the opportunity of travelling the route ahead, it was something of a journey of discovery, akin to a pilgrimage. Of course, I had been thorough in my research and our destination was certain for Silverdale might well be the Mecca of Gaskell followers.

Mrs Gaskell wrote to Lady Kay Shuttleworth (G.L.72a, undated but probably 1850) of the family's 'annual migration' to Silverdale 'with grey limestone rocks on all sides which in the sun or moonlight glisten like silver' and 'our children learn country interests and ways of living and thinking'. And, later, 'I think - and it is pleasant to think, - that one is never disappointed in coming back to Silverdale ... such wide plains of golden sands with purple hill shadows, - or fainter wandering filmy cloud shadows & the great dome of sky. - We have not sat up all night on our tower this time ...' (G.L.401, July 1858). This description was to Charles Eliot Norton and in a previous letter she had drawn him a sketch 'We live in a queer pretty crampy house at the back of a great farmhouse. Our house is built round a square court, - Stay. We have all that is shaded'. Here in the printed version of the letters is a reference to the footnote, 'Mrs Gaskell is referring to a plan she drew here'. The original letter is owned by Harvard University Library, so I requested a photocopy.

She was so economical with her use of paper that it is difficult to interpret, but they clearly had more living space than the Tower. '... the rectangular piece is two stories high, the little bit by the lane one story' - this was the kitchen, the lower storey of the Tower being the larder.

town with his brother / to Silverdale (near  
Lancaster - you must have heard of  
- speak of it, - close to Lancaster Sands.  
+ Mrs Gaskell's house at Silverdale  
comes to stay with me, - need there be  
I shall come here ~~for~~ <sup>down</sup> for six weeks, and at  
it as strong as horses it is to be hoped  
we live in a queer pretty crampy  
house, at the back of a great farmhouse.  
Our house is built round a square  
court, - Stay. <sup>Good</sup> <sup>down</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>house</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>shaded</sup>, the  
kitchen <sup>is</sup> <sup>shaded</sup>, the  
Hoddy  
Fields  
Lane <sup>Locks</sup> <sup>Head</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>two</sup> <sup>stories</sup>  
high, the little bit by the  
lane one story. Said little  
bit being kitchen & larder  
bed rooms; the kitchen is round with

Plan of Silverdale

Up to 1852 at least, William accompanied the family, he liked to 'play pranks, go cockling etc etc and feel at liberty to say or do what he likes' without any visitors, to make him 'feel constrained and obliged to be proper'. In later years he had to be coaxed to take a break from Manchester cares and relaxed on holiday away from family responsibilities; perhaps too, he found the open house hospitality at Silverdale overwhelming. He was not one of the party of '15 people who had to dine on shrimps & bread and butter,- and when they asked for more (I) had to tell them there was no bread nearer than Milnthorpe 6 miles off' (G.L.394).

Knowing Silverdale was so much a part of the Gaskell family life gave it a special significance for us, as we saw the same sandy bay, the wide sky, grey limestone walls, rocks and lichens.

After we left the motorway, near Carnforth, the roads became narrow and winding but we had no difficulty in finding The Silverdale Hotel for coffee, where we met more of our party and our local guide, Audrey Fishwick, who, having learnt of our Society when I made enquiries, joined as a member and offered to guide us. This was no easy task as access was restricted for coaches.

First we sought the Tower which was unmistakable against the skyline, set back behind a high stone wall, in a delightful garden. Mrs Horsley, the owner, had agreed to let ten of us see inside the Tower and mount the narrow staircase to the top where Mrs Gaskell loved to write, with the expansive view of sea and sky. All our party had the pleasure of walking in the garden close to the Tower and being able to mount the 'high terrace at the top of the broad stone wall, looking down on the Bay' (G.L.391). Only a week or two before our visit the Granada film crew had filmed here, so we hope all Gaskellians will share the experience.

Close by we visited the Wolf House, now an art gallery and gift shop, before making our way back to the village for lunch. It would have been pleasant to have more



time to explore the area which Mrs Gaskell knew so well. 'Oh! we are getting so sorry to leave Silverdale. We know all the people here & they know us'. Just how true this was is evident from a letter of October 1857 (G.L.376a) when she and Meta took an unplanned, impromptu holiday and tramped around the village, seeking accommodation at various houses.

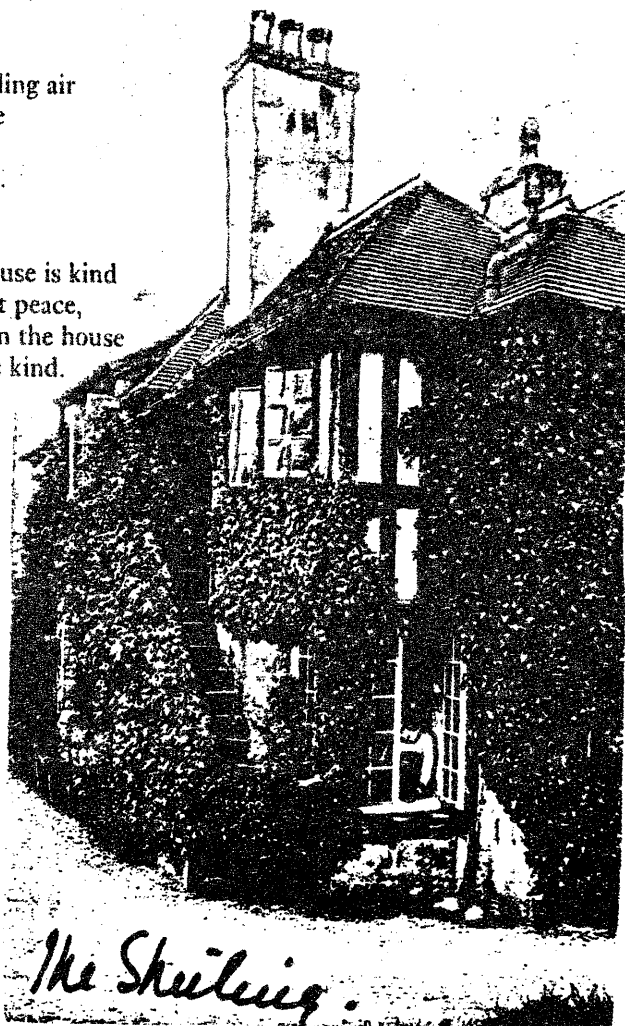
The Silverdale area can be recognised in several Gaskell works; the treacherous Morecambe Bay crossing

It stands alone  
 Up in a land of stone  
 All worn like ancient stairs,  
 A land of rocks and trees  
 Nourished on wind and stone.

And all within  
 Long delicate has been;  
 By arts and kindliness  
 Coloured, sweetened, and warmed  
 For many years has been.

Safe resting there  
 Men hear in the travelling air  
 But music, pictures see  
 In the same daily land  
 Painted by the wild air.

One maker's mind  
 Made both, and the house is kind  
 To the land that gave it peace,  
 And the stone has taken the house  
 To its cold heart and is kind.



where lives were lost and from Lindeth Tower the guide could be seen 'a square man sitting stern on his white horse (the better to be seen when daylight ebbs) ... leading (the) slow moving train of crossers' (G.L.394) gave the setting for 'The Sexton's Hero'. It also became 'Abermouth' where the dramatic scenery added to the emotional tension of the story (chapter 24). The water-lily scene (chapter 6) was drawn from Gaskell's memory of Deepdale Pool but we were not able to visit it on this occasion as it involved a rural walk.

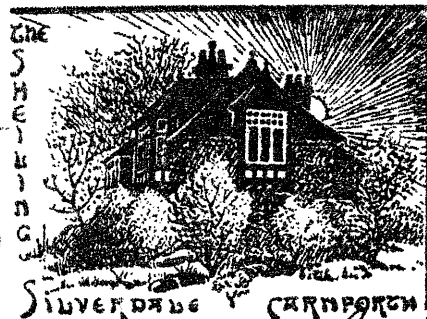
We did however enjoy a lovely field-walk overlooking the Bay. Audrey directed us to this and tried to persuade our driver to rendezvous with us at the other end; unfortunately he gave up trying to negotiate the narrow road and Audrey had some difficulty in reuniting us. We almost missed this walk when a few spots of rain made us hesitate but were so glad we had not been deterred; it encapsulated the beautiful, unspoilt natural beauty which drew the Gaskell family here. At the top of a lane called The Cove was the house which Rev Carus Wilson bought as a holiday convalescent home for the Cowan Bridge school, but there is no evidence that any of the Bronte children stayed there - surely Mrs Gaskell would have mentioned this?

We had one more stop to make, at The Sheiling. This was the house built by Meta and Julia Gaskell - the Miss Gaskells - as their retreat from Manchester. The recent owners, Mr and Mrs Baker, kindly allowed us to visit this attractive house, with something of the Swiss chalet in its design, set in its own woodlands. Edward Thomas wrote a poem about it (see opposite) from which it seems that the house was once less enclosed by woods and that it retained the Gaskell aura. The poet had been visiting Gordon Bottomley, poet and dramatist who bought the house in 1914. At a sale of his furniture two chairs were listed as having been given to Mrs Gaskell by Charlotte Bronte and acquired by him with the house.

To complete our day we visited Levens Hall with its fascinating topiary gardens. We were sorry to go home without thanking our guide, Audrey, as we had unwittingly parted company. She arrived at Leighton Hall, but our coach driver had difficulty with narrow roads so we got lost.

The countryside was so lovely and there was so much to see that a weekend would be the best way to enjoy it. Now that reminds me, some day I shall want to visit Whitby, Sylvia's country; would any members like to consider a long weekend trip?

14. IX. 00  
From the two  
Miss Gaskells  
(we hate "the  
Misses G."!)



You will receive copies of all  
the volumes of the New Edition\*  
from us, for the library; but  
please don't think it necessary  
to acknowledge each volume.

\* Referring to the complete KNUTSFORD EDITION in 8 volumes

\* \* \* \* \*

# BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

The Folio Society has added Cranford to its collection. The text is based on the 1864 edition and the illustrations are the wood-engravings of Joan Hassall which first appeared in the Harrap edition in 1940 and are also available in an edition published by Black Swan Press, in 1984. Added is a six page introduction by the novelist Susan Hill praising the subtleties of the novel. Folio society publications are normally only available to members but a copy is available in the Gaskell collection, Manchester.

There have been no new books devoted to Mrs Gaskell since the last issue with the exception of Brodies notes on Mrs Gaskell's 'North and South' by Graham Handley published by Pan at £1.95. These slim volumes are intended as revision aids for students of GCE 'A' level and consist of plot summaries, character studies, textual notes and sample questions. There is a similar volume devoted to Cranford.

The framework of fiction: socio-cultural approaches to the novel by J.A. Bull (Senior Lecturer at Manchester Polytechnic) Macmillan, 1987. (£20.00). Chapter 5, entitled 'The Novelist in the Market Place: Dickens and Mrs Gaskell', deals with the structure of the novel and, in particular, how the demands of publishers and circulating libraries such as Mudies for a three volume work influenced not only the form and length of the novel but also the change of title from John Barton to Mary Barton, made at the behest of Chapman and Hall, altered the whole emphasis of the book.

The Victorian novelist: social problems and social change edited by Kate Flint. Croom Helm, 1987 (£27.50). A series of extracts from contemporary English literature and documentary material which bear directly on the fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens. In particular the Unitarian Domestic Mission Society Reports of the Mission to the poor; Peter Gaskell's Manufacturing population of England - 1833; and Thomas

Middleton's Annals of Hyde and district, 1899, which itself drew on earlier source material such as local newspapers describing the murder of Thomas Ashton as a possible source for the murder of Henry Carson in Mary Barton. In contrast strikes prevented by a Preston manufacturer (John Goodair) is quoted as a contrast to Mrs Gaskell's treatment of the strike in North and South.

The Gaskell collection, Manchester, has also benefited from the gift by Mrs Eileen Ellison of a copy of her thesis for the degree of B.A. at Liverpool Polytechnic School of Librarianship and Information Science. Mrs Ellison is to be congratulated for her work: Feminine self-sacrifice in the nineteenth century novel; Ruth by Elizabeth Gaskell, a critical bibliography of a much overlooked novel. All entries provide annotations averaging two hundred words and results in one of the most extensive studies of Ruth ever produced.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### BROOK STREET CHAPEL

Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 came the Act of Toleration in 1689 which allowed dissenters to build their own chapels. Brook Street Chapel dates from this time so will be celebrating its tercentenary next year.

The name of Peter Coulthurst appears on the first trust deed of 1694. It was through this ancestor of Mrs Gaskell's that Sandlebridge Farm came to the family, the Heathbridge of Cousin Phillis. The graves of Coulthursts and Hollands are close to Mrs Gaskell's in the graveyard. Among the ministers were a Holland and a Turner.

This chapel which she knew and loved from cradle to grave is showing signs of its age; 'the plain white-washed walls' are damp; 'The little diamond-shaped loaded panes still cast a green gloom, not without its solemnity within' but some have fallen into disrepair and are now replaced by plain glass temporary windows. At least £30,000 will be needed for restoration work. Any donation will be appreciated.

#### THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

This Fellowship was founded in 1902 with membership open to all lovers of the works of Charles Dickens. There are some twenty branches in the UK and a similar number in North America, and others around the world.

Manchester formerly had an active branch and it is hoped to re-establish this. A meeting with a Dickens entertainment is planned for December in Manchester; if you would like details, please send s.a.e. to - Rev R.R. Carmyllie, 27 Oaks Lane, Bradshaw, Bolton BL2 3RR.

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#### BLEAK HOUSE IN CHESHIRE?

Barbara Brill noticed an interesting paragraph in 'Cheshire' by T.A. Coward (Methuen, 1932) chapter IX, p.204:

'Robert Langton, author of 'The Childhood and Youth of Dickens' believed that Tabley Old Hall may have suggested the Chesney Wold of 'Bleak House' for he learnt that Dickens and Hablot K. Browne visited the neighbourhood more than once and knew Lord de Tabley. The owner of Chesney Wold is called Sir Leicester Dedlock ...'

The family name of Lord de Tabley was Leicester - the last owner Colonel Leicester Warren died some ten years ago. Bleak House original - if either Dickens or his illustrator had one in mind - is more likely to have been Rockingham Castle in Lincolnshire. Alan S. Watts, hon. secretary of The Dickens Fellowship, Barbara Brill and myself, having considered the evidence, find very little to confirm the idea of Tabley being an inspiration for Bleak House. Mrs Gaskell met illustrator, Hablot Browne at Dickens' dinner table (G.L.45a).

It is interesting to note that F.R. Leavis in his introduction to 'Felix Holt' by George Eliot (Everyman edition) thought Treby Manor owed much to Chesney Wold of 'Bleak House'.

\* \* \* \* \*

WIVES AND DAUGHTERS: A FURTHER NOTE

by Angus Easson

I was delighted by the Newsletter's review of my edition of Wives and Daughters. Christine Lingard is of course correct in noting that the Penguin edition claims to be the first based on the Cornhill Magazine serialisation, but the claim itself cannot be sustained. As comparison of even just the first chapter shows, whatever the Penguin is using as the basis of its text, it is not the Cornhill. By basing the World's Classics on the magazine serialisation and taking the opportunity of incorporating corrections from the manuscript, I can claim to represent more faithfully than any previous version what Elizabeth Gaskell intended.

More controversial is the question of setting, which Joan Leach picks up in 'Hollingford alias Knutsford'. First, we clearly do agree that many of the characteristics of Hollingford are those of Knutsford and that Tatton and the Egertons are drawn on for Cumnor Towers and its family. However, the references to Hamley being in the midland shires (p.319), to the sight of the Malvern Hills (p.482), and to the Birmingham-London railway ("this new line between Birmingham and London", p.638), minor though each may be, do build up a sense that Elizabeth Gaskell had in mind for many details of the topography somewhere other than Cheshire, deeper south, and most likely Warwickshire in the main. But no novel needs be tied to one fixed and unchanging spot.

\* \* \* \* \*

LITERARY COURSES

Embassy Hotels run a popular series of Leisure Learning Weekends which include literary themes. Next July, I am conducting a Gaskell weekend with a lively programme of visits. Send for brochure to:

Leisure Learning Weekends Ltd  
107 Station Street  
Burton upon Trent, Staffs.

JOAN LEACH

FOR YOUR SHELVES

We can supply copies of 'Wives and Daughters' OUP/PB, £3.95;

'William Gaskell, a Portrait' by Barbara Brill, M/C Lit and Phil. £7.95;

Marshall Cavendish, 'Elizabeth Gaskell' (part work magazine and copy of 'Cranford') £3.95.

Also, we have FOR LOAN -

'Cousin Phillis' on tape. £1.00 if posted, 50p otherwise

\* \* \* \* \*

REMINDER

If you will not be at the AGM, please renew your subscription - £5.00\* - s.a.e. appreciated, to:

Mrs L. Clode  
15 Mereheath Park  
Knutsford  
Cheshire WA16 6AT

\*increase to be ratified at the AGM. When we set membership at £4 there was no Journal, and postage costs keep rising

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Material and suggestions for future Newsletters should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN. Tel: 0565 4668

ISSN 0954 - 1209

# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1989

NO. 7

## EDITOR'S LETTER

I shall be brief because there is so much interesting material to squeeze into this newsletter. I already have enough for the next, I think.

Firstly, we must congratulate the Gaskell Society of Japan on their dynamic launch in Tokyo on 16th October. Guided by President Professor Yuriko Yamawaki of Jissen Women's University, the Society rapidly enrolled a hundred members and is already planning a journal. This international literary co-operation is so valuable in promoting friendship and understanding. There are also Brontë and Dickens Societies in Japan.

The television film made by Granada called 'Voices for Change' which features Mrs Gaskell and the Gregs of Styal Mill was a little disappointing. Firstly, it was only shown in the northern area (14th February) and, secondly, it concentrated more on the Gregs in a somewhat over-dramatised presentation, comparing them with a Dallas type dynasty. For the general viewer it was colourful and entertaining but did not put over its points clearly enough for Gaskell aficionados.

Forthcoming events are the Spring Meeting at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester on 29th April and an outing to Haworth on Wednesday 28th June. The AGM weekend will be 7/8th October.

The Alliance of Literary Societies will be holding its first AGM at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on Saturday 15th April. I have been representing our Society and Kenn Oultram has joined me for The Lewis Carroll and Randolph Caldecott Societies on a caretaking committee. Kenn has taken on the challenge of producing an Alliance Newsletter so that we may keep in touch with other groups.

PLEASE help to keep our membership list in order. With this newsletter you should receive our new-style membership card; if you do not it means that we have no note of your renewal which could be our mistake or your failure to send £5 dues. Last year we caused a muddle by enlisting the aid of Lilian Clode, as Beryl was busy planning her daughter's wedding, but now you may send your subs to Beryl Kinder, 15 Sandileigh Avenue, or to me if you have other matters to include.

We hope you will enjoy this newsletter and the Journal which is just going to print to be ready for the April meeting.

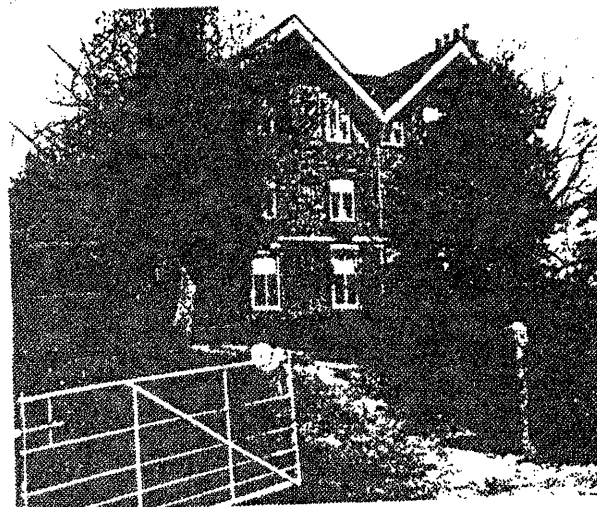
JOAN LEACH - Secretary



'The Cheshire folk differ from the rest of the English, partly better, partly equal', wrote cartographer John Speed in his Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain, published in 1611, and neither Elizabeth Gaskell nor I would disagree with that comment, but then we are all three 'Cheshire folk'! Speed continued, 'In feasting, they are friendly, at meat cheerful, in entertainment liberall, soone angry and soone pacified ... merciful to the afflicted, compassionate to the poore, kinde to their kindred, spary of labour ... not greedy in eating and far from dangerous practices'. And if Cheshire folk sound perfect, so does the countryside according to Speed: 'The Soil is fat, fruitful and rich, yeelding abundantly both profit and pleasure to man. The Champion grounds make glad the hearts of the tillers; the Meadows imbrodered with divers sweet smelling flowers; and the pastures makes the Kines udders stout to the paille from whom and wherein the best cheese of all Europe is made'. Alas, with intensive farming and use of weedkillers the meadows are no longer bright with buttercups, lady's smocks and campion but we set out on Sunday 2nd October to find the rural idyll of Cousin Phillis country.

The Heathbridge setting of the story is, without doubt, Sandlebridge, and the farm of her grandparents, only a few miles from Knutsford, sadly pulled down in 1960 though some of the farm buildings remain alongside the new farm and houses. You may recall a happy letter written by Elizabeth dated Sandlebridge May 1836: 'I wish I could paint my present situation to you. Fancy me sitting in an old fashioned parlour, 'doors and windows opened wide', with casement window opening into a sunny court all filled with flowers which scent the air with their fragrance - in the very depth of the country - 5 miles from the least approach to a town - the song of birds, the hum of insects, the lowing of cattle the only sounds - and such pretty fields and woods all round.' We stopped our coach to read this passage, looking over the green and pleasant Cheshire fields. Dr Wendy Craik, the day before at our AGM meeting, had pointed out the 'lore and learning' in Cousin Phillis and in this letter Elizabeth went on, 'Here is a sort of standard library kept - Spenser,

Shakespear, Wordsworth and a few foreign books' ... Dante? 'Baby (Marianne) is at the very tip-top of bliss ... There are chickens and little childish pigs, & cows & calves & horses & baby horses & fish in the pond, & ducks in the lane, & the mill & the smithy ...' (G.L.4) 'We stopped almost on the bridge over the mill stream, alongside the old smithy, now converted into an attractive house.



Colthurst House  
Sandlebridge



Sandlebridge  
Mill and Smithy



Something of the light, tranquility and timelessness of the scene is recaptured in *Cousin Phillis* at the beginning of Part Two.

Regretting that Colthurst House/Hope Farm was no more, we drove down the lane to The Stag's Head Inn. When Doreen Pleydell and I had reconnoitred our route we wondered how this pub made a living, it seemed incongruous, more like a town centre building, but alongside it were the out-buildings which had been the thatched country-style inn of Gaskell days. Our coach pulled up to puzzled greetings from a crowd of Sunday drinkers standing around in the afternoon sunshine, wondering why we had stopped. The fields just beyond us were shown as Heathgate on an old map.

I like to think that this was the scene Mrs Gaskell had in mind when Paul Manning had been instructed by his mother to check up on family connections: 'So the next time our business took me to Heathbridge, and we were dining in the little sanded inn-parlour, I took the opportunity ... and asked the questions I was bidden ...

'Yes'; the landlord said, 'the Hope Farm was in Heathbridge proper and the owner's name was Holman, and he was an independent minister, and, as far as the landlord could tell his wife's name was Phillis ... Hope Farm is not a stone's throw from here ... it's an old place though Holman keeps it in good order'.

'Heathbridge proper' is Gaskell's local knowledge and affinity with this area showing, although so thinly populated, Great Warford is the correct name for the inn's locality while Sandlebridge was in Little Warford.

We went on just around the corner to Great Warford Baptist Chapel, a tiny, timber-framed building believed to have been founded by ex-Cromwellian soldiers; placed at the junction of three townships when the Five Mile Act forbade ejected ministers to preach near towns. Inside the small, oak box pews and over-hanging gallery had a simple, homely dignity as the golden autumn sunshine filtered through the leaded window panes. The heavy iron-studded doors were opened with an ancient blacksmith made latch with small round boss inscribed



Stag's  
Head Inn ↑  
at Great  
Warford



Baptist  
Chapel →

1712

'No the 4th'. There is some doubt as to whether this is a date or meaning the fourth Baptist chapel in the vicinity. It was not the time to discuss genealogy but the caretaker was Mrs Holland, who told us that the chapel had been used by the BBC in the filming of *Cousin Phillis*.

Our next stop was Dam Head House, Mobberley, where John and Mary Holland had lived, Mrs Gaskell's great-grandparents. It had been in possession of the Holland family

from about 1650 until about 1870. The owners were pleased to let us see their garden and told us what a charming, happy home it made; they felt it had been cherished through its many years. Although Robert Holland seems to have been living here in her day, Mrs Gaskell never mentions Mobberley and probably this branch of the family were not Unitarians.

Then along the quiet Cheshire lanes to find Moss Farm Bowdon. Here the Gaskell children came to learn country ways or to recuperate from childhood illnesses in the fresh air. The farm land has been built over with stock-broker type houses and suburban roads but Moss Farm has vestiges of its former character. (You can read more of the Gaskells at Moss Farm in another part of the newsletter)

The road from Bowdon goes through Bucklow Hill where there used to be several private schools for boys and girls. As it is so close to Tatton Park or Cumnor Towers of Wives and Daughters we might have stopped to look for Mrs Fitzpatrick's school; instead we paused at the beautiful Rostherne Mere overlooked by St Mary's Church which celebrated 300 years of history in 1988. Tradition has it that a mermaid swims by subterranean passages from the sea and River Mersey to ring a bell which rolled into the mere centuries ago. As she does this only at Easter we did not linger.

By this time our pilgrim band was ready for refreshment and tea was waiting for us at Arley Hall. Our host met us in the courtyard ready to enlighten us about the history of the charming house and gardens; this he did while we enjoyed our tea so that we might have a little time to see the Victorian-style flower borders, walled gardens and lime walks. Our tour had been a full one and sadly we had less time than we would have liked here.

Mrs Gaskell knew the family history, if not the house itself, for in Cranford Sir Peter Arley was godfather to 'poor Peter' the rector's son.

Our tour through Cheshire lanes in search of Cousin Phillis country had been almost idyllic and somehow gave us a feeling of timelessness, that we were able to span the years since Elizabeth Gaskell had travelled this way.

JOAN LEACH

Bowdon's strongest literary association is probably with the Cheshire novelist Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-65) brought up in Knutsford and after marriage having her home in Manchester. Her letters give evidence of regular visits to Bowdon, especially during the 1850s, when Moss Farm was a loved retreat from Manchester atmosphere. Surviving letters to her eldest daughter Marianne between May 1851, when Marianne was away at boarding school, and January 1857, show how much the care of Miss Walker, the farmer's sister, was valued for the younger girls during periods of convalescence.

The first reference to the Bowdon farm (not named) appears in a letter of May 1851: "The two little ones are going with Hearn to lodge at Bowden in a farmhouse on Saturday" (G.L.97). At this period Mrs Gaskell regularly used the spelling Bowden.

A letter of 4 September 1851 (G.L.101a) shows that, with the opening of the Manchester/Bowdon railway in 1849, it was possible to escape for a day to country air at the farm, which the mention of the name Walker identifies as Moss Farm (near the present South Downs Road); it was then the only Bowdon farm tenanted by Walkers. "It was a dismal morning and we doubted if it would clear off; and indeed we gave up the thought of going to spend the day at Bowden as had been planned ... Then it cleared up so I sent Hearn and the three girls off with a dinner in a basket and tea and sugar to drink tea at Miss Walkers (where they lodge you know) ... I got away after a lunch-dinner, rushed to Bowden called on Mrs Haughton. Drank tea with the children, came home at six."

Hearn was the children's trusted nurse, and the three girls Meta, then aged fourteen, Florence (Flossy or Flossie, variously spelt) eight and Julia, four.

A year later the five year old Julia was taken by her parents to Bowdon after a short, acute illness. "She is quite well now", her mother wrote to Marianne on 28 August 1852, "though easily tired and feeble owing to the hot weather; but well enough to go to Bowden with Papa and me and stronger than I was in the walking way" (G.L.130a). This suggests another day-visit; it is not

explicitly stated that the family visited the Walkers, though it seems probable.

Mrs Gaskell herself was far from strong and very busy with Manchester commitments, so the children were used to staying at Moss Farm with their nurse, without their parents. Sometimes a Gaskell servant named Mary escorted them.

A particularly interesting reference to these visits appears in a letter of May 1851: "Hearn Meta Flossie and baby (Julia) went to Bowden yesterday. Mary took them as I was too weak and Papa too busy to go; and returned last night. Flossy was dreadfully tired when she got there. You have no idea how weak and ill she looks, and how very weak she is. But I am glad to hear her appetite seems better. Mary says she enjoyed the farm house bread and eat an egg which she has not been able to do for a long time and planned to have milk put by for breakfast a la Silverdale" (G.L.97a). (The Gaskells spent about six weeks each summer at Silverdale on Morecambe Bay.) "Meta has taken crochet, Mr Scott's poems and her sketch book to Bowden."

Then comes a valuable brief description of the farm: "It is a small old fashioned farm (like Wood's at Green Heys) - at the foot of the hill. More's the pity." Mrs Gaskell would obviously have preferred fresher air on the hilltop. "They have a double bedded room and a sitting room. They will stay a fortnight I think. But much will depend on Flossy. Papa intends to go over on Thursday and see if she is gaining strength."

A later letter seems to suggest that Hearn's home may have been in Bowdon, so she was, perhaps, the connecting link between the Gaskells and the Walkers of Moss Farm.

If Mrs Gaskell wrote any letters about her own periods of staying at Moss Farm, they appear to have been lost, perhaps through the destroying zeal of her unmarried daughters Meta and Julia, in respect for their mother's love of privacy.

A descendant of the Moss Farm family, Alice Walker, in a letter dated 1944, when she was 80, reminisced about the farm with its well-drawn water, fine orchard and 'a



room opening from the main stairs, with the deep eaves of the thatch over the little paned window, the lattice opening to floor level ...' which she always knew as the one Mrs Gaskell had stayed in.

'I think it was after Grandmother Walker's death, when my father and aunts were carrying on, feeling themselves orphans though grown-up, because she was so beloved, that Mrs Gaskell came to lodge at the Moss, with her girls Florence and Julia, and their nurse. It was a happy time. When I asked Aunt W. what Mrs Gaskell was like, she said enthusiastically, "More like an angel than anything else - an angel in the house". She must have been as beautiful in disposition as looks; and she must have loved the quaint house-place, for she came again after they had "walled in" the sitting room and made the lobbies, and she cried in distress - "Oh, you've spoiled it - you've spoiled it completely." They were sorry for her disappointment, but I think they went on being glad of the warmer room. Mrs Gaskell was very happy and busy in the old parlour where the roses

were tapping on the window, and the wood fire which she loved crackling in the high grate under the 18th century high narrow mantelpiece (which I remember myself with regret). She rested on the sofa as she wrote, and they were convinced that it was "Ruth" which she wrote, as it came out after that and they fancied that something of the Moss showed on it, but I never read the sad story carefully and don't know to what they referred. I do know that Mrs Gaskell talked with Aunt B. about Charlotte Brontë and "Jane Eyre", which was exciting everybody then, and she told of her visit to Haworth and exclaimed with deep feeling: "Oh, Miss Betsey, if you could see that dreadful place and know the life there, you would be so sorry for poor, poor Charlotte!"

My aunts liked Mr Gaskell very much, and Aunt Betsey, who went to see them at their Manchester house, enjoyed herself greatly and said he was the most kindly and courteous host imaginable. I heard so much about them and always associated the bedroom with the window looking towards the wood and hill road with Mrs Gaskell, as if she had left some of her thoughts behind in it.'

Perhaps Mrs Gaskell would not recognise Moss Farm today.

We are grateful to Bowdon Historical Society for permission to use this material, and in particular to Myra Kendrick and Ronald Trenbath who are also members of our Society.

### BOOK NOTES

Woman to Woman: female friendship in Victorian fiction by Tess Coslett. The Harvester Press. £29.95

As the title suggests, this book discusses the inter-relationship of female characters with particular relationship to Shirley. Chapter 4: Earnest women and heartless flirts, deals with three novels in which the friendship of a charming, flirtatious woman, usually portrayed as an opponent or rival of the plainer more virtuous heroine, is central to the plot. It enhances and by no means detracts from the heroine's relationship to men. The novels under discussion are George Eliot's Middlemarch, Mrs Humphry Ward's Sir George Tressady and Mrs Gaskell's Wives and Daughters. The analysis of the characters of Molly Gibson and Cynthia Kirkpatrick is set against the demands of the time and the place of women in society. The author is lecturer in English Literature, University of Lancaster.

Regions of the Imagination: the development of British rural fiction by W J Keith. University of Toronto press, £20.00

This book traces the development of the regional novel from the Scottish novels of Sir Walter Scott to D H Lawrence and includes some minor figures of the early twentieth century such as Eden Phillpotts, Sheila Kaye Smith, Constance Holme, Mary Webb and John Cowper Powys. As is often the case Elizabeth Gaskell is grouped with Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot in a chapter entitled Urbanism, realism and region. Cranford it is maintained is a local rather than regional novel. The image of Knutsford portrayed was already past when the book was written and is an idealised antithesis to Manchester. The influence of the town can be seen in other guises such as the Warwickshire of My Lady Ludlow. The use of regional material is discussed not only in other novels such as Sylvia's Lovers but also in the Life of Charlotte Brontë. There is also a hint of her influence on D H Lawrence. The author is Professor of English at University College, University of Toronto.

A new biography of Charlotte Brontë has been written by Rebecca Fraser, Methuen, 1988. It is of particular interest to Gaskell students as it challenges Mrs Gaskell's view of Charlotte as "the friend, the daughter, the sister, the wife" which it is claimed overshadowed her strong, unorthodox views and her "immense determination and indomitable will". The book is consequently full of references to and quotations from the earlier biography and the epilogue describes contemporary reaction to the book. The author is the daughter of Lady Antonia Fraser and has worked as a publisher's editor. It is her first book.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

Ed.

While I was standing in a supermarket queue recently a lady told me how much she was enjoying Rebecca Fraser's book and would go on to read Mrs Gaskell's biography of Charlotte. I have not yet had time to read the new book but I doubt if the author had the same pressures to face as Elizabeth Gaskell had in 1855

This is an unpublished letter, in the possession of Dr R Jamison, written to Mrs Green, wife of Rev Henry Green then minister of Brook Street Chapel.

Gawthorpe, Friday

My Dear Mary

Upwards of 300 letters to read through/copy what is worth in 2 days, and every day a journey to take till I land at Silverdale again on Monday must be my excuse. Yes! to be sure we can take them in, and with us, just as of old. I shall pack them in among our girls any how - they know the old ways, so that's all settled - and I must go back to my work -

Yours very affely

ECG

I am always so glad to hear from you & of you, - only I can hardly write back as I should do - I have got a packet pf Fox How flower seeds from Mrs Arnold to Isabella - Oh! I do so want some quiet. I must be so busy at Silverdale.

On 24th February 1855 Mrs Gaskell was looking down from a Roman balcony. Looking up at her was a young American, Charles Eliot Norton who was to become one of her greatest friends, and confidant. Mrs Gaskell had fled to Rome with her daughters Marianne and Meta, exhausted after having just completed "Life of Charlotte Brontë". The time was ripe for her to appreciate the full colour and vibrant life of Italy. Charles Eliot Norton was exactly the right person to open her eyes to the beauties of the South. He was a student of art history, later to become professor in that subject at Harvard University. That day, carnival day in Rome, was a fiesta for all who were with the Wentworth Storys, their hosts, as Meta recollected many years later -

"I shall keep the anniversary of that carnival day when we first saw you (she wrote to him) as a festa, for I can truly say that your friendship has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life. It is sealed now, too, with deep gratitude to you for your faithful affection to Mama, which she prized as highly as she returned it truly."

It is difficult to imagine the rapport there was between those two - indeed, at 30, Norton was nearer Marianne's age than Elizabeth's - but they had so much in common that age didn't enter into it. Winifred Gerin in her biography calls it "Platonic Love". He was the perfect guide, she the perfect recipient. He was a sensitive admirer of her books, and her "generous and tender sympathies, of thoughtful kindness, of pleasant humour, of quick appreciation, of utmost simplicity and truthfulness". On her part, there was something about the Roman air, the highly romantic atmosphere, the warmth, that Elizabeth could write after her return home -

"It was in those charming Roman days that my life, at any rate, culminated. I shall never be so happy again. I don't think I was ever so happy before. My eyes fill with tears when I think of those days, and it is the same with all of us. They were the tip-top point of our lives. The girls may see happier ones - I never shall."

Perhaps it was because she arrived back in England to the "hornet's nest" occasioned by the publication of "Life



of Charlotte Brontë" that the memory of that Roman holiday seemed even more dear in her imagination.

She and Charles Eliot Norton kept up their friendship, and their correspondence, right to the end of her life. When he married he called his elder daughter "Elizabeth Gaskell Norton" and she, too, was known to her intimates as "Lily". It was to him that Elizabeth wrote that delightful letter about having so many things to do before 10.30 in the morning. He shared her philanthropic interests, too. He built in Boston two five-storey houses, each for 20 poor families. They both enjoyed letter writing and some of that exuberance shines through in their correspondence.

At the end of a long life Norton was living with his two daughters in a little mountain farmhouse in Massachusetts. There he was visited by a very different woman from Mrs Gaskell - Edith Wharton. I first came across her only a few years ago when I heard a short story of hers on the radio. It was called "Roman Fever", and I later read a book of short stories with that title. They were pithy, witty and very readable. Edith Wharton was born into a well-to-do New York family in 1862. From a very early age she was making up stories, but never had any encouragement from her family. What saved her from the dreaded social round, and the extreme narrowness of New York society, were the years she spent abroad as a child, and her vivid imagination. Her family went abroad for long periods, not only for her father's health, but in order to economise! She fell in love with Italy, and when forced to return to the States after her father's death, she was never really happy until she could return. Like Mrs Gaskell, she had a genius for friendship, and pays tribute to the many writers who helped her get established in her autobiography "A Backward Glance". A clue to the attraction which Norton had for Mrs Gaskell is perhaps a quotation from that book -

"His animating influence on my generation in America was exerted through what he himself was, and what he made his pupils see and feel with him. Norton was supremely

gifted as an awakener, and no thoughtful mind can recall without a thrill the notes of the first voice which has called it out of its morning dream."

He was also very generous with his time and interest. Edith Wharton's first full-length novel was The Valley of Decision, a historical novel about 18th century Italy. For this she had to do a great deal of research, and happened to tell Norton that she was unable to get hold of the original version of Goldoni's memoirs, and the memoirs of Lorenzo da Ponte. "A few weeks later there came to the Mount (her New England home) a box containing these unattainable treasures, and many other books, almost as rare. For a whole summer, these extremely valuable books, some quite rare, were left at the disposal of a young scribbler who was just starting on her first novel - and to Charles Norton it seemed perfectly natural, and almost an obligation, to hold out such help to a beginner." Edith tells us that she had "to the end the warm enveloping sense of his friendship" and the last letter he ever wrote was addressed to her. Edith was a great correspondent, and the chief recipient of her letters was Norton's daughter Sara - another link between two authors.

DOREEN PLEYDELL

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Dan Head Farm near Knutsford: Sketch by Mark Unsworth (See page 5)

Two years ago an Australian visitor called Alan Holland came to Knutsford with a photograph of this house. I was able to direct him to it, where he was welcomed with afternoon tea, and assured him that it was not just Grandfather's imagination that they were descended from an important Cheshire family. Ed.

# FANNY LEWALD'S IMPRESSIONS OF MRS GASKELL

In 1850 Fanny Lewald, the German authoress, spent four months in Britain (19 May - 10 September). During this period three weeks were spent in Manchester, where she stayed with Geraldine Jewsbury, the famous local writer, at her home in Carlton Terrace, Greenheys. On her return Fanny Lewald published her account of her visit: England und Schottland (Brunswick 1851), consisting of letters written home with a view to subsequent publication, and capturing her richly detailed impressions. In her letter dated 5 September 1850, she records a sighting of Mrs Gaskell (translated from the German) -

In the evening I was present at a large concert in the music hall (...) I derived pleasure in the concert from a sighting of Mrs Gaskell, the gifted author of Mary Barton, who is a beautiful woman between 30 and 40 years old. Fairly tall, with a full and powerful figure, black hair and a lively, reddish brown complexion. From the shape of her head, the cut of her features and her complexion you would without question take her for an Italian, an impression reinforced by her vivacious dark eyes. Her appearance given such an impression of ability and completeness, that the vigorous powers of perception and the unity of talent of such a woman are striking; and I will now have twice as much cause for regrets if I do not have the opportunity to make her closer acquaintance. (Vol. II p. 617)

In fact Fanny Lewald never met Mrs Gaskell: she left Manchester for London on 7 September, and a few days later returned to Germany. Her interest in Mrs Gaskell's work was keen. In a letter dated 7 August and written in Edinburgh, she tells her correspondent about Miss Brontë, who had been in London but whom she had not met, then goes on to recommend the novels of two other English women writers she had come across in England: Geraldine Jewsbury's Zoe (1845) and The Half Sisters (1848) and Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848).

Fanny Lewald (1811-89), born a Jewess, adopted Lutheran

Christianity in 1828 in order to marry a young theologian, who, however, died before the wedding. She began to write at the age of 30, dealing particularly with social problems and marriage. (Oxford Companion to German Literature).

(This article is based on information supplied by Dr P N Skrine, Department of German, Manchester University, July 1988)

Ed. - Jane Carlyle wrote to a friend (4 July 1850)

'I have seen little of Geraldine; she comes pretty often but has always engagements to hurry her away - She has sworn friendship with Fanny Lewald the German authoress, who is also lionizing in London at present - and gives me much of her semi-articulate company - I also met Jane Eyre (Miss Brontë) one night at Thackeray's, a less figure than Geraldine and extremely unimpressive to look at (ital)'

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## STOP PRESS for our London and SE members

South Bank Centre presents an interesting series on 'The Writers Response'. Literature and the revolution in France through the eyes of British, French and European writers and others.

WEDNESDAY 19th APRIL at 6.30 pm - THE GROOVES OF CHANGE. Readings from Dickens, Gaskell, Engels, Darwin, Barbara Bodichon and others.

Many other interesting lectures.

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Material and suggestions for future Newsletters should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN  
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# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1989

NO. 8

### SECRETARY'S LETTER

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed the general meeting in Manchester at Cross Street Chapel on 22 April with a stimulating talk by Angus Easson, and an outing to Haworth and Gawthorpe Hall on 28 June. The latter was not too well supported; I wonder why? I would welcome comments and suggestions on outings, meetings and any other Society matters.

Plans are almost finalised for our joint weekend conference with the Brontë Society to be held at the Charlotte Mason College, Ambleside, 7-9 September 1990. Space is likely to be at a premium.

Our AGM meeting on 7 October will be held at The Royal George Hotel. (Optional) lunch will be followed by AGM and an address by Margaret Smith on 'Mrs Gaskell as a humourist'. Brook Street Chapel will be open during the morning for visits and viewing of the exhibition arranged by Mrs Mary Thwaite on the history of the chapel. On Sunday there will be an outing to Styal to see the apprentice house, village, chapels and Norcliffe Hall; Dean Row Chapel (contemporary with Brook Street) with tea at Adlington Hall.

On 4 November we will be holding our first London meeting at St James Church, Clerkenwell, close to Farringdon Street Station. Please try to come if you live in the South East - details later to members in this area.

The major problem in running our Society, and many others, is keeping track of membership. I mentioned this in my last newsletter. I must apologise to Mrs Lilian Clode, who took on the role of my assistant, if I implied that this resulted in problems; any errors and muddles are entirely mine, but we found that members were confused by having another address to remember. Please send your annual membership dues (£5 on 1 September) to Mrs Kinder, Treasurer, 16 Sandileigh Avenue, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0AG or to me, or pay at the AGM. An inaccurate membership list resulted in some delays and omissions in mailing the journal; if you have not received the 1989 edition please let me know. Until we have a computer or a

more efficient secretary, you'll have to make do with me!

We hope to see many of you at our AGM weekend and hope others feel they are sharing Society affairs through our publications.

JOAN LEACH

### "300 YEARS OF HISTORY"

An Exhibition with this title is being arranged in the gallery (above the west porch) at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, to mark the year of its Tercentenary, and the passing of the "Toleration Act" in May 1689. This Act made it legally possible for dissenters from the Anglican Church to gather together for their own way of worship, and to erect buildings for this purpose, subject to registration of such places by the proper authority. So the monopoly enforced by the established Church since the Restoration was broken, and a limited freedom was enjoyed at last by those who wished for some deviation from its creed and liturgy and government. But toleration as yet did not go very far. Roman Catholics and anti-Trinitarians were excluded, and nearly all the 39 Articles of Faith as set out in the Book of Common Prayer had to be accepted by dissenting ministers.

Brook Street Chapel, the oldest existing place of worship in the town, was the result of much effort on the part of those worshippers who had been meeting in secret for many years. It was in November 1687 that the first minister of what was to be Brook Street Chapel was appointed. This was William Tong, who after a short period in Chester, was then ordained as pastor of the Knutsford congregation. Mr Tong was later to become a distinguished leader of the English Presbyterians. He stayed in Knutsford for little more than two years - an eventful two years according to the Rev Henry Green who later found evidence that the 'New-Chappel' at Brook Street was being erected before his departure in 1690. With the devoted

layman, Isaac Antrobus, who gave land for the building, near to where he lived at Brook House, Tong may be acclaimed as one of the founders of the Chapel.

The Exhibition attempts to show in modest fashion something of the history of the Chapel since members met before it existed in a long vanished cottage, once sited near Cross Town Church. The oldest original item on show is a rather tattered copy of volume one of the Bible Commentaries of Matthew Henry, a friend of Tong, and minister at Chester from 1687-1711. Readers of North and South may perhaps recall that this work - all six volumes of it kept in her splendid dining room - was the usual reading of Mrs Thornton (chapters 9 and 26).

Another exhibit showing something of the early history of the Chapel is taken from a copy of the Minutes of the Cheshire 'Classis' (meetings of ministers of the district for the discussion of chapel affairs and the ministry). These cover a period from 1691-1743. Both the original manuscript and the printed transcription by Alexander Gordon published in 1919 are in the possession of the Chapel. Most of the meetings took place at Knutsford.

Other items in the Exhibition reflect the progress made from early Presbyterian orthodoxy to a more liberal and Unitarian faith. In Mrs Gaskell's day, when as a child she accompanied her Aunt Lumb through leafy lanes to the service at Brook Street, these changes were becoming more prominent. The leadership of Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey in the later 18th century laid the foundations of the Unitarian movement. And at Knutsford when Henry Green, fresh from college, became the minister in 1827, much was done to foster a more liberal and unfettered Christian faith. One example can be seen in the copy of the catalogue of the Chapel Library he instituted in 1833. This indicates the serious interest and extent of Unitarian writings. It was an age of Tracts, and one or two examples of Unitarian tracts of that time which still survive will be on show. Brook Street Chapel is one of the few that still retain an old Chapel Library - or what is left of it.

More recent events are also represented, including the Rev Albert Smith's 'Scrap-book' with illustrations of the 150th centenary celebrations in 1960 of Mrs Gaskell's birth, and chapel events of that period.

The Chapel will be open on Saturday 7 October 1989 from 10.30 am to 12 midday, to allow visitors to the Gaskell Society meeting to see this Exhibition and visit the Chapel that day if they wish. I hope to be there and to do my best to answer any questions.

MARY THWAITE



Available as note-cards. Packet of 6 for 95p. For Brook Street Chapel Restoration Fund.

For the same cause - FLOWER FESTIVAL - 15-17 September Staged by Knutsford & District Flower Clubs.

Admission by programme £1.00

I recently paid a visit to Pescara in Italy where, at the invitation of Professor Francesco Marroni, I gave two lectures to students of English at the 'Gabriel D'Annunzio' University. The first of these was on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the literature of the industrial city', and the second on George Eliot. The lectures were followed by informal discussion with the students, and I was impressed both by their command of English, and their enthusiasm for Victorian literature generally. Several of them were in the process of writing dissertations on works by Mrs Gaskell for their final degree examination, and their questions were both knowledgable and penetrating. I enjoyed my visit immensely, not least in that the programme Francesco had arranged for me allowed me to spend some time with him discussing our mutual interests. Francesco himself has recently been involved in the publication of translations of several of Mrs Gaskell's stories. His own translation of The Ghost in the Garden Room and other tales includes, as well as the title-story (more usually known in England by its alternative title of The Crooked Branch), The Doom of the Griffiths and Six Weeks at Heppenheim, while he has also written the introduction to a translation by his wife, writing under her own name of Grazia Colli, of The Grey Woman. The appearance of these stories in Italy is a tribute to Mrs Gaskell's popularity there: they are an interesting reflection too of her own taste for tales of the supernatural, an aspect of her work that has not always attracted the attention it might. Returning from Pescara via Rome I was able to visit the location close to the Spanish steps where Mrs Gaskell stayed during her own visit there in 1857. In the next issue of The Gaskell Society Journal we shall be publishing an article by Mary Thwaite on Mrs Gaskell's Italian connections, and my visit, for which thanks are due to Professor Marroni and his colleagues at Pescara, was a happy reminder of this dimension of Mrs Gaskell's life and work.

ALAN SHELSTON

This year's books indicate the increasing interest in the shorter works. Pride of place goes to a new paperback edition of My Lady Ludlow and other stories in Oxford University Press' World Classics series (£5.95). Edited by Edgar Wright, Professor of English in the Laurentian University of Ontario, Canada, who recently edited Mary Barton in the same series.

The text is based on the 1859 two volume collection Round the Sofa published by Sampson Low, but with certain somewhat controversial differences. Originally Mrs Gaskell had gathered together a number of short stories from various journals:- My Lady Ludlow, An accursed race, The doom of the Griffiths, The poor Clare, Half a life-time ago and The half-brothers and added an introduction and linking material to make a continuous narrative. The new edition omits Half a life-time ago because it was included with Cousin Phillis in an earlier volume in the series and replaced it with Mr Harrison's confessions. The linking material is now relegated to an appendix.

Nevertheless the text is scrupulously edited as instanced by the rectifying of the misprint 'as black a traitor as if he had been born in Builth' (p.229) which appeared as Bluith in the 1906 Knutsford edition, and provided with textual notes and an introduction which formed the basis of Professor Wright's article My Lady Ludlow: forms of social change and forms of fiction in Gaskell Society Journal vol. 3 (1989)

An anthology of British Women Writers edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd, Pandora Press, £23.00, is a mammoth volume (925 pages) which comprises a representative selection of women's writing. 60 British authors are included from Julian of Norwich to Angela Carter and all genres-fiction, poetry, prose and drama represented though novels regrettably only in extract. Mrs Gaskell is represented by the short story The well of Pen Morfa which "signals a growth of social and political concern" in women's writing. The book is also interesting for the presence of several minor contemporaries whose work is no longer available in

print, eg Geraldine Jewsbury (selections from Letters to Jane Welsh Carlyle) and Eliza Lynn Linton. George Eliot is represented by the critical essay Silly novels by lady novelists in which she bemoans the fact that "Harriet Martineau, Currer Bell and Mrs Gaskell have been treated as cavalierly as if they had been men".

Romantic crime in the Victorian novel by Anthea Trodd (lecturer in English at the University of Keele) Macmillan, £27.50, also mentions short stories as well as novels. The author tells how crime is used by Victorian novelists to show the tensions within society with particular reference to class and gender conflict. Novelists discussed include Dickens, Eliot, Trollope, James and Wilkie Collins as well as the more sensational writers such as Mary Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood. An early chapter deals with the relationship of the heroine to the police in Mary Barton and North and South while a later one discusses the role of the servant with particular reference to Dark night's work, the Grey women and Right at last.

However a new biography Charles Dickens by Fred Kaplan (Hodder and Stoughton, £17.95) which mentions their relationship dismisses the short stories she contributed to Household Words as morbid.

Staying with Dickens far more useful is the latest volume of the Pilgrim edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens vol. 6, 1850-1852 (edited by Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Nina Burges, Clarendon Press, £80.00) which has now reached the stage where it is relevant to Gaskell studies. It includes 35 letters from Dickens, several of them published for the first time. They show his reaction to several stories such as Lizzie Leigh and the early episodes of Cranford. They also mention a projected article which Mrs Gaskell planned to write on a factory school which had impressed her, run by James Pillans Wilson (Mr Wilson of Price's Candle factory in GL.162) but which she abandoned out of deference to her subject's wishes. This all goes to show how many of Mrs Gaskell's letters have been lost.

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 2nd enlarged edition Vol. VII: The Later Years Part 4 (1840-1853) by Alan G Hill (Clarendon Press, £70.00) includes a letter of July 22, 1840 to William Gaskell praising his Temperance Rhymes. Several letters assigned to Elizabeth Gaskell in the first edition have been reassigned to Mrs Mary Gaskell wife of MP for Maldon.

Finally the explanatory notes of Stephen Gill's biography William Wordsworth (Clarendon Press, £17.50) include the following anecdote. In a letter of July 1849, following a dinner at Rydal Mount, Edward Quillinan, Wordsworth's son-in-law wrote to Mrs Hartley Coleridge - that she was 'As nice a person as possible ... a great pet'.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

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The Society will be represented at THE NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL at Manchester Town Hall on 15th and 16th September.

This should be well worth visiting - publishers, book-sellers and dealers, libraries etc. Held for the first time last year, the editor of a leading journal described it as 'the most consistently crowded fair that I have attended'.

The Town Hall itself is well worth a visit. Architect Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) was also responsible for Manchester Assize Courts, the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, AND Knutsford Town Hall!

Mrs Gaskell would have been pleased about the latter as she knew him socially and he was a member of Cross Street Chapel. She tried to further his career by appealing to John Ruskin to use his influence in getting Waterhouse on the list of architects to compete for the design of London Law Courts in 1865. Does anyone know if this plea succeeded?

The range of varying emotions given unfettered scope in the last century is often remarkable. Readers of Mrs Gaskell's letters will recall her comical account of the hapless Mrs J J Tayler and her 'impromptu baby at Blackpool; - went there and lo & behold a little girl unexpectedly made her appearance, & clothes have had to be sent in such a hurry. Bathing places do so much good. Susan and Mary went to Blackpool last year, but did not derive the same benefit. ... So ends Mrs J J Tayler's "delicate state of health arising from some internal complaint", as Mr Ransom called it.'

A sense of humour was always useful in days when Mrs Gaskell could write that little cousins were 'pouring in upon the world'. In The Water Babies Charles Kingsley, with careless male insouciance, invented that nice, soft, fat, smooth, pussy, cuddly, delicious creature, Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, who 'took up two great armfuls of babies - nine hundred under one arm, and thirteen hundred under the other - and threw them away, right and left, into the water.' Not that they seem to have minded in his fable, for they 'did not even take their thumbs out of their mouths, but came paddling and wriggling back to her like so many tadpoles, till you could see nothing of her from head to foot for the swarm of little babies.' It all sounds great fun.

The very opposite is seen in a letter from Mrs Gaskell's American friend, Charles Eliot Norton, to her second daughter, Meta, on 17 June 1866. In it he announces the birth of his own second daughter and asks permission to name the child in memory of Mrs Gaskell, who had died some six months before. The 'birth of a little child is a most grave & serious joy', Norton writes; and he trusts that the influence of Mrs Gaskell's spirit will 'impress itself on the character of our little child if she should live to grow up'. The last clause reminds us that we must look elsewhere in Kingsley's myth of Evolution for the ever-present facts of mortality in this world.

To Meta, however, the request was infinitely touching:

Dear Mr Norton - thank you again and again - Papa is so pleased to think of your calling your baby by Mama's name - It was exactly - Elizabeth Cleghorn - She was called so after the daughter (the only child - 'and she was a widow') of a Mrs Cleghorn who had been very good to Mama's mother; and just as Mama was born this Miss Cleghorn died, and the little baby was called after her - at the poor mother's request - (5 July 1866)

A letter of 10 September 1866 from Mrs Susan Norton shows that the baby was sometimes known as Lizzie, and one of 17 March (1867) acknowledges Meta's gift of a locket 'for little Lily', which had been Mrs Gaskell's name in her family circle. Susan Norton carefully put the locket away in Meta's packing, 'that it may come to Lily if she lives, as it did to me, fresh from your loving hands'. Again, we note the automatic qualification. When life is known to be so very precarious for infants, it is no wonder that love and fellow feeling are openly expressed and often signified in names and keepsakes. The locket contained some hair of Mrs Gaskell's, not trusted to the jeweller's hands for fear it would be changed, but put in as neatly as 'dear old Hearn could' (Meta to Charles Norton, 28 March 1867).

Perhaps the name Cleghorn was not continued. The editor of Mrs Gaskell's correspondence with Charles Norton, Jane Whitehill, thanked 'Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton' for placing all these letters in Harvard University Library. It was a Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton who in 1928 gave Knutsford Library 'a lock of Mrs Gaskell's hair in a gold pendant set with turquoise and pearl': a valuable and tangible reminder of the bonds human beings forge - though 'Mama used often to say that the power of sympathy depended on the power of imagination', Meta told Charles Norton in a letter of 2 July 1867.

J A V CHAPPLE

### Editor's Note

Sadly the locket was stolen from Knutsford Library some time ago but there is still Meta's small water colour sketch of her mother, sent to Charles Eliza Norton with this letter:

'Dear Mr Norton

I cannot tell you how much I wish that this were better. But nothing could ever give her face. Your charming present of 'Snow bound' is come and I think it is most beautiful. It is so pleasant to feel that you think of us and it is so good of you to send such proof of remembrance. They always come just when one feels dreary, by some lucky chance.

Ever your

M.E.G.'

(dated April 19th - probably 1866 when 'Snow Bound' was published)

The picture, framed in Boston, seems to have been given to the Library by Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton, with the locket, in 1928. It seems as if the 'Cleghorn' name was either not given at Miss Norton's baptism or became unused later.



'A heterogenous mass of nonsense' was the critical comment on one of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters, made by her noted cousin, Sir Henry Holland. A remark which rankled enough to be remembered some years later when she believed that he could not say such a thing now that she had published Mary Barton! William had called another letter of hers 'slipshod and seemed to wish me not to send it' (though she did) (GL.13) but so often she wrote in haste, snatching minutes in a hectic schedule.

The letters reveal her caring, unselfish nature, always ready to give time, effort and sympathy to others; they show her anxieties and problems with family and writing, faced with courage and often humour; her commitment such as social work, entertaining and health-restoring travel which left her with all too little writing time.

Charlotte Brontë found one of her letters 'as pleasant as a quiet chat, as welcome as a spring flower, as reviving as a friend's visit; in short it was very like a page of Cranford'.

Rev Henry Green was the minister of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, and the two families were friends; the Greens' daughters often joined the Gaskells on holiday and visits were exchanged. A descendant of the Greens, Dr Robin Jamison has in his possession thirteen letters written to Mrs Green by Mrs Gaskell; these are mainly of family matters but reveal, once again, the pressure of many commitments.

Monday night  
(? 15 October 1855)

My Dearest Mary,  
I am dressed to go to the Hallés as your note and parcel are brought but I have a few minutes to spare before the others are ready & so I shall write as hard as I can. I am so dog-tired I would far rather stay at home, agreeable as it will be, Scotts and Hallés - but the girls want to go & Mr Gaskell is too busy to chaperone them so he stops at home & I go & only wish someone less tired were in my place to enjoy what I

know ought to be enjoyed'. She then details the last week - visiting 'one of Miss Brontë's friends' (Ellen Nussey) going all over 'Miss Brontë's school places and the places named in Shirley & made myself acquainted with a district of 5 miles square (research for the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë')'; then arrived home to find a stream of visitors and now 'I ought to be copying letters &c some hours every day, I ought to be making flannel petticoats, as usual and just at present I can't'.

Three of the Green letters add to our knowledge on the subject of Ruth. She had been surprised to learn that the first two volumes of Ruth had been printed (GL.137) while she was telling Marianne that she might put off publishing it for another year (GL.136). Then Mrs Green had written to say that she had seen an advertisement for it.

Saturday  
(November 1852)

My Dear Mary

... Ruth has yet to be written', which is an expression I used only this morn'g to Wm before your letter came. I mean it is far from completion and I feel uncertain if it ever will be done - I have written a good deal of it ... I am so far from satisfied with it myself, that I don't know how much to rewrite, or what to do about it; I was as much startled as you could be by the advertisement. However, it will not hurry me, & until I have thought it out fully I shall not write it, & if I never think it out it will never be either written or (consequently) published. And I am very very busy even for the mechanical writing, much so for the thought required. However it may all come in a minute, & it may never come; so you may fancy that in this state seeing the advertisement, or rather hearing of it - I have not seen it - is an annoyance. And if & when it does come I give you warning I doubt if it is a book that you will like to have in your family.

This is forced on me, and all by Chapman's impatience. I don't want it talked about. It only disturbs me utterly, and I expect I shall have grief and annoyance enough to go



through about it, & lack all the strength I can muster to do right. However it is not yet written & may never be.

... I would rather have all this considered private please dear Mary; except that discourage any putting it down on the part of my friends please. - I had hoped to have come over to Knutsford before this subject of pain to me was broached. Now I shall not come, because morbid or not morbid I can't bear to be talked to about it. So don't let us say any more. If I decide on never finishing it I will tell you all about it, - if not, you will know soon enough.

We (Meta & I) have enjoyed ourselves heartily at the Lakes, only I was very ill one week, partly with worry about this book, - & thought I was going to have the typhus fever. I had such deadly headaches and faintness.'

With the pressure from her publisher, Chapman, and the strain on her health from the anxiety and the conflict within herself on presenting the subject of illegitimacy in fiction, she clearly decided it must be finished quickly and wrote to Eliza Fox (GL.146) on December 20th,

'And Ruth is done - utterly off my mind and gone up to the printers - that's all I know about it.'

And to Mrs Green she wrote:-

'I do so wish I could come over to Knutsford. I have hoped & tried, - for after that book of mine is published (this week I think) I don't feel as if I ever could. And yet yr letter today makes me wish more than ever. I shd so like to 'compare notes' and talk things over with you. Yet every day brings ever more than it's full work; and - we have many visitors coming this Xmas, and an inefficient servant.'

Although she had steeled herself for a critical reaction to the publication of Ruth by the press and friends, it was even worse than feared and she suffered

physically and emotionally as a result. She 'could not get over the hard things people said of Ruth ... I think I must be an improper woman without knowing it, I do so manage to shock people' (GL.150). 'An unfit subject for fiction' is the thing to say about it; I knew all this before ... 'Deep regret' is what my friends (such as Miss Mitchell) feel and express. In short, the only comparison I can find for myself is to St. Sebastian tied to a tree to be shot at with arrows'; this she wrote to her sister-in-law, Anne Robson (GL.148); she wrote to her as she had to Mrs Green, saying that she had hoped to see her before the book came out and that she had '... taken leave of my respectable friends up and down the country; you, I don't call respectable, but you are surrounded by respectabilities, & I can't encounter their 'shock'.' But there was very little saving humour to be found and only the letters of encouragement from those whose opinions she cared for - Kingsley, Dickens, F D Maurice, Mrs Browning and Charlotte Brontë - revived her.

Mrs Green wrote, too, with approval, 'Henry says he has not cried so much for many years and we do all so admire not only the substance but the style', to which Elizabeth replied: (see facsimile on back cover)

'Your letter was such a relief (first) & pleasure afterwards. I had fancied from what Miss Mitchell had said of what Mr Green had said that both you & he wd be shocked. - I could not wonder, for I am sure I should have been repulsed by hearing that a 'tale of seduction' was chosen as a subject for fiction, - that was the opinion I dreaded; - I felt almost sure that if people would only read what I had to say they would not be disgusted, - but I feared & still think it probable that many may refuse to read any book of that kind - (I am writing in such a hurry I can't stop to make myself clear,) but yet I did feel as if I had some thing to say about it that I must say, and you know I can tell stories better than any other way of expressing myself.

This is all a muddle, but I am trying in my heart to arrange how I can do my duty (i.e. stop at home this

eveng for a class of Sunday School girls) & have my pleasure (i.e. go and dine at the Schwabes with the Scotts, Mrs Fanny Kemble -) & I find I 'cannot serve two masters', but must just stop at home - and now that's decided - I've written to Mrs S. - so now I can make myself distinct to you.'

When the dust had settled a little she weighed the balance and decided, 'From the very warmth with which people have discussed the tale I take heart of grace; it has made them talk and think a little on a subject which is so painful that it requires all one's bravery not to hide one's head like an ostrich and try by doing so to forget that the evil exists'. (GL.154)

JOAN LEACH

#### COLLECTED LETTERS

Professor J A V Chapple is working on the Green letters and others, as yet unpublished.

A new edition of 'The Letters of Mrs Gaskell' edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard would be welcome but Manchester University Press say the cost would be prohibitive. A supplementary edition would be the best substitute.

'Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell' edited by R D Waller, John Rylands, Library Bulletin Vol.20 1936 deserves to be revised and reprinted.

We will hope that Society funds and influence will increase to encourage such endeavours.

#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

You may be surprised at the range of interests.  
4 x 14p stamps to K Oultram, Clatterwick Hall, Little Leigh, Nr Northwich, Cheshire, for ALS newsletter.

Rebecca Fraser, in her recent biography Charlotte Brontë (Methuen), states that Mrs Gaskell had written in letters to 'several people', that if she had known of Charlotte's illness and the pregnancy that seems to have been the cause, she could have terminated it (p.488). I have only been able to track down the letter on the subject in Chapple and Pollard's edition of the Gaskell letters (No.233 and not 223 as given in Rebecca Fraser's chapter notes), in which, on the 12th April 1855, Mrs Gaskell wrote to John Greenwood (Chapple and Pollard p.337), 'I do fancy that I could have induced her - even though they had all felt angry with me at first - to do what was so absolutely necessary for her very life'.

I had always taken the meaning of 'induce' as 'persuasion' to accept her (Mrs Gaskell's) nursing. As a Dissenter who was not welcomed at Haworth by Mr Nicholls, but who herself had gone through five pregnancies and most probably experienced similar cases in her social work in Manchester, it seemed to me that she felt she could have persuaded Charlotte to allow her to nurse her, persuade her to eat and so saved her life.

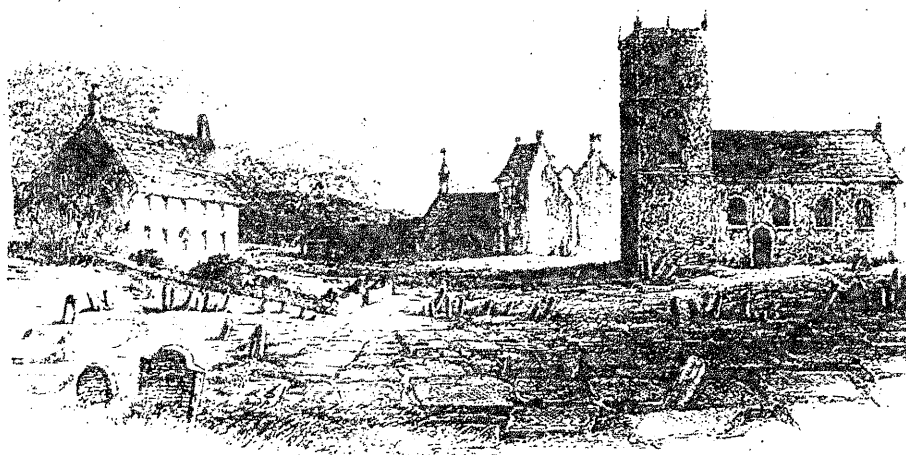
I had never considered that the word 'induce' had ever been used in a medical sense until recent years, when there has been some controversy about the birth of babies being induced by doctors on Fridays so that they could count on having a free weekend. However, the complete Oxford English Dictionary gives the word as having first appeared in The Lancet in 1840, then in 1852 and 1859, and defined as a new method of bringing about the premature birth of a child which was 'greatly to the benefit of the mother'. The treatment was a herbal one.

Of course, Mrs Gaskell knew well two distinguished doctors, her brother-in-law Sam Gaskell and her uncle, Sir Henry Holland, a distinguished London physician, and it may well have been that she had been given the herbal formula by one or other of them. Certainly, from the wording in The Lancet, there is no trace of medical prejudice against what we would now probably call abortion, as only the benefit of the mother is mentioned.

In any case, it seems that Rebecca Fraser is correct in her interpretation of the word, thus throwing a new light on Mrs Gaskell, who appears as even more 'practical' than she has so often been described. She may well have been prepared to act entirely on her own initiative and we must be prepared to be surprised at the way in which Victorian women may have helped themselves and each other to something that is now normally only available professionally.

ANNA UNSWORTH

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Mrs Gaskell to George Smith (publisher) Feb 6th, 1857

'I send you a sepia drawing from a sketch of mine of Haworth Parsonage, Sexton's Shed, School-house and Sexton's (tall) House (where the Curate lodged) and the Church' (GL.339)

As used in 'Life of Charlotte Brontë'

# OUTING TO HAWORTH AND GAWTHORPE HALL

When I mentioned to friends and acquaintances that I was going to visit Haworth the usual response was that they had been there and it rained! So when Gaskell Society members arrived there in the wind and the rain - it had not been raining when we left Knutsford - we felt it was traditional, but it was frustrating to have almost the only wet day in three months of hot, dry summer. Haworth did not exhibit its best for Mrs Gaskell either; Charlotte had invited her to come when 'the heath is in bloom, now. I have watched and waited for its purple signal as the forerunner of your coming' but when she arrived Mrs Gaskell found '... it had all been blighted by a thunderstorm a day or two before and was all of a livid brown colour, instead of the blaze of purple glory it ought to have been. Oh! those high wild, desolate moors, up above the whole world and the very realm of silence'. (GL.167)

We were prevented by the weather from walking on the moors as we had hoped to do, under the guidance of Mrs Eunice Skirrow who had helped us to plan our day.

We were welcomed to the Parsonage by the newly-appointed Chairman of The Brontë Society, Michael Steed; it seemed highly appropriate that this meeting was his first official event. Michael is also a member of our Society. He had been reading 'The Memorials of Two Sisters', where Catherine Winkworth told of her meeting Charlotte at the Gaskells' in Manchester, of her intensely shy nature and how the three of them had talked of Charlotte's forthcoming marriage. Charlotte wrote to Catherine while on her honeymoon in Ireland. It was in a letter to Catherine that Mrs Gaskell had described her first meeting with Charlotte, at the Kay-Shuttleworth's holiday house near Windermere, Briery Close: '... A pretty drawing room ... in which were Sir James and Lady KS and a little lady in black silk gown, whom I could not see at first for the dazzle in the room; she came up & shook hands with me at once ...' Charlotte had been an unwilling visitor, going more to please her father than herself, but she found Mrs Gaskell a congenial spirit, writing to Ellen Nussey: 'I was truly glad of her companionship. She is a woman of

the most genuine talent, of cheerful, pleasing and cordial manners, and, I believe, of a kind and good heart'.

On our visit it was this friendship we had in mind, the visits exchanged between friends and the link made between them by the Kay-Shuttleworths, whose home at Gawthorpe Hall we visited in their footsteps.

We were not surprised to find Haworth Parsonage busy with visitors, some pilgrims like ourselves, but we were privileged to have a special viewing, including the Library. Mrs Gaskell found the house 'exquisitely clean' and 'the perfection of warmth, snugness and comfort, crimson predominating in the furniture, which did well with the bleak cold colours without' (GL.166). Only the quiet was lacking for us to imagine the house back in the 1850s.

We walked down the High Street, noting the Black Bull, Branwell's haunt and Mr Greenwood the stationer's shop, to have an excellent lunch at The Heath Cottage Cafe.

Then, as the weather prevented us from walking on the moors, we made our way to Gawthorpe Hall. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was respected by both literary ladies as a practical man of business - nine tenths utilitarian and one part artistic was Charlotte's estimate - and both appreciated his kindness and good intentions. Charlotte observed that he gave her good advice, mostly in the form of monologues, but that she wished he were as sincere as he was polished and he showed his white teeth with too frequent a smile! Mrs Gaskell was grateful for his help in extracting material for the biography, from the unwilling Rev Nicholls, though her conscience smote her for allowing Sir James to over-ride his wishes.

The house at Gawthorpe is attractively set in woodland 'nearly three centuries old, grey, stately and picturesque' said Charlotte. The parterre gardens



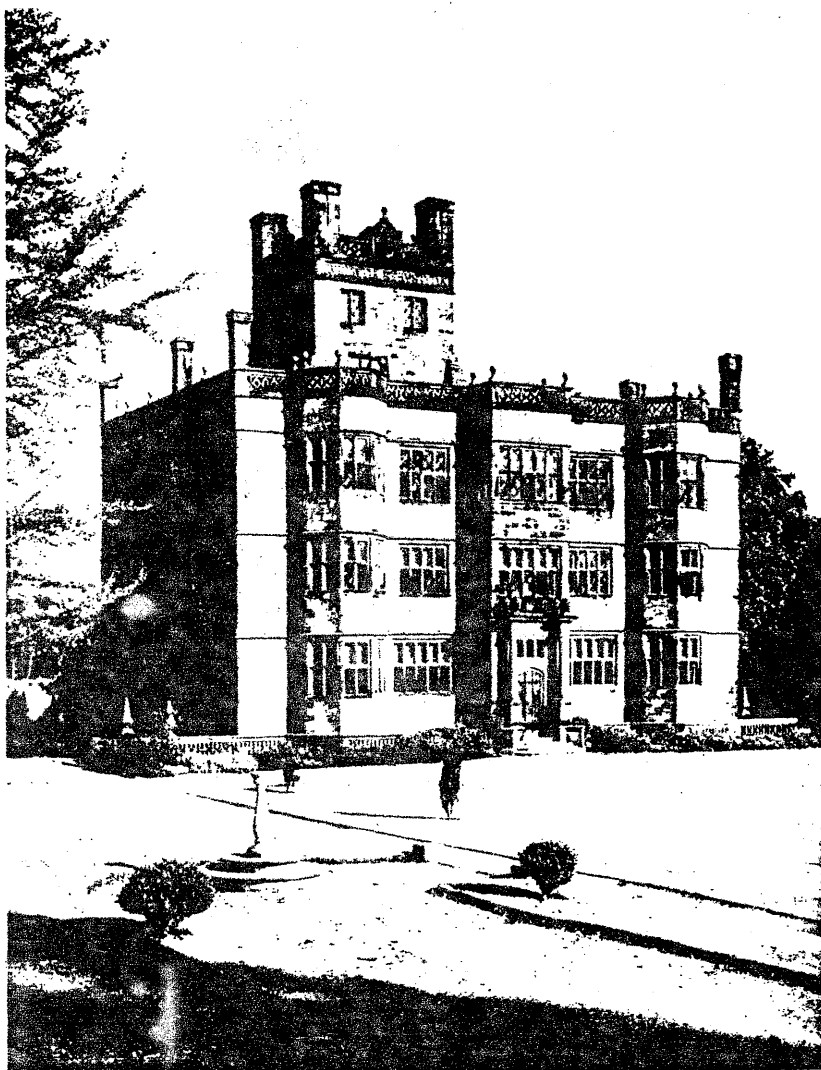
Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, 1st Bt (1804-77)  
from an early photograph c.1865

which she would have seen are being recreated but the wind and rain were strong enough to blow branches down so we were contented with the house with its Jacobean furniture, panelling, ornate plasterwork ceilings, and fine embroideries.

We enjoyed our day out, despite poor weather, and were particularly grateful to Mrs Eunice Skirrow, corresponding secretary of the Brontë Society, for being our guide at Haworth.

JOAN LEACH

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GAWTHORPE HALL

In the Autumn of 1985 while reading the Transactions of the Brontë Society Vol.18 I noticed the announcement of the formation of the Gaskell Society on 12th October 1985. As I have been a fan of Mrs Gaskell's writings for many years I became very interested and wrote to Mrs Joan Leach for information regarding the Gaskell Society. Incidentally, as a girl in Lisbon long ago, I loved that Brontë family and some years ago I presented the Brontë Society with a copy of Jane Eyre in Portuguese for their museum.

I duly joined the Gaskell Society and I have attended the three Annual General Meetings since 1986. After reading Mrs Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë my husband decided to accompany me as my escort.

I was quite excited at the thought of visiting Knutsford and seeing the places described in her novels and short stories, and this thrilled me immensely. I was most impressed with the large number of people who attended the meetings, and enjoyed making new acquaintances and friends. The various lectures were of great interest to me and I have derived great pleasure in attending these gatherings. It was quite intriguing to visit the different places connected with Mrs Gaskell and her works around the beautiful rural countryside of Cheshire. The whole atmosphere is simply delightful and Knutsford came up to all my expectations.

How engaging it is to throw one's mind back 150 years and in a sort of reverie go back and see Heathwaite - Aunt Lymb's house where Elizabeth Stevenson was brought up, with its open view to the heath; Cranford and the "Amazons"; Eltham of Cousin Phillis and Hollingford of Wives and Daughters with all the quaint Tudor buildings in King Street like the Rose & Crown, The Angel, the excellent Royal George Hotel which was built in the 14th century, supposedly named at the time The White Swan; the Unitarian Brook Street Chapel with its lattice windows; the graveyard where Mrs Gaskell is

buried together with her husband and two daughters, and realise that the Knutsford of today is still redolent of the atmosphere of the time and has kept its character to date.

Had I lived nearer I would have attended throughout the year many of the different activities organised by Joan Leach, who is the life and soul of the Gaskell Society. Instead I have to content myself with motoring down the M6 for the AGM in September. I do enjoy these weekends in a delightful English small town, a complete contrast with living in a large city like Edinburgh and a country like Scotland where people have a different outlook from the English people. I come home quite refreshed and looking forward to the next meeting.

I do hope and feel sure that the membership of the society will go from strength to strength and that the members will derive as much pleasure from the Gaskell Society as I have done.

MANUELA SUTHERLAND

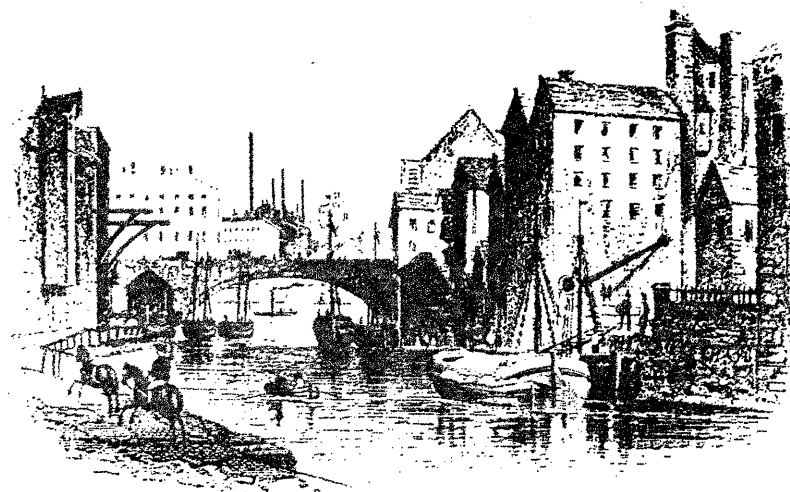
Material and suggestions for future Newsletters should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN  
Tel: 0565 4668

as a subject for fiction. - that  
was her opinion. I dreaded.  
I felt almost sure that if  
people would only read what  
I had to say they would not  
be disappointed. - but I feared I  
still think it probable that  
many may refuse to read any  
book of that kind. - I am  
writing in such a hurry I can't  
stop to make myself clear. / but  
yet I did feel as if I had done

afterwards. I was surprised.  
from what Miss Gaskell had  
said of what but I was not  
satisfied with you & the 102  
be shocked. - I could not wonder.  
for I knew since I should have  
been repelled by hearing that  
"a tale of seduction" was chosen.

Reduced facsimile of letter on p.15 - Mrs Gaskell's writing is sometimes referred to as a 'fine flowing hand'!!!

# The Gaskell Society



*The River Irwell & Ancoats Bridge Manchester*

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1990

NO. 9

As I am busy preparing this Newsletter, Alan Shelston is putting the Journal to bed, and both of us feel we are offering our members interesting reading. We hope, too, that you feel happy in sharing Gaskell interests through our publications or at our meetings. Looking back on 1989 I think all our meetings were enjoyed by those who attended and we hope even more members will try to get to a meeting in 1990. We look forward to a very full year.

Please don't forget that we are always ready to consider ideas for improving our Society in any way. Items for publication are welcome though space is limited.

Plans are well in hand for our joint conference with The Brontë Society at Ambleside on September 7th to 9th. Our President, Arthur Pollard will be chairman. We hope it will not prove too exacting a job as he must conserve his energies for a projected visit to Japan where he hopes to join The Gaskell Society there for their AGM in October. Professor Pollard's interest in Japan dates back to the war years when he worked on Japanese intelligence. The British Council will assist with travel costs.

Our Spring meeting will be held at Cross Street Chapel on 21st April. Work has been in progress there to restore an upper room to be known as The Gaskell Room; this will be dedicated in a special ceremony at our meeting. Minister, Reverend Denise Boyd, the Chapel members and ourselves all value the traditions enshrined there. Our speaker on this occasion will be Dr Edward Chitham on Elizabeth Stevenson's Education. Looking forward to this meeting, may I introduce our speaker?

Edward Chitham was born and has lived mostly in the West Midlands. He regards himself as a provincial, and was not too upset at being described by a London colleague as a 'hayseed, but a pleasant one'. His first book was a history of the Black Country, after which he wrote and published a children's novel and short story, but then began to formalise his research in English Literature, editing from manuscript a new text of Anne Brontë's poems.



This was followed by a number of other books on the Brontës, including a biography of Emily, based on research into her poetry which he is editing jointly with Derek Roper of Sheffield.

His interest in Elizabeth Gaskell dates from the 1970s, when he was called upon to devise a new novel course at Dudley College of Education and included Sylvia's Lovers. He has been working for some time towards a new biography, originally at the suggestion of Basil Blackwell of Oxford. His current posts include part-time lectureships at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, Westhill/Newman College, Birmingham, and the Open University, where he tutors the arts foundation course and makes use of his Cambridge Classics degree in teaching 'Augustan Rome'. He is also Education Consultant for the National Association for Gifted Children and enjoys teaching in schools when there is time.

JOAN LEACH

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#### THE SPANISH LADY'S LOVE

(see Postscript to following article)

"Will you hear a Spanish lady  
How she wooed an English man?  
Of a comely countenance and grace was she  
And by birth of high degree"

(Percy's Reliques)

The ballad relates how she had been taken prisoner but fell in love with Sir Urian and pleads to be taken to England. After making various excuses he finally admits to having a wife back home. The lady declares she will enter a nunnery and gives Sir Urian a 'chain of gold' for his wife.

For many years the Leghs of Adlington preserved a gold chain in a casket as an heirloom.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the delightful outings of 1987 and 1988, it was hard to believe that this year's could be anything but an anticlimax; and, being totally unmechanical, I had, to use Mrs Elton's phrase, "no great hopes" of Quarry Bank Mill. In fact, the outing of 8 October proved to be exciting and memorable, and the best of the three. The only fault one could find with the morning at Quarry Bank Mill was that it was too short. One lingered in this room and that, only to find that room succeeded room, and that, if one were to be at the Apprentice House by 2, there was nothing for it but to go faster and faster. Quarry Bank Mill, an unforgettable record of both human ingenuity and human inhumanity, provides, amongst other things, a vivid picture of the lives of the millhands of Mrs Gaskell's day - the din (if one or two machines could be so deafening, what must it have been like to work for twelve hours a day in a large room packed with machines?), the injuries, the brutality of the supervisors, and the houses in which the workers lived - a picture completed in the afternoon by the visit to the Apprentice House and Styal. Previous outings had taken us to places associated with Mrs Gaskell, some of which undoubtedly served as settings for her stories; this one introduced us to the substance of two epoch-making novels, Mary Barton and North and South, and sent me back to them.

In what was left of the day, we visited two seventeenth century chapels, Dean Row Unitarian Chapel (reminiscent of Brook Street) and the Baptist Chapel at Great Warford (previously seen in 1988) and Adlington Hall, where we had time to see the Hall itself, but not, unfortunately, to catch more than a glimpse of the grounds. Someone remarked to me recently - and I have some sympathy with the remark - that one stately home is very much like another. Adlington Hall, however, with its striking juxtaposition of Elizabethan and Georgian architecture and its Great Hall, adorned by that splendid organ flanked by the two forest trees, is, I feel, an exception.

POSTSCRIPT. Adlington Hall and The Old Nurse's Story

When I mentioned to my friend, Frank Whitehead, that we

had visited Adlington Hall, he asked if it had anything to do with The Old Nurse's Story. This had not occurred to me, but, on reflection, I think it has. The following notes are a composite effort; the names in parentheses are those of other people to whom I owe suggestions.

In the story, the organ in the hall of Furnivall Manor is played by ghostly hands.

(1) The distinctive feature of the Great Hall at Adlington is the organ. There cannot be many great houses with organs in their halls.

(2) The organ at Adlington was damaged in 1805 or thereabouts and remained silent until it was repaired in 1959 - i.e. during the whole of Mrs Gaskell's lifetime. In the story, the organ is "all broken and destroyed inside".

(3) Handel had played upon this organ. In the story it is a foreign musician who came to Furnivall Manor, had the organ brought from Holland, and won the love of the two sisters (Enid Duthie).

I know of no evidence that Mrs Gaskell ever visited Adlington Hall; the Leghs do not appear in her letters. However:

(1) Margaret's grandfather, in Mary Barton is Job Legh. There are plenty of Lees and Leighs, but the spelling Legh is uncommon.

(2) My Lady Ludlow, in the story of that name, has a son called Urian, who is drowned at sea (Enid Duthie). A portrait of Sir Urian Legh (1566-1627) hangs in the drawing-room of Adlington Hall. The name Urian is certainly not common; Sir Urian was a sailor, and took part in the expedition to Cadiz of 1596.

(3) Mrs Gaskell's friends, the Winkworths (at Alderley Edge) and the Gregs (at Styall) lived well on the Adlington side of Knutsford (Joan Leach). In any case, one did not need to know a family to visit their house: the housekeeper would show respectable people over, as the housekeeper shows Elizabeth Bennet and her aunt and uncle over Pemberley in Pride and Prejudice. We may be sure that, if she did, the housekeeper of Adlington would make the most both of the organ on which Handel was once believed to have composed "The Harmonious Blacksmith", and of the story of Sir Urian Legh and the Spanish lady of Cadiz.

P. J. YARROW

Annette B. Hopkins quoted several portions of William Gaskell's wedding-journey letter to his sister in Elizabeth Gaskell (1952). Since then it has only been mangled and inaccurately copied, though the original manuscript is available in the Brotherton Library Leeds. The crossed writing is admittedly not easy to read.

Plas Penrhyn Sept 16th 1832

My very dear Sister,

We seem to have been very much in the same mind - Whilst you were threatening me with a scolding for non-writing, I was preparing one for you. There were manifold reasons for my silence - not one that I can discover for yours. I shall only trouble you with one - we had no ink that we could make tolerably legible till we got here. Thank you for yours when it did come. Of our highways and byeways I cannot pretend to give you any thing like an account in an half-sheet. They must furnish subjects of talk for the fire-side.

We enjoyed our stay at dear little Aber very much indeed - and were not a little loth to leave it last Monday, though hope was leading us on to still more beautiful and grander scenes. We went that day through some of the finest which Wales has to shew. Our first stage was to Conway by coach - as beautiful a ride as heart could desire. On the left we had Beau maris and the sea shining and sparkling in the morning light, and on our right the hills covered with the richest and warmest tints, and the air so fresh and pure, and Lily (Elizabeth Gaskell)\* looking so very well, and two bugles playing all the way - wasn't it enough to make one very happy? We went through the fine old castle at Conway and, as I cannot tell you fully our feelings as we wandered through it and thought of departed greatness and all that - why I shall only tell you, that we felt very properly - and I (but I did not tell this before) felt very hungry.

However the next drive to Llanwrst was so lovely that all other sense was lost in sight - and it was not till we got there that I thought of applying to the cake which we

had brought with us. From Llanwrst we took another car on to Capel Curig, and our course seemed to be from good to better still. But you know in our highest enjoyments, it has been said 'Surgit aliquid amare' - and so it proved here. On the way Lily's boa took a fancy to some little nook or other, & though we stayed a considerable time at Capel Curig, consoling ourselves for its absence by eating and dinners, it made not its appearance before we left, and no tidings of it have reached us up to the present.

With hearts no lighter from our dinners, we proceeded on through the pass of Llanberis - and here boa and every thing else, but my own Lily, was forgotten in the wondrous wildness and rugged grandeur of the scene - but as I can give you no idea of it, I may as well tell you at once we reached Caernarvon about 8 in the evening, having just finished 50 miles - and such a 50 it would I imagine be very difficult to find elsewhere. I was rather hurrying through then, but we had fixed to be here on Wednesday, and wished to spend a night at Bedd Gelert. We left Caernarvon in the afternoon (of Tuesday,) and got there for tea.

The next day unfortunately proved very wet, and I only got a very short walk, which I regretted exceedingly, as there seemed some very tempting walks round about. Our ride to Tremadoc, which would have been so fine, if the weather had been at all so, was nothing but rain and wind, and when we got to the inn we were so washed in the showers that declining coming up here that night, we changed and got to bed as soon after tea as we could. On Thursday morning the carriage came for us almost before we had done breakfast, and we passed over the embankment (nearly a mile long) without much fear, though there is scarcely room for two vehicles to pass, and it is nearly 40 feet above the Sea. (Built by William Maddocks, between 1808 and 1811)\*

The scenery about here is very fine, and the view from the drawing-room windows quite glorious. We have not had good weather since we came - but on Saturday we had a delightful drive as far as Tan y Bwlch. I begin

now to feel myself at home here and shall be exceedingly sorry to leave. We talk of doing it on Wednesday. Mrs Holland is kindness itself - and Sam I like very much - and Ann I am quite in love with. My bonny wee wife - My bonny wee wife - grows I do think more bonny than ever. She is very much better than when we left Knutsford, and I hope will go on gaining strength, though she maintains she is already as strong as a horse. And now as I want her to fill up the other half (Gaskell Letter 2)\*, I must come to one or two little things which I wish you to do.

And first will you have any objections to go to Hargreaves & Hime, in the Square, and ask if they have disposed of the Piano, which Mr Shore recommended to me. It was one of Broadwoods Patents - price £55 for cash. If they have it still - get them to send it up, and say I will pay for it on my return. And had you not better get the remainder of the cake from Mrs Butterworth's, if it has not yet been sent. And have you got any saucers for the plants. And with respect to the celery be every now & then putting a little earth up round the plants - and while you do it, keep the stalks of the outside leaves well together, to prevent the earth from getting between them. Do this and there will be no need to apply to the gardener.

We can hardly tell yet when we shall be at home - but we proposing being (sic)\* at Knutsford at the beginning of next week. We will send a note letting you know the day when you may expect us. I hope the plants have been reviving since you wrote. Mind and water them well. I am feeling very much obliged to you for taking care of every thing so nicely as you are doing, I have no doubt, and with my kindest remembrances to Mr and Mrs Robberds believe me

Your very happy & affectionate brother

Willm Gaskell.

With my love to Sam (?Gaskell: a doctor, William's brother)\* tell him how glad I was to find he had nothing to do with the decapitation row -

J. A. V. CHAPPLE

\*Editor's notes, usually [ ]

Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in 19th Century British Fiction by Susan Morgan, Professor of English at Vassar College, Oxford University Press, £25.00.

- Discusses the reasons why there are so many heroines in the Victorian novel when the society it depicts was so male dominated; and shows how these heroines have been used to shape history. Mrs Gaskell has suffered at the hands of critics, who while praising her descriptive qualities and her sympathy, have failed to find anything innovative in her work. Professor Morgan claims to offer a new appraisal and shows how the novels are more revolutionary than they have previously been credited and how they have shaped history. This is just as true of Cranford and Ruth as it is of the more dramatic novels. A particular influence on Gaskell's writing was Scott's Heart of Midlothian. Other novelists treated in this study are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Sir Walter Scott, George Meredith and Henry James.

A Victorian reader, edited by Peter Faulkner (Key documents in literary criticism) B. T. Batsford, £7.95.

An anthology of passages from 22 Victorian writers, 1830-1870 in which they describe their attitudes to their work. It includes the preface to Mary Barton and Mrs Gaskell's letter to Herbert Grey, c1859 (GL 420) in which she gives advice to a novice writer on his work. George Eliot's essay Silly Novels by Lady Novelists recently published in an Anthology of British Women Writers edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd (Newsletter No. 8) is again reprinted.

The introduction also quotes from two other Gaskell letters which show her awareness of the problems of women writers. In GL 69 she writes to Eliza Fox 'I am sure it is healthy for them (women) to have the refuge of the hidden world of Art', while in 1862 to an unknown correspondent who had sent her the manuscript of a novel, she writes 'When I had little children I do not think I could have written stories, because I should have become too much absorbed in my fictitious people to attend to my real ones ...' (GL 515)

Now available on tape:-

Four short stories of Mrs Gaskell read by Judith Whale, Oasis 90025, £19.95, comprising four cassettes, playing time five hours. The contents are The Manchester Marriage, Lizzie Leigh, The Well of Pen-Morfa, The Three Eras of Libbie Marsh.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

How life goes! Essays in honour of Andrew Hughes by Hidemitsu Tohgo. Koyo Shoppan Ltd. Tokyo 1989.

Though not a study of Elizabeth Gaskell, this charming book is of interest to any lover of literature. The author charts, through a series of essays and letters, his growing enthusiasm for English literature and language, but learning so much more from his studies with his English teacher, Andrew Hughes.

Growing up in war-time Japan his ambition was to be a fighter pilot and kill for the 'glory of the Emperor and holy Japan' but through reading, paying his way through college by working in a US army camp he became aware of common humanity. 'And so I began to read books', the author writes of walking the moors at Haworth at dawn 'unable to express in poetry my feelings about the fluctuations of time and changes in personal position, I could only bow deeply towards the morning sun'.

He writes, in English, of meeting authors (including Christopher Leach) drinking in the Old Cock Tavern once frequented by Pepys, Sheridan and Dickens and the failure to 'reach' Hardy in a Dorchester shut down on December 30th. Hidemitsu Tohgo concludes that his life has become richer from the study of English and in this many of us will agree with him.

JOAN LEACH

\* \* \* \* \*

My first meeting with these two extraordinary women took place at the University of Pescara, where Professor Marroni, my teacher in English and a great "fan" of Mrs Gaskell, gave me the opportunity to become acquainted with Elizabeth Gaskell and Fredrika Bremer (1).

The research and the comparison between the two writers resulted in a thesis with the title "Elizabeth Gaskell and Fredrika Bremer - an analysis of a parallelism" -.

Is a comparison possible between these two writers? Indeed it is, is my answer. Though they were very different as women and writers, there were a couple of things that bound them together. Their friendship began when Fredrika was on her way home from America (1851), where she had stayed for more than two years, and decided to visit England, some friends and the Great Exhibition. She was very anxious to meet some of the most important writers of the moment and one of these was Elizabeth Gaskell. Fredrika Bremer's description afterwards of Elizabeth Gaskell, her home and the whole stay in England is documented by numerous articles in a Swedish newspaper, written by Fredrika herself. In particular she praises Elizabeth Gaskell with these words:

"Have you read a 'Manchester Story' called Mary Barton? If you haven't, do read this exciting and touching tale of the reverse side of the Manchester-workers' life. The novel has given the author Mrs E. Gaskell an excellent place among young English writers. I was so very surprised to see that it was she, this lovely little lady with the happy face and the nice voice in a most beautiful country-home, that had written this moving story of the earth's nightlife" (2).

Her admiration for Elizabeth Gaskell is so evident and this admiration leads further on to a close friendship, testified by some letters from Fredrika to Elizabeth. A letter from Fairfield, 19 October, 1851 says:  
 "Bless you, Elizabeth for your kind heart and all the good and genial influences with which it has surrounded

me on my way, all from our meeting in your home"! ... (3)

Another one dated Stockholm, 29 September, 1853 finishes with an ardent appeal to Mrs Gaskell: "Dear Elizabeth, dear sister in spirit, if I may call you so, give me your hand in sympathy and in work for the oppressed or neglected of our own sex" ... (4)

The last letter gives us a vision of how much Fredrika expected of her in the woman question. They had the same wish to try to better the conditions for women and partly they also tried to raise discussions about delicate problems through their novels. But as writers they were different. Elizabeth Gaskell described all sorts of problems, from social and working problems (Mary Barton), problems related to moral (Ruth), to problems of human



FREDRIKA BREMER

relations (Wives and Daughters). Fredrika Bremer wrote mostly about human relations and particularly about relationships between parents and children and between sisters and brothers (The Home, Nina, Father and Daughter).

Lastly they were also different as women. Elizabeth Gaskell was more like a dove according to Lord Cecil (5) and I'm sure, that he would have classified Fredrika Bremer as an eagle in excellent company with ugly, dynamic, childless and independent women like Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. But all these external things were not so important. The real importance was in doing something for those who were in need and this interest in common made their friendship lasting.

EVA AHSBERG BORRAMEO

#### NOTES

- (1) Fredrika Bremer, the Swedish writer, was born of Swedish parents in 1801 in Finland but was brought up in Sweden. She died in 1865 (incidentally the same year as Elizabeth Gaskell)
- (2) These articles with the title "England in the autumn 1851" were published between January and February 1852, in the daily newspaper of Stockholm "Aftonbladet"
- (3) R. D. Waller; Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, vol.19, 1935; p.165
- (4) A. Rubenius; The Woman Question in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1950; p.41
- (5) Lord D. Cecil; Early Victorian Novelists, London, Constable, 1934; p.97

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

In The Life of Charlotte Brontë (Chapter 27)  
Mrs Gaskell recalled a discussion between them when

Charlotte had been anxious that she might be accused of plagiarism, 'she thought every one would fancy that she must have taken her conception of Jane Eyre's character from that of 'Francesca', the narrator of Miss Bremer's story. For my own part, I cannot see the slightest resemblance between the two characters, and so I told her: but she persisted in saying that Francesca was Jane Eyre married to a good-natured 'Bear' of a Swedish surgeon.'

It is clear that both writers had read Bremer closely. Another link was through Mary Howitt, who had translated Bremer's works.

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#### BOOKS IN STOCK

These are mostly at special rates. If ordering by post please add postage at rate on receipt.

Elizabeth Gaskell. A Portrait in Letters by J. A. V. Chapple	£4.00
William Gaskell by Barbara Brill	£7.95
The Landscape of The Brontës by Arthur Pollard	£14.95
Manchester in the Victorian Age by Gary S. Messinger	£2.50
Cranford Revisited by John Rowe Townsend	£9.95
How Life Goes by Hidemitsu Tohgo	£7.50

\* \* \* \* \*

The Manchester City News, in 1878, printed several letters and notes about Greenheys, the De Quincey house, and the area surrounding it which was so charmingly depicted by Mrs Gaskell in the opening scenes of Mary Barton. One correspondent wrote:

'When this house disappeared in the changes taking place about four years ago piteous was it to see an old gentleman, its last occupant, who had lived in it nearly fifty years, turn away with tears running down his face. Well known was he in that neighbourhood and well liked. Poor old Walker. It was not long he survived the pulling down of his house. He had spoken with Mrs Gaskell on several occasions.'

Another correspondent wrote in detail of the Mary Barton background and characters:

'Another cottage which stood not very far from Jackson's farm, a white one-storey building, afforded less pleasing reflections. It was long the residence of a power loom weaver; who, however added botanical pursuits, and moreover was a leading delegate whenever disputes arose between masters and men upon trade questions. He is said to have been occasionally visited by the late Mrs Gaskell, and that he was the original of Job Legh, so graphically described by her in Mary Barton; but if so there seems to be no reason why she should have fixed his residence in the questionable quarters she names instead of the neat whitewashed cottage which her notice would have immortalized. But though a turn-out delegate, Job (as I may call him) had none of the fire-brand propensities which some of the disaffected indulged in.

'On the contrary, he was known to be more of a peace-maker, and never advocated violent measures, such as John Barton was accused of. The original John Barton I afterwards knew well, and a close comrade of his, also a delegate, both of whom were operative cotton-spinners.



Greenheys Lane, Manchester, 1827. Sketch by J.W. Ralston.

'The former whom I shall call R.K., was a thorough-going leveller, his motto being the three T's as "liberty, equality and fraternity" are occasionally described; and I can well imagine, from what I knew of him, that he was one of the most unflinching in upholding what he called the rights of the British Workman; but I have good reason to know that he was never guilty of the violent measures attributed to some of the turn-outs. Indeed, some of the acts of violence named in Mary Barton never occurred in Manchester at all, the locality of the murder of Mr Carson (a fictitious name) being changed from a neighbouring town to Manchester: neither were the murderers, two of whom were hung, Manchester men. But R.K. was ever after a marked man ... The disputes being happily settled, an agreement was come to between masters and men that by-gones should be by-gones, and that no workman, whether delegate or not, except actual criminals should be refused work. But though R.K. would be included in this amnesty, he found it impossible to obtain employment; so he decided to spend a few years in America, until as he imagined, the matter had blown over. But on arriving in the States, judge of his mortification to find his name had preceeded him, and that so prominent an

advocate of workman's rights would not be tolerated there.

'As R.K. had always regarded America as the El Dorado of freedom and liberty, this unpalatable extinguisher of his democratic theories took him by surprise; but only by changing his name and getting work in another trade could he obtain a livelihood, when after a stay of about six years, he returned to old England a sadder if not a better man. He, however, became painfully aware on his arrival here that his past political proclivities had neither been forgotten nor forgiven, as he was refused work on every hand. Indeed one of his old employers named to him that his rearrival in England had been made known to every master spinner in the country. Fortunately for him he had saved a little money, and this enabled him to open a retail coalyard in Ardwick, in which he prospered, and in after years, such was the reliance in his sterling integrity, particularly with those who had known him the longest, that he became one of the most trusted of men, having several trusteeships in his hands, one of them an estate of very considerable value, which virtually he rescued from the auctioneer's hammer, living to see it freed from its mortgages, and he restored it to the family descendants (whose previous ownership dated four centuries back) free from all incumbrance.

'He died only a few years ago, leaving property worth six or seven thousand pounds. The Greenheys cottage in question was long under the surveillance of the police, as ten delegates met there every Sunday, and many midnight sittings were known to be held. It was moreover searched more than once ostensibly for Chartist weapons, but nothing criminating was found. Many of these Sunday delegate meetings were professedly called botanist gatherings, but the police were able to point out those who had no pretensions to the science, and hence appearances were against their visits being so harmless a character as a botanical meeting would imply.

(signed) R. E. Bibby'

Manch. C. News 22 June 1878

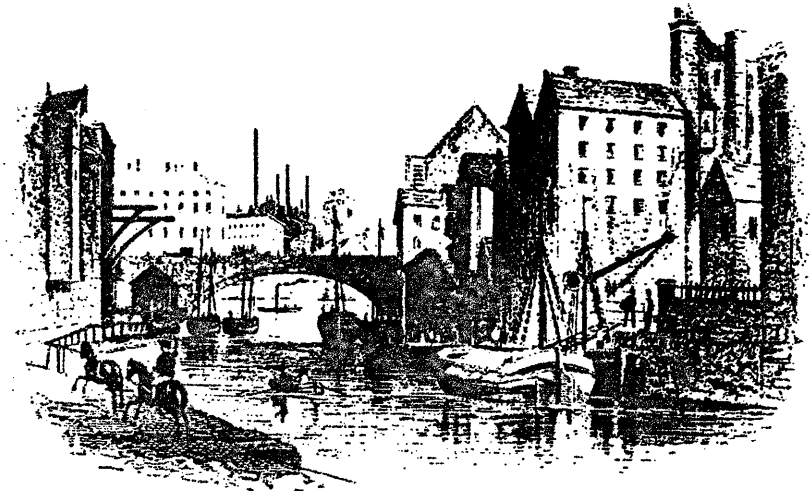
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If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

ISSN 0954 - 1209



# The Gaskell Society



*The River Irwell & Albert Bridge Manchester*

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1990

NO. 10

As soon as this newsletter has been mailed, final preparations will be made for our joint conference with The Brontë Society at Ambleside, 7-9th September. I am sure this new venture is going to be a memorable weekend for both our Societies and those of you unable to join us will hear about it in our publications. I know many of you enjoy these and are content to share our activities by reading about them; in this way our more distant members in Japan, North America, Australia and Europe can be with us in spirit.

We do try to give members the opportunity to get together but it is not easy to know just what members expect or enjoy, therefore we are always keen to receive suggestions. As we are centred on Knutsford, we have a number of local members who could meet more often for social and literary events but recent response has been disappointing both for our unusual and fascinating 'cholera walk', Royal Exchange performance of School for Scandal and canal boat trip. Perhaps we have chosen the wrong times? Possibly more local members in our ranks would give wider scope, so please note the invitation to meet at The Angel on Saturday morning, August 25th, and bring a friend. Committee member, Mrs Alison Foster has agreed to take on the role of social secretary.

We are considering a monthly (or fortnightly?) literary circle, probably to read and discuss some of Elizabeth Gaskell's short stories; please let me know if you are interested and whether a weekday or Saturday afternoon would suit you best.

For our London and South East members, we are planning another London meeting, on Saturday 27th October at Chelsea, first meeting at Carlyle's house on Cheyne Row. Professor K J Fielding has agreed to speak on "The Sceptical Carlyles Meet the Unitarian Elizabeth Gaskell".

Looking even further afield and ahead we think Whitby area would make a fine literary venue for the study of Sylvia's Lovers. Cober Hill Conference Centre on the Whitby side of Scarborough offers excellent facilities,

in 6 acres of grounds overlooking sea and cliffs. The cost of a weekend at the end of May, for example, would be around £35 full board; or a three night mid-week break at about £55. The Royal Hotel Whitby could accommodate a group but it would be more expensive, but there is also a Methodist holiday home which is reasonable and central, so the party could be split. Let me know your thoughts on this; it seems the end of May/early June would be best for several reasons.

Our AGM weekend promises to be enjoyable. Saturday 29th September at The Royal George Hotel in Knutsford, which suited us very well last year. Brenda Colloms, writer and lecturer will speak about "William Johnson Fox and his circle". Those of you fortunate enough to own a copy of The Collected Letters of Mrs Gaskell edited by Chapple and Pollard (let me know if you ever spot a spare copy) will know that there are many letters to Tottie Fox, daughter of W J Fox, M.P. Brenda Colloms has a book due out on the subject of her talk and some of you will know her excellent study, Charles Kingsley: The Lion of Eversley.

On Friday 28th September, we hope you and your friends will join us at Tatton Hall for the premier of "Charlotte and Elizabeth", an imaginative new play on the relationship of the two writers. After the play there will be opportunity for informal discussion with the company.

It should be mentioned that there is always academic Gaskell work going on and we are pleased to be of use in any way. When I have finished this letter, I am going into Manchester to meet an American member and also hope to find time to look at registry records for Gaskell entries.

It is much appreciated if UK members will enclose a s.a.e. with any correspondence needing replies, and also if members NOT attending the AGM will pay their subs due on 1st September for 1991 year without waiting for reminders! (£5 for UK and EEC, £10 for overseas members, or \$18 to our US representative, Mrs L Magruder

Box 1547, La Canada, Ca 91012.

We wish our President well on his visit to the Gaskell Society of Japan in October. Professor Arthur Pollard will give several other talks there, and we are pleased to acknowledge assistance from the British Council.

JOAN LEACH

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(Above) Entrance Front, Capesborne, 1843. Edward Blore, architect.  
(Below) West Elevation 1843, showing the Paxton Conservatory.  
John Wood - Edward Blore, architects.



(see following article)

Mrs Susan Kearney has kindly given permission to print a letter to her great-grandmother, Agnes Sandars (née Paterson). It describes a visit to Capesthorne Hall, the home of the widowed Mrs Caroline Davenport, who was then about to marry Lord Hatherton. This is worth reading alongside the first chapter of North and South (1854-55). At the end of the new letter Elizabeth Gaskell gives a brief account of a play by Bulwer-Lytton and a farce called Mr Nightingale's Diary, by Charles Dickens and Mark Lemon.

The letter has not yet been fully researched, but our knowledgeable Secretary has identified the Macclesfield clergyman, Mr Weigall of Hurdsfield parish. Mr Nathan Hubbersty appears in volume 1 of the great edition of Darwin's Correspondence now in progress - as 'a Mr Hubble-Bubble' at first! The word 'Braidized' is exceptionally interesting. Dr James Braid, a Manchester physician writing scientifically about a popular phenomenon, first coined the term 'neuro-hypnotism' in 1842. He shortened it to 'hypnotism' in the following year, though 'Braidized' was still being used forty years afterwards.

I would welcome any information members of the Society could give me about minor figures or events in Elizabeth Gaskell's letters. It would be truly wonderful if the location of Caroline Davenport's diary and correspondence could be discovered, too. All that I have found so far are the two short extracts from her letters just printed in Brontë Society Transactions 1990, from a notebook of Jane Adeane of Llanfawr now in the Brotherton Library at Leeds.

Plymouth Grove  
Wednesday [?27 January 1852]

My dearest Agnes,

I think you will perhaps like to hear something of my doings lately; of my visit to Capesthorne in the first place, and of the Amateur Play in the second. You know Mrs Davenport was going to be married on the 11th of Feb [1852], so she wrote to ask me to come and see

her a long time ago, & renewed the invitation when she knew the girls were gone. So I went. I joined her at Macclesfield as she was coming home from Staffordshire, and we drove together to Capesthorne (5 miles) and on the way she surprised me by praising the President [Napoleon III], and believing from all her private information from Paris, that he was going to try to be the Napoleon of Peace (whatever that means).<sup>1</sup>

At Capesthorne I found her uncle, Mr Charles Hurt, her cousin Miss Emma Wolley (such a nice girl do you know her? daughter of a clergyman near Nottingham, her father's name was Hurt.) Mr Osborne the Principal of [?] Rossall School and a very clever agreeable ugly man, and Mr Weigall a clergyman at Macclesfield. It was very pleasant that day, but the next our two nice clergymen left, and a very stupid Mr and Mrs Blore came. He is an architect, who has made his fortune, and his wife has been a beauty.<sup>2</sup> Her daughter is married to a Mr [?] Careton a minor Canon of Westminster. Her dresses and jewels were something to wonder at, & as we could not find out anything to talk to her about, Mrs Davenport brought down all her wedding finery for public amusement.

A set of diamonds and opals, and a set of diamonds & emeralds - (the first far the most beautiful & far the most expensive too,) a green velvet cloak down to her heels lined & trimmed with miniver 6 Indian shawls of various kinds, the lowest priced one 90 guineas - one a soft green exquisitely embroidered in pale lilac & gold, another a crimson or Indian red ditto in white & gold, another a blue scarf, ends in gold - oh dear! they were so soft and delicate and went into such beautiful folds. Her gowns (only 7) were in London, - a white moiré antique a maize coloured do trimmed with black lace & coral-branch 'fittings', a blue silk with white lace, a green velvet, a black cloth (the only one with a waistcoat whh her dress maker told her was only to be worn with a cloth dress, [?] & rather going out in that) a dark blue silk, & a mouse coloured ditto. Her everyday petticoats were all made without bodies, set into a

round band [small sketch] with pretty jacket bodies with little skirts [small sketch] loose; trimmed all round with Valenciennes and with high-bodied jackets with long sleeves for high bodied gowns. They looked so pretty. Then her tip-top best were with embroidered stomachers. Everything else was as pretty as could be, only nothing else so very new and [?]fancy.

Mrs Blore was in ecstasies at every separate piece of finery, & put on rings till she could not bend her knuckles to try & come up to Mrs Davenport's grandeur. She left on the Monday, & good go with her! I hope I shall never see her again. Such a testing of everything by money I never heard in my life. If she heard of a man being successful, she asked directly what income he had, & neither Mrs Davenport nor I could knock any other idea into her head.

Then on the Monday your friend Mr Nathan Hubbersty, and Mr Alfred Arkwright came; I liked the latter much. I did not like the former, & could not imagine how any sister of Mrs Davenport's could have married him. On Tuesday I went, with much regret to the Sam Greys. He was ill, and they thought my coming might cheer him up, and do him good. When I came home on the Friday - (somewhere about Febry 5th) I found a note from Mrs Davenport, begging me to come back on the Saturday & stay with her over the Monday, when the tenants were to give her their presents; she had expected Lord H to be with her, but now she found he could not. So I went. I expected her to meet me at Chelford but she was not there & I took a fly. On the way I met another fly, and out jumped a nice-looking elderlyish gentleman, & introduced himself to me as Lord H. He had come down from London by the express train to see Mrs D unexpectedly as she had said she was not quite well, staid 3 hours at Capesthorne, & was going back by the evening express.

Sunday was a very nice day at Capesthorne. The S[unday] School come into the beautiful conservatory to be taught, and are clean wholesome country-looking children in the midst of camellias, & [?]sweet-scented geraniums

&c &c - the chapel through the conservatory - the pew a parlour with low luxurious sofas, a fire place &c,<sup>3</sup> - how easy it seems to be good compared with a long wet tramp down to a close school-room, full of half-washed children, - that's very wicked is it not? Then in the evening after dinner the children & choir sing chants in this same beautiful conservatory (almost as large as that at Chatsworth, & we opened the library door, which went into the conservatory & heard them singing in a green bower[.]

Then on Monday came all the present giving [-] a present for every servant - for nearly all the out of doors servants too, for the school children[.] We arranged all: desks for the men-servants, nicely fitted up, - gowns for the younger, fur-cloaks for the older women servants - ladies' companions for the school-girls, double-bladed knives for the boys: & towards 12 o'clock came a poor idiot to whom Mrs D had been very kind. 'Silly Billy' dancing along the park dressed in a gay horse-cloth, and preceding a band then came 200 school-children, - then women, then men upwards of 500 in all. Mrs Davenport put on her beautiful cloak and went and stood in the raised & covered terrace in front of the house, while they formed a semicircle round her. Then an old farmer came forwards, crying & trembling with a little speech of farewell & a bracelet (value 60 guineas) the farmers had bought for her, - & she made a little speech, & then she cried - then came forwards the labourers who had bought a clock for her dressing-room but she could not answer them for crying - then her house-servants - a church service all in purple & gold; then the school children a silver vase for flowers; then they all came to wish her goodbye; but as we saw they each had their separate private thanks to render for some little kindness done to them; it was proposed they should raise a cheer that she might not be utterly worn out; & the band played Should auld acquaintance &c, - and then the crowd went to have refreshment. All that day we were helping Mrs Davenport, & the next morning she & I & Mr Crackenthorpe (her co-executor) went to Chelford; and

now I shall leave Lord Hatherton to finish out the story; you'll find a letter from him, among those I send which I thought you might like to see. I can't read Meta's all over again, but I am sure I may trust to your & Eliza's discretion if Meta is imprudent; and I should like to have all the letters back again sometime.

Yes! we went to see the Amateurs; we asked Mr Forster & Dickens to stay here, but they could not. Mr F came up however to call, & told us they expected to gain 1000£ by these 3 nights (2 at Liverpool, where he was not going to act.) He said the play was very heavy, and so it was. He gave me a private admission for any friends, so I took the Winkworths & we escaped the crowd. We sat right under the very much raised stage, on the front row, & I think I got Braidized for I had such a headache with looking up. The play is very very long too - 3 hours & a half, & they omitted 1 scene. And very stupid indeed. The farce was capital. Dickens was so good, & Mark Lemon, - D Jerrold was not there and Mr Forster was sadly too long over his very moral sentences in the play.

We hope to see you here dear Agnes before long. I must beg your pardon for my writing. I have so much to do just now I can hardly get through it. My kind love to Eliza. Wms remembrances to both of you.

Yours very affely

ECG

Our remembrances to Mr Saundars [sic].

#### Editor's Notes

1. The Editor of the Macclesfield Courier (Jan 17th 1852) also speculated on the French President's hopes for peace:

"Louis Napoleon has promulgated a constitution in which he has appointed himself President for 10 years and adheres to the terms of the proclamation of December 2nd. For our own parts we are inclined to think that the Constitution is such as it will last if Louis Napoleon can escape assassination and keep the soldiery in good

humour without going to war."

2. "a very stupid Mr and Mrs Blore came. He is an architect, who has made his fortune."

It seems that Mrs Gaskell was unaware that much of the building around her, at Capesthorne, was the work of Edward Blore, in 'the style of the Jacobean period, but in an idiom unmistakably of his own making, and the general tone of Victorian Gothic revival cannot serve as a description of his particular expression'. He was also architect to William IV and Queen Victoria. The work he did at Capesthorne had been put in hand by Mrs Davenport's husband, Edward Davies Davenport between 1837 and '47 when he died.

The Paxton conservatory is of the same period. 'It possessed several features which reappeared later in his design for the Crystal Palace ... and in its day may well have been the largest conservatory in existence' - (Quotes from Capesthorne guide book)

3. The family pew from the chapel is now part of the entrance hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### A GASKELL PRECEPT

On the Gaskell Memorial Tower and other Watt buildings in Knutsford, texts are a feature of the architect's style; he believed architecture should instruct and uplift.

New building at the end of King Street in Watt's style gives the area a feel of Port Merion. An attractive Watt house, now offices, has a text from Mrs Gaskell (GL.12) which might serve us today:

"The beauty and poetry of many of the common things and daily events of life in its humblest aspect does not seem to me sufficiently appreciated"

On the opposite wall is a verse familiar to many, but few could identify the author as Carlyle:

So here hath been dawning  
Another blue day.  
Think wilt thou let it  
Slip useless away?

There is no doubt that reminiscence and autobiography play a considerable part in Mrs Gaskell's work: Cranford, it is well known, owes much to Knutsford, and Wives and Daughters would not have been written, had Mrs Gaskell's father not remarried. Nevertheless, we must not forget that she was a novelist, and her experiences are not reproduced exactly in her stories.

(1) In My French Master (1853), Mrs Gaskell writes:

"Three years ago I was in Paris, An English friend of mine who lives there - English by birth, but married to a German professor, and very French in manners and ways - asked me to come to her house one evening."

The friend is unmistakably Mme Mohl, and Mr J G Sharps, in his invaluable book, Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, wonders, on the strength of this passage, if Mrs Gaskell could have paid an unrecorded visit to Paris in 1850 or 1851. This, however, is untenable, since she wrote to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth on 7 April 1853: "... we may go to Paris on May 12 or 13th! I have never been there ..." Clearly, we cannot take this sentence in My French Master as straightforward autobiography.

Mr Sharps is probably right in saying: "It seems [...] the basic ingredients of the story My French Master were Knutsford and a love-story which could easily have come from the salon of Mme Mohl". As the story was published in December 1853, it looks as if the visit to Paris very naturally reawakened in Mrs Gaskell memories of her own childhood lessons from the émigré French master, M. Rogier. The Parisian hostess, whose match-making efforts unexpectedly succeed, after all, though not in the way she intends, does resemble Mme Mohl, who was well known for her interest in young people and their love affairs, and whom Mrs Gaskell had already known for several years. Whether the love affairs in the story came from Mme Mohl or from Mrs Gaskell herself, who thereby achieved her (unconvincing) happy ending, of course, we cannot know, though we might suspect the latter.

Mme Mohl may have known of the daughter of an émigré returning as mistress to her father's ancestral mansion through marriage with a descendant of its subsequent purchaser; but the double marriage in the story strains credulity.

As for the phrase "three years ago" in the passage quoted above, Mrs Gaskell, one suspects, instinctively thought of 1853, not only the date of her first visit to Paris, but also - more important - the date of the publication of her story, to which it gave a ring of authenticity. She was obliged to antedate the action to "three years ago" to allow time for all the events she mentions - the two marriages, the installation of M. de Chalabre as an old man in the house (formerly his property) of his younger daughter, the birth of his grandchild (now of an age to play in the gardens) and his death.

Conjectural as this may be, it is possible, and in tune with Mrs Gaskell's procedure on other occasions. In My French Master, for instance, though the narrative is supposedly autobiographical, the character of the narrator, from the start, is not entirely that of the author, and her circumstances and her subsequent life very different indeed.

(2) We know little about Elizabeth Stevenson's sojourns in Edinburgh, and biographers have been tempted to fill the gap from Round the Sofa (1859). The narrator is a girl who has been sent to Edinburgh for medical treatment, and who lives a rather dreary life in drab lodgings. This has been taken as a reminiscence of Elizabeth Stevenson's own life in Edinburgh, and it has even been assumed that she and Ann Turner were sent to Edinburgh to escape from the cholera raging in Newcastle (see, for instance, Winifred Gérin, Elizabeth Gaskell, 1976, pp. 42-43).

Now, just as Mrs Gaskell's visit to Paris may have revived old memories, and led her to write My French

Master, so the death in 1858 of Mrs Fletcher (née Dawson), the former society hostess of Edinburgh, who had known her parents and her cousin, may have awakened old memories (as W Gérin suggests, p. 205), and provided the occasion for Round the Sofa. But that the narrator's life reflects Elizabeth Stevenson's seems improbable. The letters to Harriet Carr, recently published by Professor J A V Chapple in vol. 4 of The Gaskell Society Journal, leave no doubt that Elizabeth Stevenson had left Newcastle for Woodside, Birkenhead, several months before cholera reached Newcastle; and, even if she had not, why should she and Ann have been sent to lodge in Edinburgh, when they could have gone to live with Mrs Lumb in Knutsford or Mrs Robberds in Manchester? Moreover, the narrator's life in Edinburgh does not tally with what little we know of Miss Stevenson's. According to Meta Gaskell, her mother stayed with relatives in Edinburgh; and the miniature and the bust of her, executed by well-known artists, suggest an interesting social life. Indeed, this, one feels, is likely. Mrs Gaskell was lucky with her friends and relations. In Newcastle, she lived with the Rev Turner, the very centre of the vigorous intellectual life of the city; and in Paris, she stayed with Mme Mohl, whose salon was frequented by many of the most distinguished writers, thinkers, and scholars of the day. It is hard to believe that her life in Edinburgh did not follow the same pattern.

E L DUTHIE

P J YARROW

\* \* \* \* \*

OUR AGM SPEAKER, Brenda Colloms, is Lecturer & Librarian at the Working Men's College, London. Her other books include Victorian Country Parsons (characters such as Jack Russell, William Barnes etc) and Victorian Visionaries about the Christian Socialist movement, both published by Constable. We look forward to her book on William Johnson Fox and his circle later in the year.

On a warm Sunday afternoon, though thankfully not as overpoweringly hot as it had been, July 22nd, members of the Gaskell Society drove into Manchester to Gt Ancoats Street for a 'Cholera Walk' conducted by fellow member, Blue Badge Guide and historian, Sheila Lemoine, M.A., M.Ed., Dip. in Adult Education. We were rather a disappointingly small band, possible due to holidays - just nine in number - which was a shame as the quality of the occasion was very high.

Sheila had arranged to meet us in 'The Crown and Kettle', a Victorian public house of great interest in itself as it had once been the local magistrates' court and boasted a splendidly ornate ceiling. We were thoughtfully provided with sheets of information on the background to the walk, including maps, and Sheila expanded upon them. In the early nineteenth century, she explained, cholera was not a new phenomenon - we had our own strain and actually called it 'cholera nostra'. But, in 1832, Asiatic cholera reached the shores of England, carried in by a boatman at Sunderland. There was no immunity and the new strain was devastating in its effect. By the May of that year, it had spread to Manchester though it was then considered to have arisen 'upon the spot', the first case being that of James Palfreyman, a 29 year old coach painter.

Much of Sheila's information about the cases came from the biographical notes written by Dr Henry Gaultier, a local physician, attempting not only to treat the patients (though there was little he could do for them) but also to determine the cause. How easy it is for us now to look back in horror, with the benefit of our modern knowledge, and realise that of course it was carried in the water and that lack of sanitation was responsible for its spread! But for Dr Gaultier, in the days when microbes and bacilli were unheard of and microscopes were only poor things which could not see them, how much more difficult it must have been! Yet this dedicated man chronicled in detail each of the first 300 cases he saw, including their previous condition, where they lived, what they had eaten and who



they had seen in an attempt to discover the relevant factors, before he was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of them. His intuition was very close - he made particular note of the fouling of every court by open cesspools.

We set off on our walk - past the old market and across the broad streets built to accommodate six 'lanes' of wagons plying to and from the cotton mills - and soon reached Swan Street. Here an engineering works, fallen into disuse, had been taken over and whitewashed and used as the first hospital. It still stands today though it has returned to a commercial use. Here, so many died and were taken away for communal burial underneath nearby Victoria Station. Coffins were not usual for the poor then but the terror engendered by 'King Cholera' demanded them. Despite these precautions and the use of chloride of lime as a crude antiseptic, nurses (revealed by Dr Gaultier's notes to be of the same general standard as Dickens' Mrs Gamp!) and porters who handled the bodies also died.

Ms Lemoine spoke with an obvious passion for her subject and brought it to life vividly. By the time we reached Angel Street and the site of Woodward's Court, we imagined the smell of the place as well as the tragedy which had wiped out whole pathetic families there. In 1773, the population of Manchester was 48,821. In 1832, it was 142,026. Much of this explosion was contained - if that word can be used at all - in this small area. Houses were back to back, crammed into recesses even in the angles of the filthy courts and severely overcrowded with beds being shared if there were any at all. Abattoirs and tripe-works were based nearby contributing to the general stench. I was much struck with the repeated comment in Dr Gaultier's notes that children, although basically 'healthy', were in a poor condition, starving and half-naked and subject to attacks of diarrhoea, even before the cholera gripped them. The wonder is that so many survived at all, as somehow they did. 674 died in a matter of months and most

significantly in June and July.

Our next stop was the parochial graveyard near the site of St Michael's Church, now gone. The stones have long since been flattened and used as paving but the names and ages remain on the middle-class graves in the superior church graveyard next door. It is an overgrown and strange place now. Within 300 yards of each other, two 'Ragged Schools' still stand. We were reminded that this excess of urban population had never been known before. It was a new problem and here were the visible signs of someone striving to do something about it and an indication of the greatness of the need in their proximity.

Downwards again: underneath Stevenson's Railway, carrying the main line between Yorkshire and Lancashire, where we were invited to imagine the houses, now demolished, crammed in under the bridges and subject to the belching of smuts from steam engines all day long. And finally the River Irk: still flowing beneath the railway and the broad roads constructed overhead, on its way to join the Irwell. It is cleaner today, clean enough to grow long weeds but still choked with litter and harbouring rats, which we saw, and still conveying a chilling sense of evil as it winds through tunnels and conduits built deliberately high to accommodate flooding.

It was here that Friedrich Engels stood on the bridge and formed his thoughts whilst looking down on the crowded hovels of 'Gibraltar'. He of course favoured Communist revolution as the remedy but, in England, it did not happen, possibly due to the sensibility of the need for reform.

We repaired to a pleasant afternoon tea in the Parker's Hotel, a different world indeed, only a street away, and we washed our hands gratefully in the sanitised water provided by the strenuous efforts of local government after the great cholera epidemics. Perhaps not quite the thing for a summer Sunday afternoon's outing? Not a bit of it. We headed home for the comforts of rural Cheshire with more than a slight feeling of awe and the knowledge that it was individuals such as Dr Henry Gaultier and

Mrs Gaskell that had drawn attention to the plight of the working classes in Manchester and, in their own separate ways, had done something about it.

ALISON FOSTER

#### Editor's Note

While Elizabeth Gaskell was writing about the evils of industrial Manchester, William was also working to bring about reform. Catherine Winkworth wrote to her sister Emily (November 22nd 1852, Memorials of Two Sisters, p.93):

'Mr Gaskell is doing a great deal now and is gaining many warm friends in Manchester, particularly among the clergymen, by his activity, good sense, and good temper in two committees. One is for the better regulation of beerhouses and places of public amusement, the other a Sanitary Committee to prepare the town for the next visit of the cholera. (Note the accepted inevitability of this) Both the Dean and Canon Richson are saying everywhere that he is the most valuable member on these committees, and he was invited the other day to the distribution of medical prizes . . . to which no dissenting minister was ever asked before . . . Lily is proud that he is appreciated by people whose appreciation she cares for.'

\* \* \* \* \*

#### A POSSIBLE NEW IMAGE OF MRS GASKELL

About three years ago, several old suitcases of family memorabilia came into my possession.

The cases contained many items which had belonged to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte Brontë's best friend.

A distant relation of mine, Mrs Richard Needham, attended the sale of Miss Nussey's effects at Moor Lane House, Gomersal, in May 1889.

The Brontë Parsonage Museum at Haworth has a catalogue of the house sale which gives details of some of the items bought by Mrs Needham. Catalogue item 192 refers to 14 small & 11 large photographs together with two

sheets of lithograph letters & a drawing of a cockatoo by Emily Brontë.

In one of the suitcases there was a large envelope containing what appears to be some of the above items, one of which is a photograph of a lady who looks convincingly like the known representations of Mrs Gaskell - arched eyebrows, centre hair parting and face shape. I have consulted Mr Colin Harding of the Bradford Photographic Museum about the above photograph and he has confirmed that it is a photographic print of a painting. If this photograph is a representation of Mrs Gaskell then I believe that it has not been seen before.



Mrs Gaskell spent many hours with Ellen Nussey collecting material for her biography of Charlotte Brontë. I can only think that Mrs Gaskell would have given this print to Ellen Nussey who had treasured it and kept it with her other "special" photographs.

AUDREY HALL

Lois the Witch & other stories. Pocket Classics series, Alan Sutton. £3.95.

This publisher continues its policy of producing lesser known works of the major Victorian authors in cheap no frills editions. Already available are the Manchester Marriage and My Lady Ludlow. This volume also contains the Old Nurses Story and The Crooked Branch, The Grey Woman and The Squire's Story. The Grey Woman has not been available in this country since the Knutsford edition of 1908. There are no textual notes and only a three page biographical introduction by Sheila Michell.

The Politics of Story in Victorian Social Fiction by Rosemarie Bodenheimer, Assistant Professor of English at Boston College. Cornell University Press. £20.60.

(The Gaskell sections of this book are based on an article in Nineteenth Century Fiction, 1979).

A discussion of the social problem novel showing how the plot influences social change as much as the proclaimed social intent. The first half deals with women's novels in which middle-class heroines are the instruments of social change. Gaskell's North and South was deliberately written not only as a reaction to criticism of her own Mary Barton but in answer to reservations she had with Brontë's Shirley and is more challenging to traditional conceptions. Two inferior novels are discussed in detail by way of contrast: Elizabeth Stone's William Langshawe: The Cotton Lord and Geraldine Jewsbury's Marian Withers. The second half discusses three social problem novels in which the romantic ideas of nature play an important part in the structure - Oliver Twist, Alton Locke and Ruth. An interesting feature of this book is the use of letters to show how the novels came to be written.

Mutual friends: Charles Dickens and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital by Jules Kosky. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.

Contains some small but new biographical details. Dickens was a patron of Great Ormond Street Hospital and solicited the help of a number of friends and colleagues in fund raising. Mrs Gaskell's involvement came about

through a number of relatives who were already subscribers to the project - Henry Holland, the royal physician, Capt. Frederick Holland R.N. (her cousins) and Dr Samuel Gaskell, her brother-in-law who was on Shaftesbury's Lunacy Commission. There is quite a lot of information about Capt. Holland, who was the son-in-law of Dickens' friend Lord Denman, Lord Chief Justice. He lived at Ashbourne Hall, Derbyshire. Mrs Gaskell made several visits to him in the 1850s, usually following a stay at Lea Hurst, the home of Florence Nightingale who is also discussed in the book.

#### (Editor's Note:

This book has solved a mystery for Professor Chapple and myself, who have been puzzled as to why Captain Holland's photograph was seen by Mrs Gaskell in the Ward Room of the Royal Yacht when she visited Portsmouth in 1861 (GL.484). Captain Denman, commander of the vessel was Holland's brother-in-law. The Denmans were also related to the Brodies with whom ECG spent a happy time at Oxford.)

Living Space in Fact and Fiction by Philippa Tristram. Routledge. £40.00.

A study of the English house as depicted by English novelists from 1740. All classes are represented from Blenheim Palace to the weavers' cottages in Mary Barton. There is also an illustration and description of her drawing room at Plymouth Grove.

The Industrial City, 1820-1870 by Dorothy and Alan Shelston. Macmillan, 1989.

The interesting study by the Journal Editor of the Gaskell Society aims to show how the industrial city has been portrayed in a wide variety of writings not just fiction. Overseas topographical and sociological writers such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Friedrich Engels are treated alongside Dickens, Gaskell and George Eliot. Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool are amongst the cities described. Extensive quotations are used to

emphasise the points. The book is complementary to the address given by the author to the Gaskell Society - Elizabeth Gaskell's Manchester (Gaskell Journal 1989) which was concerned with identifying and verifying Gaskell's descriptions, and, while including some of the same material provides a totally different angle.

A Brontë Diary: a chronological history of the Brontës from 1775 to 1915, by Michael Steed. Dalesman. £7.95. This is a table of events in the family from the meeting of Rev Patrick Brontë's parents to the death of Rev Arthur Nicholl's second wife. There is a Who's Who and over thirty photographs. It is a little confusing to use with three indexes - a topographical index, an index of people which includes several names not in the 'Who's Who' and a general index which includes references to the Brontës as well as those in the index of people. It would also have been useful to indicate which of the letters alluded to in the text have survived. On April 5th 1855 it states that Patrick writes to tell Mrs Gaskell of Charlotte's death with no mention of the fact that on April 4th she had replied to John Greenwood's letter informing her of the news.

Incidentally, Mrs Gaskell's maiden name was spelt Stevenson not Stephenson.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

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#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

Kenn Oultram has produced issue 2 of CHAPTER ONE, the official newsletter of the Alliance. This contains fascinating details of literary events and various societies, in fact essential reading for the literary connoisseur. If you would like a copy, please send 50p (i.e. 2 x 20p coins, 2 x new 5p coins, in strip of sellotape), plus self-addressed label to: Kenn Oultram, Clatterwick Hall, Little Leigh, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 4RJ

On 26th April 1990, three months into research on Mrs Gaskell and the achievement of the work Mary Barton, my search for material led me to Manchester for the third time, to attend the Spring Meeting of the Gaskell Society at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel. I had travelled from Birmingham to hear Dr Chitham's talk on Elizabeth Stevenson's education - some clues here perhaps to her extraordinary talent?

Prior to the meeting proper was a short Unitarian service to commemorate the newly-opened Gaskell room. This short service, led by Rev Denise Boyd, was my introduction to the non-conformist faith of Mrs Gaskell. It proved to be most revealing and enlightening: the intellectual content, the appeal for the love of learning and literature, the absence of ritual, a prayer shared without the need to clasp hands, bow heads or close eyes, the manner in which the service was led by an "unfrocked" lady minister - all this created an ethos indicating the special nature of the theology of Unitarianism, and the murmurings of its significance upon, not only Mrs Gaskell's actions and thought, but also her writing, began to stir in my mind. From this point, my study focused upon Unitarianism, and firm links began to emerge between her faith and her art in the work Mary Barton.

How then did Unitarianism, for which it remained a legal offence to openly confess belief until 1813, differ from orthodox Christianity? The weekly periodical for the religion was entitled 'The Inquirer' and this implies a questioning, intellectual response to religious thought. Rational thought and the quest for religious truth led the founding fathers to find the Trinitarian formula an impossible one, and in consequence the doctrine derived from it was equally invalid.<sup>1</sup> They rejected the Trinity and Divinity of Christ, whilst emphasising the simple humanity of Christ and his witness to the truth. Coral Lansbury (75) is particularly helpful in her explanation of Unitarianism. She states:

"Their theology was an optimistic affirmation of man as a rational being who could ultimately attain a perfect state in this world without

recourse to marvels and miracles. Further, they were untouched by the struggle between science and Christian doctrine ... they gladly espoused the cause of the apes as further proof of man's capacity to evolve by reason and by will."<sup>2</sup>

So at a time of religious doubt, Unitarians stood firm in their beliefs: the new science held no threat for them, it merely confirmed and strengthened their convictions.

Theirs was a particularly tolerant religion: as such Unitarians did not attack traditional doctrines, whilst insisting that no doctrine was too sacred to be questioned.<sup>3</sup> Additionally it was marked by forward thought in the search for religious truth, the areas of education, gender discrimination and emancipation for women. By mid-nineteenth century, they abandoned belief in the infallibility of the Bible. Accompanying the questioning, scientific attitude towards religious truth, was a marked independence of mind, and a belief that people must be free to work out their own salvation. Unlike mainstream Christianity, they were not over-preoccupied with the life to come, but rather sought to improve life on earth. So that whilst contemporary attitudes allowed men to quote the Bible and say 'the poor will always be with us', seeing the problem as inevitable, Unitarians refused to accept this logic, arguing that God had given each human reasoning powers which could be put to use in improving his fellow man's lot.

While freedom, reason and tolerance was the motto for their faith, theirs was also an active religion - they believed actions were stronger than words. Unitarians were at the forefront of social reform, and many a mechanic institute was founded by these active philanthropists, whilst ragged schools for children of the very poor were pioneered by Unitarians.<sup>4</sup> Education was a major Unitarian concern long before there was a national system of education. The enlightened views of the Unitarians led them to believe education was the right of every human being, male and female.<sup>5</sup> They

sought good education for their daughters, a most uncommon attitude in Victorian days. As a result, Unitarian women did not suffer the social and cultural deprivation known to most Victorian women. Because of their emancipated attitudes, Unitarians attracted to their ranks a number of eminent women, amongst them Frances Power-Cobbe, the greatest feminist campaigner of the century, Barbara Leigh Smith who in 1855 set up the first Feminist Committee to campaign for Women's Property Rights, and ten years later, the Woman's Suffrage Committee. Eliza Fox, Barbara Bodichon, Harriet Martineau, Emily Shaen and Florence Nightingale were all Unitarians of varying degrees of faith.<sup>6</sup> Another demonstration of their liberal thought was that they were the first denomination in Britain to accept women into the ministry.<sup>7</sup>

This impressive list of firsts enables us to understand the dynamics of belonging to such a church, a church at variance with mainstream religion, and at the forefront of modern thought. Whilst rationality was at the centre of Mrs Gaskell's religion, she was at the centre of Unitarianism, through birth, marriage and geography.

The attributes of this active faith, namely realism, rationality, independent thought, belief in the individual, tolerance and optimism were all headed by a quest for the truth. 'Truth to a Unitarian was the torch that would eventually illuminate the whole of mankind.'<sup>8</sup> Mrs Gaskell, moving between the world of the poor and the privileged world of her class was aware of the truth and beauty in the lives of the working classes, unknown to the middle classes. In a letter to Mary Howitt, she comments:

"We have such a district, and we constantly meet with examples of the beautiful truth in that passage of 'The Cumberland Beggar'.<sup>9</sup>

Adhering to the truth for a Unitarian involves a refreshingly honest depiction of all aspects under consideration, and where scholars have often described Mrs Gaskell as authentic or realistic, they have missed the all-pervading nature of this quest for truth, I feel.

In addition, I believe it is possible to make strong links between the features of Unitarianism named above, and the work of Mary Barton, and this I have attempted to do in a study entitled The Impact of Unitarianism on the Work of Work of Mary Barton by Mrs E Gaskell, prepared for the Humanities Department of Birmingham Polytechnic for fourth year B.Ed. Hons. studies, and now submitted to Alan Shelston at the University of Manchester.

SYLVIA KIRBY  
Birmingham Polytechnic  
July 1990

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If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 0565 4668)



Ashbourne Hall, 1839.

(see Book Notes p.19)



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held on SATURDAY 27th SEPTEMBER 1986  
at La Belle Epoque, Gaskell Memorial Tower,  
King Street, Knutsford

Programme

12.30 for 1.00 pm

3 course lunch - £5 payable in advance  
(please reply by 16th September)

2.30 pm

A.G.M. Election of officers; annual report,  
discussion and plans for the Society

3.00 pm approx

Address by Professor J. A. V. Chapple:  
'Elizabeth Gaskell and her father'

Tea and talk if desired

SUNDAY 28th SEPTEMBER

11.30 am

Members will be welcome to attend Brook  
Street Chapel Harvest Festival Service

2.30 pm

Assemble outside 'Heathwaite', Gaskell Avenue,  
for a guided Cranford Walk, finishing at  
Brook Street where tea will be available.

An exhibition of Gaskell Illustrators will be on view  
after both meetings, at the schoolroom, Brook Street

Several of our members will be staying, for one or  
two nights, over 27/28th September at Longview Hotel,  
Manchester Road, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0LX  
Tel: 0565 2119. Prices begin at £18 per single  
room for Bed and Breakfast. All rooms have radio  
and tea/coffee making facilities.

-oOo-

Comments, contributions and suggestions welcomed by  
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# The Gaskell Society



BROOK ST. CHAPEL  
and  
Mrs. Gaskell's Grave.

## NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1986

NO. 2

SECRETARY'S LETTER

As our first year is nearly completed, the time has come to review progress. I think the advent of our Society has been widely welcomed and well supported, interest being shown around the world. Our membership is growing steadily and will go on increasing with better publicity; our future activities depend on good support.

Our first newsletter seems to have been enjoyed so, I hope, will this second edition. Consideration must be given to an academic journal allowing scholars and students to publish their research material and essays; this would be expensive and might have to be occasional rather than annual.

Nearly sixty members met at 84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester, the Gaskell's home now used by The International Society, for our spring meeting on April 26th. The last Saturdays in April and September for our meetings seem to suit most people, but please make your wishes known at the AGM if you are not in agreement.

It was a great pleasure to meet at Plymouth Grove and to hear Geoffrey Sharps' talk about his experiences in study and research for his book, *MRS GASKELL'S OBSERVATION AND INVENTION* (Linden Press 1970). I hope to have our year's lectures printed at the end of the year. At this meeting we adopted a constitution and elected a committee with Professor Arthur Pollard as President, Professor Francesco Marroni as Vice-President (he is doing sterling work as our Italian ambassador to Mrs Gaskell!), Dr Ken Walley as Chairman, and J. G. Sharps as Vice-Chairman. Also on our committee are:

Mrs Mary Thwaite, librarian of the Gaskell  
Collection at Brook Street Chapel  
Kenn Oultram, founding secretary of the Lewis  
Carroll and Randolph Caldecott Societies  
Mrs I. Stevenson ) joint treasurers  
Mrs B. Kinder )  
Miss M. Leighton, Manchester University Student  
and myself as Secretary

For help and advice with Manchester meetings we have:  
Miss Christine Lingard, sub-librarian,



Manchester City Library, Language and  
Literature Department

Mrs Marion Arnold of The International Society, and  
Mrs Janet Allen of the Portico Library, Manchester

Our summer outing was most enjoyable; now I am researching  
the Gaskell connections with North Wales for next summer.  
I hope to trace their honeymoon tracks and ride on the  
Festiniog Railway, mainly instigated by Samuel Holland  
for his slate quarries. Look out your climbing boots  
and start rallying your friends - perhaps we could  
charter a train!

JOAN LEACH

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#### AN AFTERNOON WITH THE GASKELLS

By special request of Friends of The Royal Exchange  
Theatre Society:

'AN AFTERNOON WITH THE GASKELLS', readings  
from the letters and works of Mrs Gaskell,  
presented by Barbara Brill with Joe Tindsley  
and Mary Humphries.

At Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, at 4.30 pm on

SUNDAY 21st SEPTEMBER

Admission 50p. Pay at the door or by reserved  
advance ticket from Mrs J Leach, Far Yew Tree House,  
Over Tabley, Knutsford WA16 0HN

(Editor's note: Many of our members participated in  
this last year and may wish to come again and bring  
friends)

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#### JOB LEGH AND THE WORKING MEN NATURALISTS

"Learned he was; nor bird, nor insect flew,  
But he its leafy home and history knew;  
Nor wild-flower decked the rock, nor moss the well,  
But he its name and qualities could tell."

ELLIOTT

This verse heads the chapter 'The Mill on Fire' in MARY  
BARTON in which Mary meets for the first time Job Legh,  
the working man naturalist. Mrs Gaskell opens the chapter  
with an account of the enthusiasm shown by many Manchester  
working men in natural history and goes on to cite  
instances she has heard, of those who had acquired  
particular skills in such complex studies as the families  
of Ephemeridae and Phryganidae (may flies and caddis  
flies). She relates an anecdote told in the preface to  
THE LIFE OF SIR J. E. SMITH (founder of the Linnean  
Society of London) who was advised by William Roscoe  
(president of the Liverpool Botanic committee) to seek  
information he needed about the habitat of a rare plant,  
from a handloom weaver in Manchester. When Sir J. E. Smith  
arrived in Manchester by boat from Liverpool and inquired  
from the porter carrying his luggage if he could direct  
him to the botanist the man told him he was a close friend  
and they were fellow botanists, and he himself could give  
him the information about the plant.

I read this chapter with particular interest when I read  
MARY BARTON for the first time 25 years ago. I was at  
the time doing some private research for my own satis-  
faction into the lives of the working men botanists of  
Victorian times. As a lover of wild flowers but not a  
serious botanist I had been thumbing through  
Lord de Tabley's FLORA OF CHESHIRE (1899) and found among  
the list of acknowledgements to those who had helped him  
acquire specimens and verify habitats, were the names of  
several Lancashire men in humble life. They captured my  
imagination and I went on to read more about them in A  
BOTANICAL GUIDE TO FLOWERING PLANTS FOUND WITHIN 16 MILES  
OF MANCHESTER by Richard Buxton (1849), MANCHESTER WALKS  
AND WILD FLOWERS (1852) and COUNTRY RAMBLES (1882), both  
by Leo H. Grindon, and WHEN THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY

by James Cash (c.1878). I tracked down obituary notices and records of botanical societies and field clubs. I found myself wandering round overgrown churchyards, peering for names on lichen-covered gravestones. I visited St George's Church in Hulme, Manchester, and found the very handsome tablet erected in memory of Edward Hobson, 1782-1830, renowned for his knowledge of mosses, and where recorded on stone are the words:

'Humble parentage had afforded him scanty education and the necessary support of numerous family demanded his daily labour. Yet amidst privations and difficulties he had by patient assiduity and fervent zeal rendered himself a skilful naturalist as his scientific works and ample collections lastingly justify.'

I went into the churchyard but was unable to find his grave nor that of his friend, James Crowther, who died 17 years later and at his special request was buried beside Hobson.

Crowther was born in a cellar in Deansgate in 1768, the youngest of 7 children, and had only three years' schooling, starting work as a draw-boy for petticoat weaving at the age of 9. Soon after starting work he was taken to a meeting of the Eccles Botanical Society, one of the earliest, where he met many enthusiastic naturalists and thus began his lifelong interest. He was tireless in his search for specimens and was much loved by his fellows, but never attained their skills in recording and cataloguing the plants he gathered so diligently and was described as 'not learned but very loving'. He went out into the fields and lanes after long days in the weaving shed, staying out so late that on one occasion he was caught with a dredging net in search of water plants at Tatton Mere by the gamekeeper and suspected of poaching. He was able to prove to Mr Egerton that he was plant-hunting and was given permission thereafter to go wherever he liked on the Tatton estate.

He married and had six children but always lived on low wages, and never spent any of his earnings on his botanical pursuits, but earned extra money by working additional hours as a porter for passengers arriving at Knott Mill from Liverpool.

This is the story of James Crowther as told by James Cash and surely he is the botanist to whom Mrs Gaskell refers. He died the year before MARY BARTON was published, so would never have seen the reference to himself. In his last illness he was in need of a nourishing diet beyond the family purse, but he was made an allowance of 3/- a week from the Society for the Relief and Encouragement of Scientific Men in Humble Life founded by Mr Binney in 1843, certainly a society with which the Gaskells would have been sympathetic.

To round off this comment on Mrs Gaskell and the botanists, I must refer to the circumstances that led me to read MARY BARTON in the first instance. Among the secondhand books I obtained during my researches in the 1960s was an 1879 copy of BEN BRIERLEY'S JOURNAL, and in the column 'Chat round the Table' I read 'A field naturalist writes: "Readers of Mrs Gaskell's MARY BARTON will recollect the powerful picture of Job Legh the botanist weaver. This portrait is so lifelike that many must have conjectured as to which of the artizan botanists had come under the notice of the gifted novelist. Perhaps some of your readers may be able to say."' But no suggestions were forthcoming in subsequent columns.

A novelist of Mrs Gaskell's skill does not draw her characters directly from life, but takes different characteristics from many individuals and welds them into a new and original personality. The description of Job Legh as 'a little wiry man ... with dun-coloured hair lying thin and soft at the back and sides of his head ... his forehead so large ... the absence of all the teeth ... the eyes ... so keen, so observant ... were almost wizard-like' matches closely with a daguerreotype of Richard Buxton taken in 1851 which I have; but this man, author of BUXTON'S GUIDE, was more at home with books and field studies than with the

preparation and stuffing of animals for display in glass cases, as Job is described as working at during Mary's first meeting with him. Jethro Tinker of Stalybridge (1788-1871) was the expert on the preparing of collections, but he was a tall upright man whose early life was spent watching sheep on the moors in Longdendale. The humour that Job Legh displays when he tells the tale of his journey from London with his baby grandchild was an attribute of George Crozier (died 1847), shop assistant in Shudehill, ornithologist and entomologist, who was merry and fond of a joke, but he was tall and patriarchal with a flowing white beard. It seems that Job was a composite portrait created by Mrs Gaskell from her knowledge of this fraternity, much of it no doubt gleaned from her husband, William, who spent many evenings lecturing at working men's clubs and knew of their thirst for knowledge.

My interest in these nature-lovers has never waned, and I am grateful that through my early readings about them I was introduced to Job Legh and so to MARY BARTON and took the first steps towards becoming a Gaskellian.

BARBARA BRILL

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#### MASTERMIND

I am sure most of you admired Jennifer Keaveney's brilliant performance in winning this year's contest with 'Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works' as her special subject. Mrs Keaveney wrote to me, saying that she admired Mrs Gaskell's writing which was why she chose this subject, but having to re-read and study for the contest made her appreciation even greater. She is pleased to become a member.

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#### SOME BOOK NOTES

Mrs Gaskell's TALES OF MYSTERY AND HORROR; edited by Michael Ashley. Gollancz. 1978

This interesting collection of seven of Mrs Gaskell's more fantastical and macabre tales is now out-of-print, but it is pleasing to report that a copy has just been donated to the "Whitfield" collection at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, by Mrs Christine Kloet, a member of Gollancz staff.

In a short introduction, Michael Ashley traces Mrs Gaskell's place in horror fiction from its beginnings and the "Gothic" novel, and he expresses his opinion that her "prime contribution to the genre of the horror-story was her ability to describe the emotions and feelings of her characters, to emphasise the personal as opposed to the scientific aspects of the supernatural ..."

The book may claim to be important for its inclusion of Mrs Gaskell's story, THE CROOKED BRANCH, as it was first printed in the 1859 Christmas issue of ALL THE YEAR ROUND. Dickens had planned a ghost-story cycle for his magazine, on the theme "The Haunted House", each room being haunted by a ghost who tells a story. He changed the title therefore of Mrs Gaskell's contribution to "The Ghost in the Garden Room", added a prologue, and made other slight alterations to fit his purpose. These additions were deleted when it was later reprinted, and the author's original title, THE CROOKED BRANCH, was restored. This present collection edited by Ashley seems to be the only edition which has reprinted the original version as it first appeared as "The Ghost in the Garden Room."

The other tales in the volume are: "The Old Nurse's Story"; "The Squire's Story"; "The Scholar's Story" (a translation in verse by William Gaskell from the French, for which Mrs Gaskell wrote the introduction when it appeared in the Christmas issue of HOUSEHOLD WORDS in 1853); "The Doom of the Griffiths"; "Lois the Witch"; "Curious if True".

POCKET CLASSICS, published by Alan Sutton Publishing Co.

Under "New Publications" in the first Newsletter details were given of two Gaskell titles just issued in this new series of POCKET CLASSICS. One of these, MY LADY LUDLOW, was found to be imperfect, with the last page or pages of the introduction missing. Copies have been withdrawn from booksellers and an amended edition is expected shortly. The text of the story is itself complete - the fault is only in the preliminary pages. If you have an imperfect copy your supplier should be able to change it when the reprint is available.

(Editor: Jardine's Bookshop, Knutsford, has the faulty edition on sale at only 95p, instead of £2.95. These will be available at the next meeting or by post from me at £1.30)

ELIZABETH GASKELL by Tessa Brodetsky. (Berg Women's Series) Berg Publishers Ltd, Leamington Spa. 1986. £3.95 (paperback) ISBN 0-907582-83-4

This work just published, by Tessa Brodetsky, is an excellent, easy-to-read, short outline of Mrs Gaskell's writings, set against the background of her life and times. Tessa Brodetsky shows how the novelist combined being "A model par-excellence of a Victorian middle-class woman" with a creativity, ability and a literary output which were long under-rated. It is refreshing to have an account that presents the novels and stories so descriptively, with many quotations, and the book should be welcome as a useful and attractive introduction for the general reader and the student, who may be unfamiliar with novels of a power and variety that range far beyond the popular, endearing CRANFORD which has perpetuated, even obscured, Mrs Gaskell's fame since it first appeared in 1853.

After a chapter on Mrs Gaskell's life and its setting, we are taken through the novels in sequence of their appearance, from "The Industrial Scene - MARY BARTON" to her "Mature Accomplishment - WIVES AND DAUGHTERS".

One chapter deals with her many shorter tales, concentrating on four contrasted and important contributions - HALF A LIFE-TIME AGO, MY LADY LUDLOW, LOIS THE WITCH, and COUSIN PHILLIS (here for me put too much on a level with the others). That on "The Life of Charlotte Bronte" must have been one of the most difficult, but Tessa Brodetsky makes both the biographer and the subject come alive in her perceptive resume. A final "Retrospect" assesses Elizabeth Gaskell's contribution to literature in relation to her strongly held convictions and values, and compares her with her outstanding contemporaries, claiming for her a place "among the important rather than the minor, novelists of her period".

The book is illustrated with four portraits and eleven photographs of places associated with Mrs Gaskell's life and works. A minor query arises here. Was not the drawing of Haworth Church and Parsonage (p.69) the work of Meta Gaskell, not that of her mother?

MARY THWAITE

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Roy Charnock, a member who deals in antiquarian books, would be pleased to buy World Classic editions of the following, offering at least £10 each:

168	Cousin Phillis
175	Lizzie Leigh
203	Right at Last
190	Round the Sofa
88	Ruth

Roy's address:

83 Croft Road  
Swindon  
Wiltshire  
SN1 3DN

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### MRS GASKELL'S COUNTRY HOUSES

Elizabeth Gaskell loved the English countryside all her life, and died in her own just-purchased country house in Hampshire. Her visits to the country houses of others are therefore of particular interest to Gaskellians, and may also lead to identifications of sources for houses in her fiction. In attempting to compile a directory of such houses with descriptions of them, I have found only partial information in some cases. Listed below are three houses and what information I have gleaned about them; if members of the Society have knowledge of their locations, present status (destroyed, in private ownership, in institutional use, open to the public?) and/or their architecture and construction dates, I would be very glad to learn of it through Newsletter replies.

BOUGHTON HOUSE, Worcestershire. When Elizabeth Gaskell visited her cousin Charlotte Holland Isaac at Boughton in 1850, she reported, "This last experience of country air has done me so much good - I am a different creature to what I am in Manchester." (LETTERS OF MRS GASKELL, 1966, Nos. 86, 297, cited hereafter as G.L.). Penguin's BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND volume for Worcestershire contains no Boughton, nor does BURKE'S AND SAVILL'S GUIDE TO COUNTRY HOUSES, vol.II, covering Worcestershire. Mrs Gaskell's Boughton should not be confused with the immense establishment of the Duke of Buccleuch in Northamptonshire, which has the same name. The address Mrs Gaskell gives is "J. Whitmore Isaac's Esq, Boughton near Worcester". John Bartholomew's IMPERIAL MAP OF ENGLAND AND WALES ACCORDING TO THE ORDNANCE SURVEY, 1860?, sheet 11, shows it to the southwest of Worcester.

HULME WALFIELD, Cheshire. Elizabeth Gaskell stayed with the Edward Wilmots December 7th 1852, and wrote to her daughter Marianne, "This house is a large one and full of people; it stands just about Congleton and must be very pretty in fine weather." (G.L. 144)

THE PARK, near Manchester, Lancashire. Elizabeth Gaskell attended a dance at The Park in 1852, and wrote to her daughter Meta about it.

"Friday evening we took Hannah to the Park dance. A large house with very small rooms but any number of them. There were nearly 300 there ... There was a crush and crowd into supper. Mrs Schwabe and I tried 3 times before we got in; it was such a little room. The hosts were two Mr Philips ... very kind and good natured not very gentlemanly ... we came home about 3, found Hearn up, had tea and went very fresh to bed to get up with an awful headache yesterday." (G.L. 118a, letter of 28th March 1852.)

The two Mr Philips were brothers and both members of Parliament; Robert N. Philips owned The Park, while Mark Philips (1800-1873) was supposedly Disraeli's model for Mr Millbank, the industrialist in CONINGSBY. The evening after the dance, Mrs Gaskell reported in the same letter, she went to an affair given by the Fairbairns, and Mark Philips took her in to dinner; she said the occasion was "rather flat" because there were too many Fairbairns present.

### JANICE KIRKLAND

(Editor's note: 'The Park' was described by Leo Grindon in 'Country Rambles and Manchester Walks and Wild Flowers' (1882):

'The private grounds are exceedingly pretty and sylvan and up to about half a century ago were used as pheasant preserves ... they are not forbidden to legitimate and respectful request made a few days previously, with the understanding that there shall be no trowels carried.'

The author of this article, Janice Kirkland, is a college librarian in Bakersfield, California. She also wrote details of Sandlebridge, which will be the subject of a further article in a later edition.)

MRS GASKELL'S CHESHIRESummer Outing - June 29th 1986

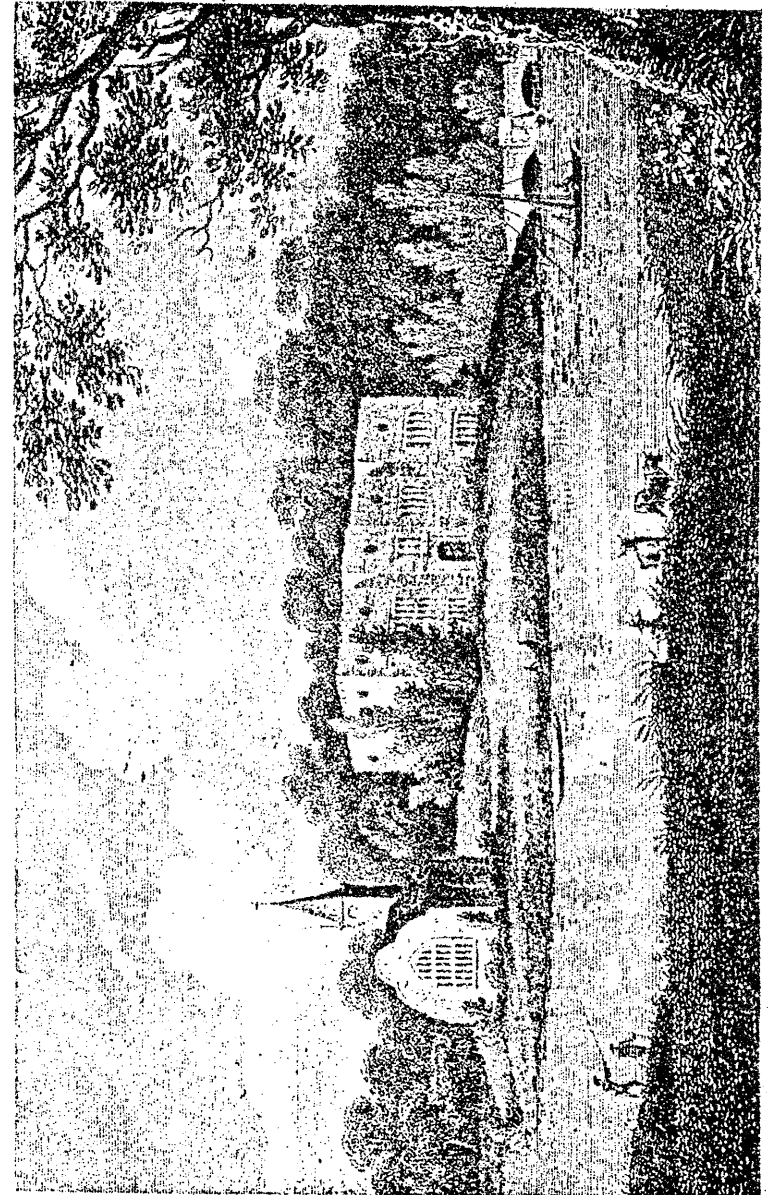
'I was brought up in a little country town, and it is my lot now to live in or rather on the borders of a great manufacturing town, but when spring days first come and the bursting leaves and sweet, earthy smells tell me that 'Somer is ycomen in', I feel a stirring instinct and long to be off into the deep grassy solitudes of the country' (G.L.8)

This letter to William and Mary Howitt, dated May 1838, expressing Elizabeth Gaskell's deep love of the countryside, continued with memories of 'happy scenes' which she recalled from her childhood. Members of our Society set out by coach on a lovely June afternoon to visit scenes she knew and to evoke the spirit of her times.

It was from Knutsford, 'the little, clean, kindly town', that we set out, though our party did not, as did that in 'Mr Harrisc 's Confessions' (Chap.V), bring the shopkeepers and cottagers to their doors pleased 'to see the cavalcade gathering'. Our destination was the same: Tabley Park.

In her letter to the Howitts, Mrs Gaskell described the 'old house with a moat within a park called Old Tabley, formerly the dwelling place of Sir Peter Leycester, the historian of Cheshire, and accounted a very fine specimen of the Elizabethan style. It is beautifully kept by its owner, who lives at a new house built about half a mile off ...' The Leicester family had been settled at Tabley from 1272 until the last of the line died unmarried in 1976. The moated hall built in 1380 retained its stone flagged, galleried hall even after Sir Peter restored it with a Jacobean style front in 1671; sadly it is now only a ruin, too dangerous to be viewed, since subsidence in the 1920s caused its collapse.

So it was only in imagination that we could follow Elizabeth to the island where, with her friends, she 'rambled, lounged and meditated; some stretched on the



TABLEY HOUSE AND CHAPEL

grass in indolent repose half reading, half musing ... lulled by the ripple of the waters against the grassy lawn ... and when the meal was spread beneath a beech tree of no ordinary size ... one of us would mount up a ladder and toll the bell to call the wanderers home' (G.L.8). We were able to sit in this selfsame chapel as we read her letter, for it has been rebuilt adjoining Tabley House, the Leicester's later home. Sir Peter, who built the chapel in 1675, suffered for his royalist allegiance in the Civil War but found consolation in compiling a Cheshire history, 'rescuing the monuments of antiquity from the rubbish of devouring time'. In his neat handwriting the accounts of the chapel building are still preserved - '60 trees fallen for the Roofe of my Chappell ... paid to John Broderick the joyner for the pulpit and railles £10'. This pulpit with its sounding board above was a little too lofty for me to stand in while reading Mrs Gaskell's memories of Old Tabley.

Our chairman, Dr Walley, has known this chapel for longer than he cares to tell as he was baptised here when his father farmed on the estate; it is still used for occasional services such as Harvest Festival, though not in the traditional 'Tabley Chapel Style' - a local saying, after the second Lord de Tabley decreed that men needed a rest from women for an hour each week so in chapel they sat on opposite, facing sides.

A door from the chapel leads into the Old Hall Room where some of the furniture and fittings have been lovingly installed; pictures around the walls show the carved, painted fireplace as it used to be and the enamelled glass windows with coats of arms. We could see them in their new position, look at the pictures around us and recall Mrs Gaskell's description - 'It was galleried with oak settles and old armour hung up and a painted window from ceiling to floor. The strange sound our voices had in that unfrequented stone hall! One or two of Shakespeare's ballads: 'Blow, blow thou winter wind' and 'Hark, hark the lark at heaven's gate sings' etc. were sung by the musical sisters in the gallery above and by two other musical sisters (Mary and Ellen Needham) standing in the hall below.'

Mary Needham had another role to play and we were to 'meet' her later as Mrs Gaskell did.

After walking by the waterside of the old hall and peering across the waterlilies to catch a glimpse of the Old Hall ruins, we left Tabley for Over Peover Church close to the hall of the Mainwaring family. All that remains of them are some splendid marble effigies in the small church where, on 'the twenty-fifth Day of Novem'ber in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety Seven ... appeared personally William Stevenson of the Shire of Mid Lothian in the Kingdom of Scotland Farmer and being sworn on the Holy Evangelists, alledged and made Oath as follows That he is of the Age of twenty-one Years and upwards and a batchelor and intends to marry Elizabeth Holland'.

Our drive to Over Peover Hall and church took as past 'The Whipping Stocks' Inn, once 'The Mainwaring Arms'. In describing Molly Gibson's drive to Hamley Hall (Wives and Daughters) Mrs Gaskell mentions 'the little inn' and the wooden stocks close by the gate, then the drive through the meadow grass to the red-brick hall. It seems the Hamley Hall bore some resemblance to Over Peover where the Mainwarings were so proud of their ancient lineage as to go to law with Sir Peter Leicester over a slight on their ancestor in his history book. The fictional Hamleys were just as proud of their ancestry. Roger Hamley might have been proud too, of the beautiful gardens which the present owner, Mr Randle Brookes, allowed us to saunter through, with hornbeam and lime avenues, herb garden, rose arbours and lily ponds.

Our next call was Capesthorne Hall, which Mrs Gaskell knew over a long period.

12th May 1836

'I rode 18 miles that day and lunched at Mr Davenport's at Capesthorne, such a beautiful place - not the house which is rather shabby but the views from the park' (G.L.14). It is not shabby now but a stately home welcoming visitors and sustaining us with cups of tea.

26th November 1849 (to Eliza Fox)

'Monday I go to Mrs Davenport's, Capesthorne - a place



for an artist to be in - old hall, galleries, old paintings etc, and such a dame of a lady to grace them: you would long to sketch her, it and them.' In a later letter she wrote - 'I admire Mrs Davenport more the more I see of her. She is such a queenly woman' (G.L.105). Mrs Davenport became Lady Hatherton on her remarriage, visiting the Gaskells in Manchester and continuing the friendship when she moved to Teddesley Park, Staffordshire.

In the saloon at Capesthorne we were able to see a portrait of her and of her son, Arthur. I wonder if the two mothers ever discussed their children? Arthur seems to have been a problem child from reading the Stanley of Alderley letters<sup>1</sup>. In 1846 his father was writing to the Times 'showing up' Dr Vaughan, headmaster of Harrow who had flogged his son, who was described as 'sulky, morose and ill disposed'. He did not improve and his engagement to a beautiful, titled but poor girl when he was known to be frequently drunk caused much talk.

'November 1857 Arthur Davenport got beastly drunk at the Wrexham Ball and was carried out of the room after having insulted the Duke of Montrose and yet he will give him his daughter! I never knew a more dreadful sacrifice at the altar of Mammon. How difficult it is to congratulate Lady Hatherton properly.' It was believed that the Montrose family hoped that Arthur would quickly drink himself to death, leaving a rich widow to make more satisfactory arrangements. The wedding was called off as a result of Arthur's excesses and he died unmarried at the age of 35, having managed to burn down the central part of Capesthorne a few years before.

I am sure Mrs Gaskell must have been familiar with the Davenport family history. A fine Romney portrait of Arthur's grandmother was sold to the National Gallery in Washington for £60,000 in 1926. She was the lady, who

<sup>1</sup>'The Ladies of Alderley' (Letters from 1841-50)

'The Stanleys of Alderley' (Letters from 1951-65)

Edited by Nancy Milford, published by Hamish Hamilton:

having been bored by her chaplain's sermon one Sunday, said to him the following week, 'We will not trouble you for a further discourse this morning'. Readers of 'My Lady Ludlow' will recall that aristocratic lady using almost the same words.

While staying at Capesthorne Mrs Gaskell had discussed Charlotte Bronte with Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, who arranged for the two writers to meet at Briery Close. Mrs Gaskell wrote of the planned meeting (G.L.72) May 14th 1850 'I am half amused to find you think I could do her good ... I never feel as if I could do any one any good ... I should like to know her very much.' She also wrote to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth about the pro-worker bias of 'Mary Barton' (G.L.72a) 'I know and have always owned that I have represented but one side of the question and no one would welcome more than I should, a true and earnest representation of the other side ... I believe that there is much to be discovered yet as to the right position and mutual duties of employer and employed; ... I think the best and most benevolent employers would say how difficult they, with all their experience, found it to unite theory and practice. I am sure Mr Sam Greg would ...'

Mrs Gaskell often went on to visit Samuel Greg at Bollington after visiting Capesthorne, so we followed in her footsteps. She must have known the Greg family since childhood when her Uncle, Peter Holland was doctor to the apprentices at Styal Mill which provided better conditions than the Manchester cotton mills. Samuel Greg's unitarian beliefs, allied to astute business ability, helped him to found a successful, humanitarian factory system owning mills at Styal and Bury; his son, Samuel (1804-1876) was more of an idealist and less of a business man. At Bollington he tried to set up an ideal mill community which he named 'Goldenthal', that is 'Happy Valley'. He wrote to the inspector of taxes that he aimed 'to show to my people and to others that there is nothing in the nature of their employment or in the condition of their humble lot that condemns them to be rough, vulgar, ignorant, miserable or poor; there is nothing forbids them to be well-bred, well-informed, well-mannered and



and surrounded by every comfort and enjoyment that can make life happy'. Believing this fervently, he built schools, library and reading room, rebuilt the stone cottages with gardens, paying gardeners to help maintain them and even had a dormitory and playroom attached to the mill. It was, as Mrs Gaskell wrote 'a stinging grief to him' (G.L.72a) when his workers 'surprised and grieved him by a turnout' when he attempted to introduce a new type of machinery for stretching cloth. He had believed that such a relationship existed between himself and his workers that they could discuss problems and not resort to strikes. It was, to him, a betrayal of his trust; thereafter he never went in the mill again, his health suffered and he even considered emigrating to New Zealand! (G.L.114). The family rallied round with financial support and, for a time, William Rathbone Greg took over the management, before leaving the business of cotton mills for journalism. Mrs Gaskell certainly thought this story needed to be told and it must have influenced her in writing 'North and South', though Samuel Greg's character, idealistic, religious and sensitive, did not resemble that of John Thornton.

Samuel Greg's home at Bollington Cross is today a nursing home approached from a steep, narrow lane by an attractive, curving drive which our coach driver negotiated with great skill, driving backwards as there was no room to turn in the lane. Mrs Gaskell accompanied by Florence in 1847 arrived in a 'fly', 'a word which puzzled Florence extremely; and which she talked about for an hour I think ... when we got here Mrs Greg was busy and Mr Greg was resting (it must have been soon after his disaster) so we were shown into a charming bedroom with a fire in it and Mrs Greg came very soon to us with her little boy' (G.L.21). The two ladies might well have reminisced about Tabley because Mrs Greg was one of the 'musical sisters', Mary Needham. No doubt she soothed her husband's troubles, surrounding him with a happy family of seven children.

Florence enjoyed making 'friends with the little

ones ... and wanted to be dressed so early this morning - long before it was light that she might be ready to see the garden which delights her.'

These gardens were carefully planted and tended by Samuel Greg, though the sight of his mill in the valley below must have saddened him. The Lowerhouse mill was our last call; today it is a paper mill in a pleasant, semi-rural spot, stone-built like the workers cottages close by, still bearing the imprint of Samuel Greg's hand.

In our progress through Cheshire in Mrs Gaskell's wake we read excerpts of her letters and mingled history with literature on a very pleasant June afternoon. I hope I have managed to put something of this on paper for those of you who were unable to accompany us, to follow in imagination.

JOAN LEACH

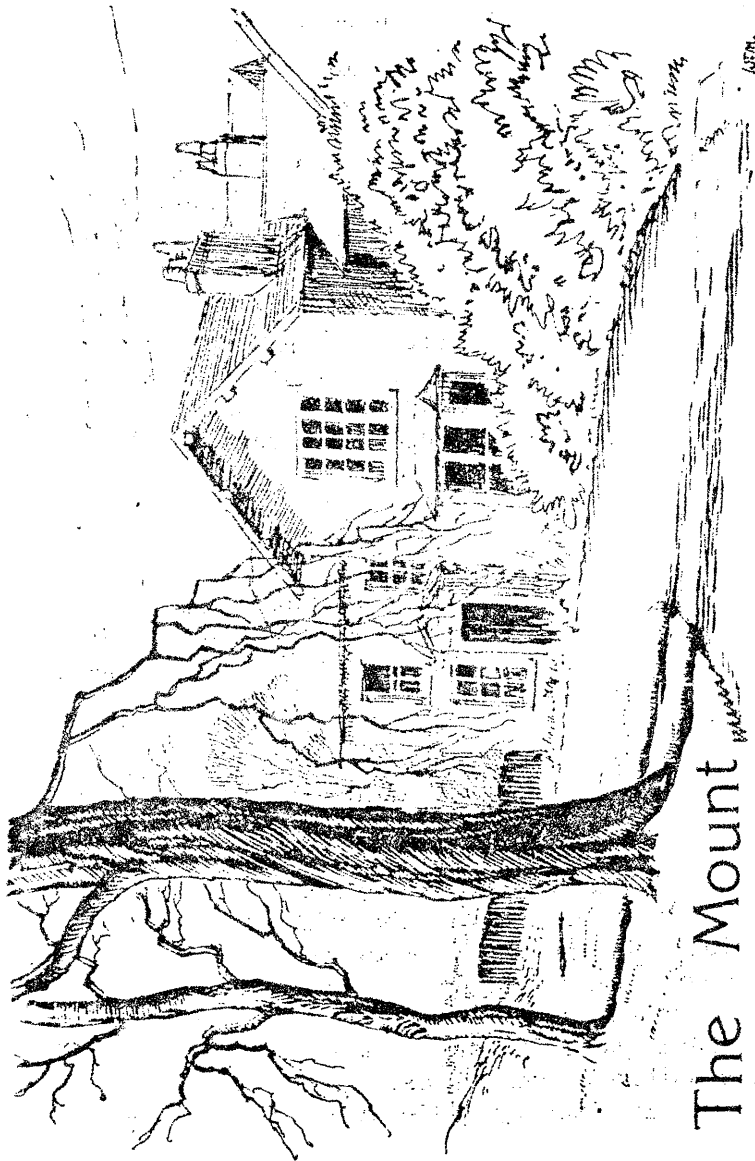
Acknowledgements for details of Samuel Greg to 'Portrait of a Village. The Happy Valley' by Margaret Ingram, illustrated by W. Stirling Martin

-oOo-

#### LETTERS MAKE NEWS

At Sotheby's auction recently three of Mrs Gaskell's letters were bought for £670 by Manchester City Library. These are not in the collected letters and are of considerable social interest concerning the distress in Manchester caused by the effects of the American Civil War on the cotton trade; they are addressed to Vernon Lushington. At our next Manchester meeting it may be possible to show these. Librarian Christine Lingard was invited by Radio Manchester to talk about them.

-oOo-



The Mount

Samuel Greg's home at Bollington

# NOTES FROM MANCHESTER CITY LIBRARY

The growth of the modern feminist movement is reflected in the increasing number of books about women's writing so interest in Elizabeth Gaskell is perhaps inevitable. Therefore it is gratifying to find that she is now being given her rightful place as one of the major writers of the period instead of relegating her to the ranks of the minor figures, as can be seen in a number of recent books:

PROTEST AND REFORM: THE SOCIAL NARRATIVE BY WOMEN, 1827-1867, by Joseph Kestner (Professor of English at University of Tulsa) Methuen, 1985. £15

This integrated study explores the contribution of minor figures - Hannah More, Elizabeth Stone, Frances Trollope, Charlotte Tonna, Camilla Toulmin, Geraldine Jewsbury, Fanny Mayne, Julia Kavanagh and Dinah Craik as well as the more prominent Maria Edgeworth, Harriet Martineau, Brontë, Gaskell and Eliot. It aims to break down the popular conception that the social novel was the preserve of men. A highly complimentary evaluation, it praises her narrative ability in particular. As well as all the full-length novels LIBBIE MARSH and SEXTON'S HERO are mentioned as good examples of her style.

FEMALE FRIENDSHIPS AND COMMUNITIES: CHARLOTTE BRONTE: GEORGE ELIOT, ELIZABETH GASKELL, by Pauline Nestor (Senior Tutor in English, Monash University Melbourne) O.U.P., 1985. £19.50

This interesting book aims to show women writers' depiction of female relationships and women's capacity for friendship. Gaskell's contemporary reputation was more modest than Brontë or Eliot, and consequently she was not overawed by it. She ingenuously solicited the judgement of other authors on her works. There are numerous quotations from her letters to show her relationships with Anna Jameson, Geraldine Jewsbury, Bessie Parkes, Barbara Bodichon, Adelaide Procter and Florence Nightingale. A second chapter deals in detail with the treatment of the relationship between women in all her works including the stories. CRANFORD in particular should not be dismissed for its quaintness.

VICTORIAN WOMEN'S FICTION: MARRIAGE, FREEDOM AND THE INDIVIDUAL, by Shirley Foster (University of Sheffield) Croom Helm, 1985. £17.95

More relevant to feminist issues this book is confined to Craik, Brontë, Sewell, Gaskell and Eliot who it is suggested shared a female voice. Gaskell was the only one of the five to have a normal married life, but her approach to the position of women was ambivalent. She advocated the marital state, while pointing out its limitations, though she does not bring much of her own experience into her novels - there are no working wives in her books. MARY BARTON is no revolutionary view of womanhood but NORTH AND SOUTH is bolder.

VICTORIAN WRITING AND WORKING WOMEN: THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE by Julia Swindells (The Open University) Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1985. £19.50

This book deals with the treatment of working women in literature in general and is not confined to women writers. Gaskell is contrasted with Thackeray under the heading "Gentleman's Club Literature" but Dickens and Eliot are also dealt with. It shows the prejudices Gaskell had, as a woman, to overcome in writing novels. But the book is marred by an important error - the author writes that after her publishers had rejected Gaskell's choice of pseudonym (Stephen Benwick (sic)) her own name appeared on the title page of MARY BARTON. In fact MARY BARTON was published anonymously.

ENGLISH FICTION OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD, 1830-1890, by Michael Wheeler (Head of English Literature at the University of Lancaster), Longman, 1985. £5.59 (paperback)

This is a straightforward uncontroversial literary history, part of a projected 46 volume series aimed at students. It includes biographical notes and a short bibliography.

THE INDUSTRIAL REFORMATION OF ENGLISH FICTION: SOCIAL DISCOURSE AND NARRATIVE FROM 1832-1867, by Catherine Gallagher (Professor of Literature, Berkeley University) University of Chicago Press, 1985. £21.25

An exploration of the structural changes which became

apparent with the industrial novel, with reference to Gaskell, Kingsley, Disraeli, Dickens and Eliot. The Gaskell chapters are confined to MARY BARTON and NORTH AND SOUTH. It mentions the influence of the Martineaus and Francis Newman's CATHOLIC UNION is suggested as a source of inspiration for MARY BARTON.

MARY BARTON is shown as a tragedy and attention is drawn to the skilful use of melodrama in the novel. NORTH AND SOUTH is compared to HARD TIMES. The portrait of family life depicted is an analogy of the wider employer worker relationship.

CHRISTINE LINGARD  
(Sub - Librarian)

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#### WHERE CAN I FIND MRS GASKELL?

This is the title of a book\* that caught my eye in the window of a bookshop in Hay-on-Wye, the Town of Books.

But before you devotees of Mrs Gaskell rush out to buy this book, be warned, it is not a book about Mrs Gaskell. Nor is it a book about her home town of Knutsford. It is in fact, as the sub-title tells us, "The Diary of a Hay-on-Wye Bookseller" and the title is taken from an anecdote in the book (pages 31 and 32) about a visitor to Hay in search of Mrs Gaskell's books.

But if you haven't yet visited Hay-on-Wye, may I recommend that you do so. It is an experience not to be missed by any book-lover. This little Welsh border town became the secondhand book centre of the world in the 1960s when Richard Booth, a former Oxford undergraduate and local boy, "bought up the town" and filled every vacant premises available with books. The cinema, the fire station, the workhouse, empty shops, all fell prey to the ever-expanding Booth and his books. You could even buy books in the morgue and the castle. The Guinness Book of Records at one time listed Richard Booth as the world's largest secondhand bookseller with 8.49 miles of shelving and a stock of over 1,000,000 books in 30,091 sq ft of selling space.

Hay-on-Wye is also a town of humour. In the mid-70s,

in front of the television crews of Europe, Richard Booth declared Hay an Independent Principality and proclaimed himself "King of Hay", and his horse the Prime Minister! You can buy a passport to Hay, a HAY registration plate for your car, or even a piece of hay from Hay. Every now and then off-beat social events take place. For instance, this year there is to be a "Garden Party for Disappointed People" in the grounds of King Richard's castle.

In recent years there have been changes. In all there are now about fifteen bookshops. Richard Booth is down to one - "The Limited" - and a new figure has appeared on the scene, Leon Morelli of the Quinto Group, known locally as The Great Morelli. He has now built up his holding to five of the other bookshops.

So, do visit Hay, explore its quaint narrow streets (very narrow!), walk along part of Offas Dyke, browse among the books, buy a copy of Hay Wire, the monthly broadsheet (only 10p a copy and a good read). But above all don't forget to ask, when you go into the bookshops, "Where can I find Mrs Gaskell?" Like the character in the book, you might get some funny answers from bookshop assistants who haven't a clue who Mrs Gaskell was!

ROD MONNINGTON

\*WHERE CAN I FIND MRS GASKELL? by Keith Gowen, published by Gomer Press, Llandyswl, 1985. Price £3.95.  
ISBN 0 86383 134 6

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#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that annual subscriptions are due on 1st October. You may like to consider paying by Bankers Order - our account number is 07633660 at the Trustee Savings Bank, Princess Street, Knutsford, Cheshire

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KNUTSFORD

# Mrs. Gaskell would find it worth writing home about!

Mrs. Gaskell knew an interesting story when she heard one. And she could certainly write them, too, using the people of Knutsford as her models. She renamed the town, Hollingford, and Alfred McAlpine Homes are continuing the historic link at Hollingford Place. The styles, standards and methods of building are traditional. The features, reassuringly modern. Large double bedrooms, an en suite bathroom, luxury fitted kitchen, and a wealth of other details which would have kept Mrs. Gaskell's pen working feverishly. But don't take our word for it. Pay us a visit soon and watch Hollingford Place coming alive before your eyes.

A refined collection of 4 bedroom detached family homes mostly with double garage and all to a superb specification including double glazing. Showhome and Sales Office open shortly.

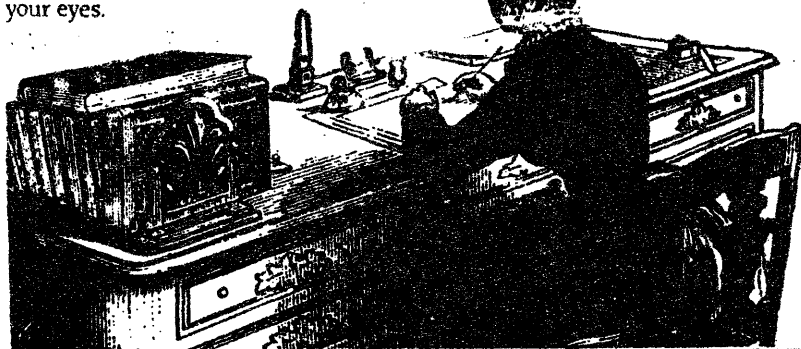
Prices from around £79,000.

For further information, directions and colour brochure, please telephone (0625) 523727 (24 hrs).

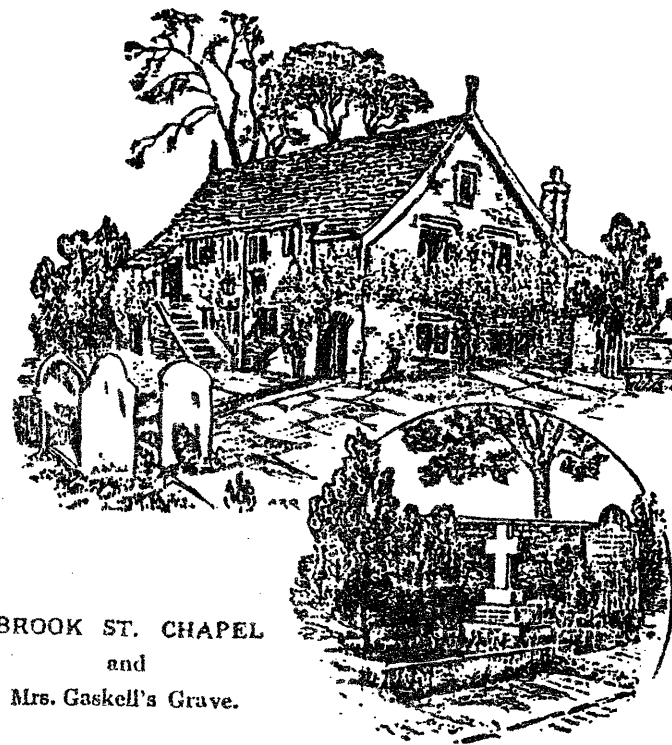


**Alfred McAlpine Homes**

*Quality is the Keyword*



# The Gaskell Society



BROOK ST. CHAPEL  
and  
Mrs. Gaskell's Grave.

## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1987

NO.3

SECRETARY'S LETTER

It seems a long time since our last meeting, the AGM on September 29th at Knutsford. For those who were unable to attend I must tell you what an enjoyable occasion this was. The Gaskell Memorial Tower made a delightful venue and La Belle Epoque restaurant provided us with a splendid meal. Do keep the last weekend in September free, members who came from far afield - Edinburgh, Exeter and Kent - found Knutsford pleasant for an autumn break.

Our next meeting is on April 25th at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, 2.00 pm. Bill Ruddick of Manchester University English Department will speak on 'George Du Maurier: Illustrator and Interpreter of Mrs Gaskell', using slides from the original serialisation of 'Wives and Daughters' in The Cornhill, together with some others from illustrated editions which Du Maurier worked on in the 1860s.

We are grateful to Cross Street Chapel for allowing us to meet in this place of so many associations for Gaskell fans; they have also agreed to provide us with tea at £1.25. The Chapel is easily reached by train from Oxford Road Station or Piccadilly but parking is likely to be a problem for drivers. Note enclosed reply form.

Alan Shelston, our journal editor, reports good progress and we hope to have your first copy available to pick up at this meeting.

The collection of Gaskell books from Brook Street Chapel has recently been rehoused in Knutsford Library. This has been a great undertaking by Mrs Mary Thwaite, who has cared for the collection for many years but was concerned to find some deteriorating with damp etc. With the co-operation of Cheshire County Libraries they will be better cared for, with the added bonus of greater accessibility for study. It is hoped to have an exhibition gallery at Brook Street; we hope members will help with fund raising by coming to a coffee morning on April 8th.

No one can doubt that Mrs Gaskell's influence is still felt in Knutsford when they see Hollingford Place being

built by Alfred McAlpine. I am most grateful to them for giving me the air fare to attend the University of Kansas' two-day conference on 'Queen Victoria's Jubilees' from March 24th to 26th. I hope to have the opportunity to promote our Society too.

Manchester Central Library has bought several Gaskell letters which will be the subject of future articles. The Language and Literature Library (4th Floor - good lift which 'chats' to you) has a small display from April 6th to the end of the month: 'Elizabeth Gaskell: fundraiser, background to some recently acquired letters on the Manchester cotton famine, and the fund for Thomas Wright, prison philanthropist'.

It is a little too soon to give details of the summer outing but keep the last Sunday in June free provisionally, to go to North Wales.

Hope to see you on April 25th.

JOAN LEACH

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#### THE COMPLETE ENGLISH COUNTRY ESTATE

Tatton celebrates the visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales exactly one hundred years ago.

The vast cellars are providing the kitchens with food for final preparation.

Re-enactment of Victorian life in the servants rooms, work rooms and in the sumptuous state rooms touches all your senses.

The magnificent mansion contains a collection of fine antiques and furniture, many paintings and superb decor.

The glorious gardens, medieval Old Hall, deer park and farm complete Tatton's picture.

Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN, England



#### CROSS STREET CHAPEL

The history of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, dates back over three and a quarter centuries. It was founded in 1662 by supporters of the Collegiate Church of St Mary (now the Cathedral) for the Preacher, Rev Henry Newcome, M who was deprived on his living, together with over two thousand other Church of England "Ministers of Conscience" who could not take the oath and sign the Covenant at the time of "The Reformation" and were outcast as "Nonconformist".

An Act was passed to prevent them being within five miles of their churches and for ten years he continued to engage in pastoral duties, preaching in private houses, and occasionally illegally in conventicles.

He received a licence for preaching in his own house in April 1672 under an Act of Toleration, and in May one for the adjoining Barn Chapel, thought to be Thomas Stockton's Barn in Shudehill, (probably the first licences to be obtained in Lancashire) ever amongst his people and they were determined on his staying in Manchester. There is reason to believe from the "History" written by Rev H H Johnson that although services for many years in the converted "Cold House" Barn Chapel were irregular, a continuous nucleus of a congregation was maintained under Newcome's ministry and a stated income was raised for him. From July 1687 Rev John Chorlton was appointed as assistant to him and regular timed services at the same hours as the Parish Church were held.

A site near by on Plungon's Meadow, and facing Acres Field, which was then the Annual Fairground but is now St Ann's Square, was acquired by Nathaniel Gaskell (later to become the Grandfather of Clive of India) and other members of the congregation. Further Acts of Toleration were passed and in 1693 building of the Chapel on the present site commenced, being completed and opened June 24th 1694, on which occasion Henry Newcome preached the first religious service in it. He preached his last sermon there on June 13th 1695, and died in the following September.

Since then the Chapel has achieved many wonderful things and been an inspiration to many people in this country and overseas.

Until 1780 the Chapel remained Presbyterian before gradually changing to mainly free Christian and Unitarian. The Unitarians in Manchester and Warrington were in the forefront of moral education from the foundation of Cross Street Chapel until the present day. The Schoolhouse and Chapel room built in 1734 on the lines of Chetham's School, for 40 poor scholars, functioned as a school for over 80 years and is still in use today.

The first suggestion of a Mechanics Institute came from Rev Dr Thomas Barnes DD, who was appointed at Cross Street as assistant minister in 1780. This institute, built later in David Street (renamed Cooper Street), was where Rev William Gaskell took classes in Literature at a Working Men's College started in Manchester in 1858, for students of sixteen and over, able to read and write.

With William's appointment as lecturer at Owen's College, later to become Manchester University, when he took with him his large following of Working Men to increase the serious decline in student entry, the link with Cross Street and education continued.

Elizabeth and her daughters were all teachers at some time, Meta and Julia as superintendents at the large, free Day and Sunday School which stood on the site in Lower Mosley Street, now occupied by the Midland Hotel (one of my aunts was in Miss Julia's class).

Education and scientific discovery is of little use if people do not know the difference between right and wrong, and Good and Evil; Cross Street Chapel and its dedicated ministers and workers have striven to convey that moral code which is the basis of true religion and without which there can be no peace or security.

H HEWERDINE, FRSH

Editor's note: The Chapel was destroyed in the blitz of 23rd December 1940 but services continued without

a break until it was rebuilt in 1959. The Memorial Hall, built in 1864, where William worked with the Home Missionary Board, can still be seen at the corner of Albert Square.

For further reading:

Cross Street Chapel and its College 1786-1915 by Lester Burney (1983)

Cross Street Chapel Schools 1734-1942 by Lester Burney (1977)

William Gaskell 1805-84, a Portrait by Barbara Brill M/c Lit & Phil.

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#### GASKELL ON TAPE

A new venture for the Manchester Central Library is the provision of literature on cassette for home loan. These include two Gaskell items which have also been added to the Gaskell collection for reference use.

Prunella Scales reads from Cranford. Two cassettes, approximate duration 2 hours 27 minutes, produced by Argo Spoken Word Department, London Records Ltd, 15 St George Street, London W1. Kenneth Branagh reads Cousin Phillis, complete and unabridged, three cassettes, duration 3 hours 55 minutes. Produced by Cover to Cover Cassettes Ltd, Dene House, Lockeridge, Marlborough, Wiltshire.

These tapes may be borrowed from the Language and Literature Library, Manchester Central Library, St Peter's Square, for a charge of 10 pence per cassette per week on any public library ticket.

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# ELIZABETH GASKELL IN ITALIAN TRANSLATION

The translation into Italian of the writings of Mrs Gaskell began in 1929 with the publication of La cugina Fillide (Cousin Phillis) by the firm of Sonzogno of Milan. This was ascribed to Gastone Rossi, who may be noted especially for his over-confident attitude and, it might be added, for the excessive assurance with which he confronts the text of the story. Not only does he depart from a faithful adherence to the writer's own words, but where it seems to him that she is too long-winded, he makes drastic cuts, which are often dangerous and misleading in their effect. Yet he does not follow this practice in his epilogue - there it is quite the contrary. Perhaps not being satisfied with the novelist's conclusion, the translator tags on in arbitrary fashion some lines which end the tale in a heavy, moralistic way, pointing out to the reader that Cousin Phillis is pervaded by that "Christian spirit which encourages resignation". Apart from the fact that La cugina Fillide appeared in a series significantly labelled "Cheap Romantic", it should be said that it was perhaps not accidental that it should have been the first Gaskell title to be published in Italy. The references to Dante and Manzoni, as well as the cultural interest shown in the Italian language by the protagonists - ("I had a capital novel by Manzoni, just the thing for a beginner ..." says Holdsworth) - must have had more than a secondary influence at the time this long tale was chosen.

Above all, however, the best known and most read Gaskell book is Cranford. In the histories of English Literature most widespread in Italy (see Mario Praz and Carlo Izzo) it is presented as the summit of Elizabeth Gaskell's art. Due to this critical reputation of Cranford there have been a number of translations of it, seemingly excessive when compared with the neglect surrounding the other Gaskell novels. Apart from a first translation of Cranford in 1935, undertaken by A Gennasi (now practically unobtainable) mention must be made of the accurate version by Mario Casalino,

issued under the title of Il Paese delle Nobili Signore (Milan. Rizzoli. 1050. Collana B.U.R. 211-213). In the anonymous introduction to the volume (probably written by the translator) it is claimed that Cranford is Mrs Gaskell's masterpiece. "It is a novel where one does not look for important adventures, remarkable events, or unexpected stage effects: what animates it and makes it unforgettable is its smiling picture of the characters, simple, modest, quiet folk, a trifle eccentric, but even heroic in their submissive dignity, and exemplary in their honesty and solidarity" (p.6). Only a year separates this translation by Casalino from that by Augusta Grosso for the authoritative series, "Great Foreign Writers", directed by G V Amoretti (Turin. U.T.E.T. 1951). Here the translator seems very intent on interpreting the humorous vein of Cranford, attempting to capture and express the special gifts of Mrs Gaskell's art. In her introduction to the volume Augusta Grosso pointedly observes: "Mrs Gaskell succeeds in being neither pedantic nor tedious, even in the apparently monotonous texture of her story, thanks to her vivifying power and her very particular kind of humour ... (this) arises from a sincere and most vigilant observation of the comic aspect of the traits of her characters; but there is no exaggeration so that they remain living beings, and do not become caricatures" (pp.9-10).

It was necessary to wait exactly thirty years for another Gaskell translation. In 1981, Mary Barton, translated by Fedora Dei, with an introduction by Anna Luisa Zazo, appeared as one of the series of Oscar/Narrativa (Milan. Mondadori. 1981). Although in one respect this Italian version is precise and efficient, partly due to a textual decision which rejected the reproduction of dialect forms and used only normal Italian, from another angle it must be regretted that the beautiful poetical quotations which Mrs Gaskell used as headings for each chapter were omitted. It seems to me absurd that the translator justified such omissions by declaring that the epigraphs interfered with the "smooth flow of the narrative" in the Italian version. It must also be observed that A L Zazo in her introduction

presents a rather subdued image of our writer to the Italian reader. "Let us try to look into her face: this wise woman, good and courteous, who knows how to judge, yet allows herself to be moved. It is a face typically nineteenth century, even more typically Victorian" (p.v). It is difficult to understand exactly what A L Zazo means when she speaks of "typically nineteenth century and typically Victorian", and it is hoped that she does not intend to deny with such expressions the individuality of the artistic talent of the writer. For truly behind A L Zazo's opinion and evaluation we can discover the phantom of David Cecil, who saw Mrs Gaskell as a mild and tender dove when compared with other Victorian writers. But A L Zazo re-establishes the individuality of our writer when she declares that the vein of melodrama and false sentiment does not belong to her art: on the contrary Mrs Gaskell possesses the quality of an intense realism concentrated on a minute and close observation of the domestic universe.

FRANCESCO MARRONI

(Translated by Mary Thwaite)

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### SILVERDALE

We hope to visit this beautiful area for our summer outing in 1988, but if you are in the area and need information Miss Elizabeth Davis, 54 Michealson Avenue, Torrisholme Avenue, Lancs LA4 6SE, would help members to trace the Gaskell associations.

Elizabeth, daughter of Mrs Elsie Davis, a Society member, has devised a fascinating, scenic walk. Send a stamped addressed envelope to me (Joan Leach) for a copy if required. You can reach Silverdale by train from Lancaster.

There is also a booklet, 'In and around Silverdale', by David Peter available from Lunesdale Publishing Group Ltd, 38-42 Market Street, Carnforth, Lancs, price £1.95

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### CLEGHORN

A few months ago I was browsing through an old book of Burns' poems and letters - the print was too small to encourage close reading - when suddenly the name CLEGHORN 'jumped out' of the page. The letter, dated 31st March 1788, was addressed to Mr Robert Cleghorn.

Burns sent a verse he had written to an air, "Captain O'Kean", which he remembered was Robert Cleghorn's favourite, then added:-

'I am so harassed with care and anxiety about this farming project of mine, that my Muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming ...'

Now, here was a thought-provoking association - CLEGHORN and farming was also the Gaskell connection. Elizabeth was given her unusual middle name after James Cleghorn who had helped her father, William Stevenson, to set up in experimental, scientific farming at Laughton (according to W Gerin and the Dict. of Nat.Biog.). But this was James Cleghorn, whereas the Burns letter was to Robert.

Still, it seemed worth investigating, so I wrote to the Burns Society for information on Cleghorn, either or both, James and Robert. Back came details from the Burns Chronicle, 1962, listing 'CLEGHORN, MR ROBERT, SAUGHTON-MILLS. He was a farmer at Saughton who was made a burgess and guild-brother of Edinburgh on 21st September 1786, in the right of his father, JAMES, a brewer at Gairnshall. He was a member of the Crochallan Fencibles, a friend of Burns and the recipient of some of the poet's spiciest prose and verse.'

I am told that it was Robert Cleghorn's step-son, Dr John Allen, who introduced Byron to Burns' poetry.

I can only conjecture that this James, father of Robert, may have been the friend of William Stevenson; only

further research might reveal the facts. More relevant to Gaskell study is the mention of SAUGHTON MILLS. I went back to check Winifred Gerin's biography which gives 'Laughton', as does the D.N.B. and my copy of Ellis Chadwick's 'Mrs Gaskell's Haunts, Homes and Stories'. A Scottish member of my WEA class knew of Saughton Mills, near Edinburgh and that it should be pronounced 'SOCKTON'. I next consulted Mrs Sutherland, an Edinburgh member, who found a map showing Saughton and Saughton Mills and a description of the house which had 'at one time been a pleasant residence on the bank of the Water of Leith, about three miles west from Edinburgh'. It had a 'wheel staircase', cellars, turrets and 'King Charles' room has an ornamental plaster ceiling ... on the wall at the frieze will be seen the insignia of royalty ... over the doorway are the arms and initials of Patrick Eleis, a merchant and burgess of Edinburgh, with the date 1623 and the pious inscription on the lintel beneath:

'BLISIT BE GOD FOR ALL HIS GIFTIS'

This description dates from early this century (I think); I don't know if the house still stands.

Mrs Sutherland noted that the Water of Leith must have been where William obtained out-of-season salmon which he believed to have caused his skin complaint.

Dr John Chapple is inclined to agree with me that 'Laughton' and 'Saughton Mills' are one and the same (unless someone can find us a 'Laughton' near Edinburgh); he observed that Mrs Chadwick has 'Saughton Mills near Edinburgh'. But she didn't in my copy, which had 'Laughton'!

This mystery was solved when I realised that mine was 1910 edition. Professor Chapple's was 1913, new and revised. So I think there can be no doubt that Saughton Mills was the place where both William Stevenson and Robert Cleghorn did their farming.

JOAN LEACH

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BOOK NOTES by Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell by Tessa Brodetsky. Berg (Leamington Spa) £3.95

Members may already be familiar with this book in Berg Women's Series which includes Gertrude Bell, Mme de Staël and Emily Dickinson. This is a short and simple book but very comprehensive and well-balanced. It makes an excellent introduction to the subject for the general student. There is one chapter of biography plus a chapter on each of the six novels, Life of Charlotte Brontë and the main stories. Each chapter contains a summary of the plot as well as general criticism backed up by quotations and bibliographical references. There are about a dozen illustrations.

We must also welcome a new edition of Mary Barton in the Oxford University Press' World's Classics series (£2.50 in paperback). This is a revision by Professor Edgar Wright of the Laurentian University, Ontario, and author of Mrs Gaskell: the basis for reassessment (1965), of the 1906 edition in the same series edited by Clement Shorter. This new edition includes an improved introduction and explanatory notes. It also provides a contrast with the only other edition currently in print, the Penguin edition which is based on the first edition of 1848. The World's Classics edition is based on the third edition of 1849. Mrs Gaskell, in her letters, expresses her displeasure at the numerous errors regarding the part written in Lancashire dialect in the first edition. The bulk of these corrections were made to the third edition so that it may be regarded as closer to Mrs Gaskell's intentions. Other differences between first and third editions are improved footnotes to the dialect terms, the addition of chapter titles and the replacement of the motto in chapter 30.

Professor Wright in his introduction puts the novel into its social and historical context. Mrs Gaskell's observation was accurate but selective. The tendency of critics to divide the book into two parts, the moving story of John Barton with its social realism and the more melodramatic treatment of the story of Mary as the novel

reaches its climax, is an over-simplification. The latter is just as important to the structure of the novel and displays her narrative skills to the full.

In addition Professor Wright has included twenty five pages of explanatory notes, an increase of fourteen over the Penguin edition. Some may argue that to be told that Cumberland is a "northern lakeland county" and that Delilah was Samson's wife is a little superfluous but it reflects an increasingly international audience with diverging cultural backgrounds. However his more detailed biographical notes on minor figures such as Madame Catalani, and Ebenezer Elliott are much appreciated.

(Editor's Note: DR EDGAR WRIGHT and TESSA BRODETSKY are members of our Society)

The following also make mention of Elizabeth Gaskell:

Victorian Idyllic Fiction: pastoral strategies by Shelagh Hunter PhD (University of Warwick) Lecturer, Yale University. Macmillan £29.50

A complex argument on the Victorian idyll, its structure and the inter-relationship with plot and character.

Idyll is defined as novels describing the simple life from the traditional pastoral to the Victorian novels of social realism. At the centre of the study are Elizabeth Gaskell, Thomas Hardy and George Eliot but mention is also made of George Sand and Mary Mitford.

As well as Cranford, Mary Barton and North and South the book includes a lengthy and enthusiastic discussion of Cousin Phillis. Reference and comment is made on earlier critics such as John Gross, John Lucas and Raymond Williams.

The novel in the Victorian age: a modern introduction by Robin Gilmour, Senior Lecturer in English in the University of Aberdeen. Edward Arnold £7.95 (paperback)  
A more general and straightforward survey of the novel with authors from the end of the century well represented eg. George Moore, Mrs Humphry Ward and Henry James. Mrs Gaskell is linked with Disraeli and Kingsley in the chapter "Sense of the present" though there is no

detailed comparison. The author praises her confidence in handling her material which came from personal experience and enabled her to develop her characters more fully than other authors. Mary Barton and North and South are noted for their realism, but he feels that Cranford needs to be defended against a decline in its prestige. Cousin Phillis is confined to a single paragraph but is also highly complimentary.

) Women in the English novel. 1800-1900 by Merryn Williams (PhD Cambridge and former Open University Lecturer)  
) Macmillan £7.95, first published 1984.

Though intended as a study of the treatment of women in the novel (there are chapters on Scott and Dickens), there is a preponderance of women novelists and the problems they found in pursuing their career. It deals with the whole century from Jane Austen and is stronger on the earlier part. Elizabeth Gaskell warrants a chapter of her own and is described as the novelist who writes most realistically. Her work is much more varied but is here discussed under the headings Working Women, Old Maids, Fallen Women and the Duty of Women. Sylvia's Lovers is considered to be her greatest book.

Also of note a periodical article "Dialect as 'realism': Hard Times and the industrial novel" by Patricia Ingham in Review of English Studies, November 1986. This acknowledges Dickens' debt to Mrs Gaskell in his use of dialect.

) Members may also be interested in a new book by our Vice-President, Dr Enid Duthie, The Brontës and Nature, Macmillan £27.50, which by discussing the different ways the three sisters responded to nature provides a new approach to an understanding of their work.

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Manchester Central Library besides buying the Fletcher letter has acquired three very interesting letters addressed to Vernon Lushington and concerning the cotton famine in Manchester caused by the American Civil War. Christine Lingard, Sub-Librarian and G.S. member has arranged a small display of related material: 6th April to end of month (library closes at 5 pm on Saturdays)

LETTER ON BOUGHTON PARK

Dear Editor,

On page 10 of the Gaskell Society Newsletter No.2 you enquired to the public as to the whereabouts of Boughton House, Worcestershire, a house Mrs Gaskell stopped at in 1850. I am pleased to tell you that Boughton House still exists: it is the clubhouse on an exclusive golf course, situated in the Bransford Road, about two miles from Worcester centre.

It would be interesting to know the exact date of her stay, because if it had been Springtime, she would have good cause to "write home" about the air doing her good. In 1850 the cherry and apple orchards (of which there was an abundance in this region) would have exuded the fragrance of their blossoms. (Ed: the date was December 2nd, 1850)

Boughton House is but a few hundred yards from the River Teme, and the walk from Bransford Bridge to Powick Bridge along the river bank was a favourite of both Sir Edward Elgar and W B Leader (artist). Malvern Hills can be seen eight miles away in the distance, particularly beautiful in sunsets - when they seem to transfuse through every imaginable blue.

Mrs Gaskell would have been happy there, then! Now, alas, Worcester is a concrete extension of Birmingham.

Yours faithfully

RICHARD MOON

(Ed: We are pleased to hear from Richard Moon, 'book man' of Hay-on-Wye.

Rod Monnington (Where can I find Mrs Gaskell G.N. No.2) adds "from B rts Gazetteer - 'Boughton Village with halt station, GWR, in county, and 1½ miles SW of, Worcester. Boughton Paril is a seat. On the 1" 7th series O.S. map sheet 143 (453) Boughton village and Boughton Park are no longer named.

-oOo-

THOMAS WRIGHT, THE GOOD SAMARITAN

A few months ago a Knutsford firm of stamp dealers, Sandafayre, brought to my notice an unpublished letter of Elizabeth Gaskell's which they had for sale. I was able to tell them that it concerned not 'Mr Wight a (wrongly?) convicted ex-prisoner' but Mr Thomas Wright, the prison visitor. Manchester Central Library has bought this interesting letter.

Plymouth Grove, Manchester

February 17

(1852 postmark)

My Dear Mrs Fletcher,

The accompanying memorial will show you what has been done in accordance with your advice; but I am afraid Government has little to spare; they talk of a pension of £70 only, which is very well as a recognition of his merits, but it will be but little for him to live upon, he his wife and two children and two fatherless grand children, with his generous disposition. There is to be some public meeting in London, where I do not know. I hope it will be announced in some widely read newspaper. Meanwhile his friends here are collecting subscriptions to be invested in an annuity for him; there was a public meeting held here last week, the Mayor in the chair, and £380 subscribed there and then but little has since then come in, and that principally from poor people, convicts and prison officers, and although their mites are a beautiful testimony, yet we want the knowledge of this subscription to spread far and wide, and be as 'national' a thing as we can. There are many people who know Mr Wright at Gosport - can you my dear Mrs Fletcher interest any of them. He is very feeble and out of health. We are all well, thank God.

Yours very affect(ionate)ly

E C Gaskell

This letter is, without a doubt, one of those which Mrs Gaskell wrote 'without end, till (my) wrist actually swelled with it' (GL 116a) and she felt 'very stupid altogether with writing up and down the kingdom on behalf of our dear Mr Wright' (GL 114a). It has considerable interest for Gaskell students and many implications.

Some of the details emerge in *The Life of Thomas Wright of Manchester: 'The Prison Philanthropist'* with a preface by the Earl of Shaftesbury, written by T W McDermid, grandson of Wright, in 1876, the year after he died.

This tells how he was brought up by an aunt who had attended Cross Street Chapel in the days of Rev Dr Barnes (who was also an influence on William Stevenson). She remembered, as a girl, carrying a stool for Wesley to stand on at one of his open-air meetings in Manchester. She became a Methodist and Wright received a strict moral training under her. Perhaps too strict for when he became a foundry worker, at five shillings a week, he became mixed up with 'the most wicked men and boys ... gave up going to the house of God and ... profaned God's Sabbath'. However he returned to his faith in a 'conversion as dramatic as St Paul's'.

At the foundry he became foreman at the age of 24, rising at five in the morning and working until six. One day a recently employed workman was dismissed when it was discovered that he had spent time in prison. Wright pleaded for him to be given a chance to prove himself, offering to stand bail for him. By the time he had gained his point the man had already collected his belongings and departed. Wright followed him, found him sitting by the roadside, miserable and penniless, then brought him back. Perhaps it was as a result of this incident that Wright inaugurated the discharged prisoners aid society.

He gained the confidence of prison authorities who allowed him to visit the cells, getting to know the men so that when they were discharged he could help them to

find work and lodgings. This often meant guaranteeing their good conduct with deposits of his own money and visiting them every week to render any further assistance.

In his tenth annual report HM Inspector of Prisons (1845) commended Wright's work, noting that out of 96 of his protégés only 4 returned to prison - one of these served 28 days and was now 'following an honest occupation'; the remaining three had been transported, two from Knutsford and a third from London.

As he himself worked long hours his prison visiting was done in the evenings and on Sundays. Besides Manchester's New Bailey Prison, chaplains of other gaols would send for him to visit condemned men. Ragged schools also claimed his time and, at the invitation of Captain Frederick Holland (Mrs Gaskell's cousin) he appeared on a London platform to address an annual meeting of the Ragged School Union.

He and his work were well known to the Gaskells as Susanna Winkworth wrote: 'At the time when I began to know him (he was a frequent and always welcome visitor at the Gaskell's) about 1848, he was a beautiful, white-haired old man, full of interesting experiences, and with almost as much humour as pathos'. (*Memorials of Two Sisters* ed. M J Shaen)

The first mention of him in Mrs Gaskell's letters was in May 1849 (GL 47) when she spared time from being 'lionised' in London following the publication of 'Mary Barton', to visit 'Tot-hill Fields prison to see the silent associated system of which our dear Mr Wright thinks so highly'.

On one of his visits, a year later, Elizabeth commented: 'The said good Mr Wright drank tea here last night, and said 'By jingo' with great unction, when very animated, much to William's amusement, not to say delight'. It was at the time when they were about to move to the Plymouth Grove house and she was worrying about the expenses: 'My dear (to Tottie Fox GL 69) it's £150 a year, and I daresay we shall all be ruined; and I've already

asked about the ventilation of the new Borough gaol and bespoken Mr Wright to visit us'.

It was about this time that Wright's work was becoming recognised. An article in Chamber's Magazine read by the young artist G F Watts inspired him to paint a picture of The Good Samaritan using Wright as his 'model', though it was not to be a portrait which Richard Cobden felt was a disadvantage when it came to fund raising:

London 9th February 1850

My Dear Mrs Gaskell

I hope you will not think me neglectful in not having before replied to your letter which you did me the honour to send me upon the subject of the painting of the 'Good Samaritan' - my first suggestion to Mrs Schwabe on reading your note was that to identify the picture with Mr Wright's philanthropic mission it ought to contain his portrait - This I suppose is not possible - Without this I do not see exactly how it can be identified with his proceedings in Manchester - Further let me add my candid doubts whether his character be sufficiently known and appreciated by the wealthy inhabitants of your city to ensure the purchase of a large historical picture to be placed as a tribute to his virtues in one of your public buildings - To one so profoundly acquainted with human nature as yourself, and especially the human nature immediately surrounding you - I need not say how completely the words 'a prophet is not without honour etc.' apply to a man of Mr Wright's humble sphere of action in Manchester. - I mention this in all candour and confidence hoping I may be mistaken - I will endeavour to accompany Mrs Schwabe at the beginning of the week to see the picture, and at all events will let you know through her my opinion of it, which after all is not worth much, as I am not a connoisseur - Again hoping you will excuse my delay in writing.

Believe me

ever faithfully yours

Rhd Cobden

My kind remembrances to Mr Gaskell

(Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell, ed. R D Waller)



'THE GOOD SAMARITAN' painted by G F Watts



This did not discourage Mrs Gaskell, and a letter from Catherine Winkworth to a friend (Feb 1850, Memorials of Two Sisters) throws further light on the subject: 'One of the things Mrs Gaskell has been busy about is a picture that is going to be painted ... of Mr Wright the prison philanthropist. She got a very hurried note a few days ago, from Mr Tom Taylor, saying that a young artist friend of his, Mr Watts - (does your uncle know him?) Mr Taylor calls him 'one of the noblest natures I ever knew, great genius etc' - having heard of Mr Wright's good deeds, was so struck by them, that he determined to paint a picture of 'The Good Samaritan', the Samaritan himself to be Mr Wright, and to present the picture to some Manchester Institution. Mr Tom Taylor, however and some other friends, knowing that Mr Watts could not well afford to paint for nothing, and wishing to show respect at once to the artist and to the philanthropist, are subscribing to purchase the picture still meaning to give it to some Manchester Institution'.

He showed it at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1850 with the dedication, 'Painted as an expression of the artist's admiration and respect for the noble philanthropy of Thomas Wright of Manchester'.

Mrs Gaskell did not know of Watts either, as he was just starting on his career, but she wrote to Eliza Fox (GL 63) 'Now write and tell me about Mr Watts.

Mr Cobden will be here the end of this week and I want to work him up, but must know about Mr Watts'. Ever thorough, she also set about copying 'Prison reports, by way of statistical information as to Mr Wright' to supply Mr Tom Taylor with information to circulate in London and he immediately started writing to ask people to go and see the picture and 'got Mr Schwabe, the Bishop and Dr Bell all pretty well interested'.

Mr Tom Taylor was a barrister at the time, soon to be appointed to the Board of Health, but his interests were literary and he later became professor of English Literature at University College, clearly of the absent-minded variety.

'That Mr Tom Taylor is born to get me into scrapes I verily believe! Did I tell you (to Eliza Fox GL 70) of his wishing to be introduced to Mr Schwabe (a Manchester calico printer) to plan about Manchester's having the Good Samaritan (which Manchester somewhat contemptuously declines) so I wrote a very proper note of introduction: and the trouble is to me to write a proper (*italics*) note no one can tell save those who have seen my improper ones ...'

She went on to describe how Taylor had missed several appointments with Mr Schwabe who, as a result 'looks on him as not a good person to conduct business affairs, and draws out of the whole, and thinks it a pity Mr Watts has such injudicious friends' - and such a quantity of persuasion and talking as I have wasted!'

However, her efforts were not wasted and the picture did find a home in Manchester where it can still be seen in the Art Gallery. Mrs Gaskell had found some way of making Wright personally known to Watts, for on July 1st 1850, the painter wrote: 'I return you my dear Madam my sincere thanks for the pleasure and the honour you have done me in making me acquainted with Mr Wright. Such noble natures are indeed rare, and proud should I feel in devoting my trifling talent, and the little time I think remains to me (his health was poor at the time) to the object of making known to the world its real but too often neglected riches ...'

Wright himself expressed his appreciation by the gift to Watts of half-a-dozen handkerchiefs!

In the same month as her efforts for Watts' picture, January 1850, Mrs Gaskell was involved by Thomas Wright in prison visiting, an experience which led to her writing 'Ruth'. In a letter to Charles Dickens (GL 61) she described the plight of a sixteen year old Irish girl in the New Bayley prison. She had been apprenticed to a dressmaker 'who was very profligate and connived at the girl's seduction by a surgeon in the neighbourhood who was called in when the poor creature was ill (when she came face to face with him unexpectedly, in his role as assistant prison doctor, she 'fainted dead away' and ...



he was dismissed from his post in consequence').

The girl had been decoyed into becoming a prostitute and 'for four months led the most miserable life'. In the hopes of killing herself, 'for no one had ever cared for her in this world', she drank, 'wishing it might be poison', pawned every article of clothing - and at last stole. I have been to see her in prison at Mr Wright's request'. Dickens knew of Thomas Wright and wrote an article in 'Household Words'; he also helped to arrange for the girl's emigration.

It was typical of Mrs Gaskell that she showed her sympathy practically, by helping to improve the girl's life and then addressing herself to the wider, underlying faults of society, writing 'Ruth' to stir the conscience.

Mrs Gaskell was just one of the 'dear Christian friends' named by Thomas Wright as having 'liberally assisted me in carrying out my object, and who gave me much valuable counsel and encouragement'. I was fascinated and surprised to note that he headed this list with 'Miss Mary Holland and Miss Lucy Holland of Knutsford'; others were 'Miss J E Wedgwood, Mrs Salis Schwabe, Miss Agnes Ewart, Mr D Darbishire, Captain Holland (5 others) ... and some few other Unitarian friends'.

It was two years later in 1852 that Mr Wright's failing health and strength, at the age of 62, caused his friends to start fund raising to enable him to give up his foundry work. The justices of the Salford Quarter Sessions sent a memorial to the First Lord of the Treasury, detailing his valuable work and asking for government support. This was on January 12th 1852; on February 9th a public meeting was held in Manchester with Mayor Robert Barnes in the chair, as Mrs Gaskell explained in her letter to Mrs Fletcher, though she did not add that William, along with J G Robberds, Thomas Greg and William Fairbairn, Charles Dickens and Lady Hatherton were either subscribers or on the committee.

As the fund grew, further attempts were made to obtain public funds when, on May 14th, a deputation waited upon Lord Derby, among them Lord Shaftesbury and Monckton

Milnes (later Lord Houghton). It was deemed that Wright's unofficial work did not qualify him for a civil list pension but £100 was allotted out of the Royal Bounty and with an annuity bought from the subscription fund, was enough for him to retire on. He wrote in his diary: 'May 4th, 1852. I gave up my employment at the foundry. What can render to my God for his especial mercies towards me?' On the same day Mrs Gaskell wrote, 'Mr Wright (came) too last night. He is a gentleman at large now'.

One must admire Wright's determination to go on with his prison work in his own way; he had turned down the offer of £800 a year as a prison inspector. Perhaps, though, fame had a bad effect on him, as it must have been Thomas Wright that Mrs Gaskell wrote of in this letter, although he is not named: 7th November 1859

... 'A very (*italics*) good man in Manchester was a few years ago brought into much notice for his philanthropy, and many people were only too glad to learn something of the peculiar methods by which he certainly reclaimed the erring. So he was asked about his experiences, and told many true (*italics*) interesting histories. Lately I have observed that it was difficult to 'bring him to book' as it were about his cases. He would tell one of a story that made one's heart bleed - tell it dramatically too which faculty is always a temptation, and when unwilling to let emotion die without passing into action one asked for the address etc - it always became vague - in different ways. For some time I have suspected that he told old (*italics*) true stories, as if they were happening now, or had happened yesterday. And just lately I have found that this temptation to excite his hearers strongly has led to pure invention (*italics*).'

How well she understood human frailties and how true was her own charitable nature. In another letter, about the same time she wrote 'Mr Thomas Wright, beautiful as he is in many ways, is not to be quite relied upon for his facts - and not at all for his opinions - which he generalises into two great theories - one that good mothers are all important - true - and another that we are all going to the dogs because 'people think so much about recreation now a days'. (GL 630)

Finally, the interest of this letter is also in the recipient, Mrs Fletcher. It was addressed to her at the home of her daughter, married to Sir John Richardson and living at Haslar, near Portsmouth. Her other daughter was married to Dr John Davy (brother of Sir Humphrey Davy) and the Gaskells enjoyed visiting them at their Ambleside home where they also met the Arnolds. The first mention of Mrs Fletcher and her daughter, Mrs Davy, in the Collected Letters comes in the same letter as the 'good Mr Wright' drinking tea at the Gaskell's and amusing William with his 'By jingo': 'Mrs Fletcher, Mrs Davy were to have come here this week with a maid ... Dear old lady! I wish she had come under our roof, but she was ill and could not'. (GL 69)

She did stay with them later and recorded in her autobiography (1875, Edinburgh) 'At Mrs Gaskell's we had great pleasure next day at breakfast of meeting Thomas Wright, a philanthropist of no ordinary cast of mind, profoundly pious and humble-minded with the most energetic devotion to the principle of doing good. He devotes every hour he can spare from his employment, that of overseer of an iron foundry, to visiting the prison and doing all he can to reclaim convicts from their evil ways ... he seldom allows himself more than four hours sleep'.

Mrs Fletcher had been a friend of William Stevenson when he lived in Edinburgh. His work as a literary editor brought him into contact with the intellectual, social circle which Mrs Fletcher belonged to. She was delighted to find, on being introduced to the authoress of 'Mary Barton', that Elizabeth was the daughter of William Stevenson and both shared a love of Edinburgh. When Mrs Gaskell set 'Tales around the Sofa' in Edinburgh she used Mrs Fletcher's maiden name of Dawson for her narrator.

To complete the research into the story of this letter it needs someone to find out if Mrs Gaskell's appeal to Mrs Fletcher and to the 'many people who know Mr Wright at Gosport' bore any fruit. Did the people of Gosport have reason to know him because of the transportation of prisoners?

The letter was folded and addressed on the outside:

'Mrs Fletcher  
Sir John Richardson's  
Haslar  
Gosport'

A note in the index of 'Letters of Mrs Gaskell' (Chapple and Pollard) to the effect that Sir John Richardson was an Arctic Explorer who searched for Franklin, sent me to look him up in the Dictionary of National Biography where I found a five column entry, which I must resist the temptation to relate here. Mrs Gaskell refers to his wife as 'Lady (North-Pole) Richardson'; she was his third wife, born Mary Fletcher, daughter of Mrs Fletcher of Edinburgh. Richardson was a man of many talents - surgeon, explorer, naturalist and whilst he was physician to the Royal Hospital at Haslar, T H Huxley was his pupil. One story I must relate concerns his early days when he entered Dumfries Grammar School, on the same day as Robert Burns' eldest son, the poet lent him a copy of 'The Faery Queen'. The DNB states that Richardson was a friend of Burns 'who from 1790-96 spent evenings at Nith Place' (his home), but as Richardson was born in 1787 it seems more likely that Burns was a friend of his father.

Who would have thought that one letter of Mrs Gaskell's could have led to so many fascinating connections?

JOAN LEACH

-oOo-

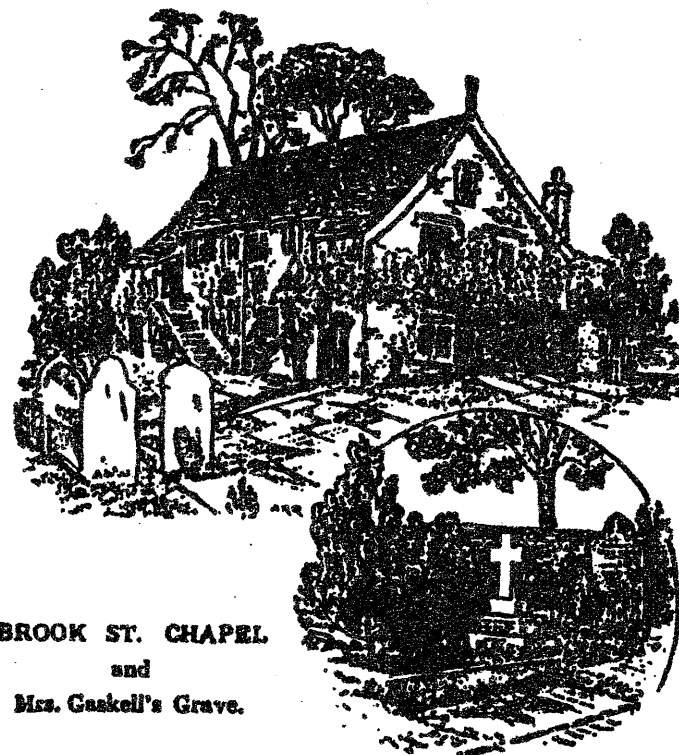
Editor: Mrs J Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

I shall be pleased to receive any information or suggestions for future newsletters.

Annual Membership: £4, to Secretary or Treasurer:

Mrs B Kinder  
16 Sandileigh Avenue  
Knutsford

# The Gaskell Society



BROOK ST. CHAPEL  
and  
Mrs. Gaskell's Grave.

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1987

NO. 4

EDITOR'S LETTER

Our Society has had a busy and successful year, steadily recruiting new members and launching our first Journal. Alan Shelston, our editor, had only recently returned to Manchester University from lecturing in the States when he attended our AGM in September last year, little knowing that he was marked as my target to take on this project; he capitulated with good grace. Janet Allen, librarian at The Portico Library, Manchester, has been invaluable as assistant editor, seeing Gaskell Society Journal Vol. 1 through the presses.

We intend to continue the bi-annual newsletters to go out with details of April and September meetings.

As many of our members live locally, we have held several informal lunch or coffee meetings, which have proved popular. Perhaps one of our London or South-East members would like to plan a similar meeting?

We are indebted to Professor Yuriko Yamawaki of Jissen Women's University, Tokyo, for acting as our Japanese secretary, making our activities known in Japan and enrolling members there. Mrs Yamawaki was able to join us at our Manchester meeting in April and hopes to be with us in September, too. Our Vice-President, Professor Francesco Marroni, expects to join us from Italy, and Dr Edgar Wright plans to come over from Canada - quite an international line-up. Incidentally, the Daily Telegraph will have an article about the Society (though probably in its Northern edition only).

The Gaskell Society has had contacts in various ways with other literary societies. We are especially close to the Brontë Society and Jean Hobson, a member of the Brontë council has agreed to be liaison officer between us. Many Dickensians enjoyed an afternoon in Knutsford, escorted by Gaskellians, while they had a conference at Salford University in July. Barbara Brill and I have corresponded with an active Wirral branch of the Angela Thirkell Society.

The Secretary of the George Eliot Fellowship co-ordinates the Alliance of Literary Societies. This proved its

worth recently when the Nuneaton Free School Building (c1745), mentioned in 'Scenes of Clerical Life', was threatened with demolition; so many other literary groups raised objections that it will be restored instead.

We have planned a weekend of various events around the AGM on 26th September, and hope many members will be able to participate. Please return forms by 12th September.

Our Chairman, Dr Ken Walley, is unfortunately ill in hospital and may not be able to join us at the forthcoming AGM. We wish him a speedy recovery.

By now you should all have received our first Journal which I hope you have enjoyed. Our costs have been kept down by advertising; offers or suggestions for the next edition will be welcome.

JOAN LEACH

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#### SOCIETY CALENDAR

AGM Etc - last weekend in September in Knutsford

Spring Meeting - last Saturday in April in Manchester

Newsletters - one month before each meeting

Journal - to be ready for collection at April meeting

Outing -- Next year to Silverdale. Please let us know whether the last Sunday in June is the best date (last outing not too well supported on this date), or whether to have it on the Sunday after the AGM in September.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

These are due on 1st September (I mistakenly put 1st October on some cards). If you are not coming to the AGM events, please send £4.00 (£6.00 sterling overseas) with s.a.e. for membership card, to the Treasurer, Mrs B Kinder, 16 Sandileigh Avenue, Knutsford, or the Secretary (address p.24)

#### THE "WHITFIELD" GASKELL COLLECTION

by Mary Thwaite

This valuable collection of books and documents relating to Mrs Gaskell was presented to Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford (where the writer's grave may be visited), by the late Professor A. Stanton Whitfield (1900-1975), on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of her birth in 1960. The library was the result of a lifelong and devoted interest, which went back to the Professor's student days. His thesis for an Oxford B.Litt. degree was upon the subject of Mrs Gaskell's life and work, and later this was the basis for his book published in 1929. This may now strike the reader as somewhat exuberant and romantic in style, but it ranges with scholarly perception over the whole extent of the writer's work, appraising this in detail, and showing how much wider and deeper was her art and achievement than "the fragrant posy of Cranford" which had too often dominated critical comment. In fact, his book hints at the re-assessment that was to emerge in the 1960s.

The preface of Professor Whitfield's book is dated from Niigata-si, in Japan, where he had been teaching English literature since 1925, the date his book had been completed. He returned to England before the outbreak of the war, but his influence in Japan did not seem to fade. While he was there several Gaskell stories were published in editions with notes for Japanese students. One of them is an edition he edited of The Sexton's Hero, and other tales. These have formed part of the collection, and there are also several later studies in Japanese on Mrs Gaskell, the most recent being the thesis by Mrs Yuriko Yamawaki, a visitor whom we were pleased to welcome to the Society's Manchester meeting in April.

Mr Geoffrey Sharps, who has described the Professor as an "old friend and mentor", has told me how he brought the books to the Knutsford Chapel on that day twenty-seven years ago. They were received by the minister, the Rev. Albert Smith, who gave much attention to their care and cataloguing, and who also made further additions by his

appeal for donations. Mr Smith also compiled an interesting series of scrapbooks containing many cuttings, photos etc. relating to the Chapel and Knutsford and the links with Mrs Gaskell, especially during the 1960 birthday celebrations.

Since then various enquirers and scholars have found this collection very useful, and it has been enriched by generous donations of some of their published works. During the last few years, however, conditions in the Chapel vestry, where the books were housed, much deteriorated and the books were becoming increasingly affected by damp and lack of ventilation. Because of this, and also the need to make the material more readily available, a scheme of co-operation has been arranged with the County Library, which came into effect this spring. The "Whitfield" collection has now been transferred from the Chapel to the Knutsford Library (a building just across the road from the Chapel), where it is now kept "on permanent loan", and accommodated in excellent glass-fronted bookcases generously provided by the County Council. The County Library has also given to the Chapel an exhibition case for installation in the gallery, and so it is now intended to develop this, and have on show there a small display of material about Mrs Gaskell and her connection with the locality for the benefit of visitors.

A typewritten catalogue and a revised index on cards may be consulted at the Knutsford Library, and I still act as "custodian" on behalf of the Chapel. As a former professional librarian I find that closer co-operation with the Knutsford library staff is most useful, and it is hoped that we can deal with enquiries more thoroughly than was formerly possible, especially as there is a good deal of Gaskell material at the Knutsford library. Some rare items there are not in the "Whitfield" collection, notably the first edition of Mary Barton, and the first volume of Dickens' new Journal, Household Words, where Mrs Gaskell's first contribution, Lizzie Leigh, began as a serial on the first page on 30th March 1850.

The "Whitfield" collection very much reflects its former owner's keen interest in everything relating to Mrs Gaskell's life and art - there are even contemporary guide books for her Italian journeys. Pencil notes have sometimes been added as comment or correction to some books about the writer, and there are many scarce items. These include My Diary, the (later privately printed) record kept of "the early years of my daughter Marianne", from March 10th 1835 to October 28th 1838; also the account of Clopton Hall, as it appeared in William Howitt's Visits to remarkable places (1840); and first editions of most of her novels. The Life of Charlotte Brontë is well represented by many editions including the first three. Three autographed letters were also owned by Professor Whitfield, who quoted from them in his book long before they were known and published. These are now being deposited in the County Record Office for safe keeping, but excellent photocopies with transcripts have been obtained, and these are at the Knutsford library.

The latest extension to this Gaskell library has resulted from the interest and activity of Professor Francesco Marroni of Pescara University in Italy, who is one of the Society's Vice-Presidents. Now added to the collection are several volumes in Italian, including an Italian version of Cranford by Mario Casalino, a study of Mary Barton by M. Ingenito, and two articles by Marroni himself. It is hoped to add very soon a copy of his study of Mrs Gaskell recently published in Italy under the title of La Fabbrica nella valle.

\* \* \* \* \*

Members may like to know the times of opening of the Knutsford Library, where the "Whitfield" Gaskell collection is now kept:

Monday	9.30-5.00	Thursday	9.30-5.00
Tuesday	9.30-8.00	Friday	9.30-8.00
		Saturday	9.30-1.00

The library is closed on Wednesdays, and also for lunch between 1.00 and 2.00 p.m.

\* \* \* \* \*

WILLIAM GASKELL'S HYMNS

by Barbara Brill

During the time I was engaged on research for my book on William Gaskell nothing gave me more pleasure than hearing from Manchester College Oxford that they had in their possession Mr Gaskell's own copy of the book of hymns which he and Dr John Relly Beard collected and published in 1837. The librarian kindly sent me photocopies of all William Gaskell's own hymns contained within it, and also of the fly leaves with his signature at the front, and an additional hymn in his own small neat handwriting at the back.

William contributed seventy hymns to this collection and in his own copy added written amendments to his own verses in the margin. It was the imprint of his own hand that made the words leap out of the page at me. I felt that I could picture him at his desk in his study at 42 Plymouth Grove in the more leisurely days of his old age, making these alterations to his hymns, many years after their original publication when he had a dead-line to meet and no time to give his verses the necessary polishing. He was thirty-two when he wrote them and at that time living at Dover Street, Manchester, the home to which he had brought his bride, Elizabeth, in 1832. The hymn book was published in the same year as their second daughter, Margaret Emily, was born, two and a half years after their first-born, Marianne. In this same year William and Elizabeth had worked together on a poem which was published in Blackwood's Magazine, entitled 'Sketches among the Poor, No. 1' and obviously intended to be the first in a series, in imitation of Crabbe's Scenes from Humble Life. It would appear that the young couple had too many calls upon their time to continue with their 'Sketches'. Elizabeth's increased maternal responsibilities and the necessity for William to complete his hymns for Dr Beard prevented their further collaboration in poetry.

Two years later William brought out a book of Temperance Rhymes, like his hymns simple rhyming verses,

easy to understand and to memorise. William Gaskell firmly believed in the power of poetry to stir the hearts of the unschooled men and women he met with in daily life and saw it as the ideal vehicle for conveying a message simply and memorably. He was struck by the number of natural poets to emerge among these men of humble birth and prepared a series of lectures on 'Poets and Poetry' which attracted large audiences of working men.

William Gaskell would be the last to claim that his verses were inspired poetry, for his hymns were certainly not prompted by the poetic Muse but by the invitation of Dr Beard to contribute to the collection. In his hymn-writing he aimed to convey a clear and pious message to simple homely people, set in conventional verse forms that were easy to set to a tune, and with words fitting to the atmosphere of worship.

When planning my book I hoped that it would be possible to head each chapter in true Victorian style with verses from the hymns and in this way to introduce readers to these little-known hymns. This idea did not prove practical so I am taking this opportunity to let you read those that I chose, giving my reasons for the selection of specific verses to head appropriate chapters and in this way to introduce you to William as a hymn-writer.

Chapter 1. Early Influences

This describes William's beginnings in Warrington and this verse from Hymn 72 in Dr Beard's Collection expresses thankfulness for the gift of life.

"For life and all its pleasant scenes,  
For all it knows of good and fair;  
For love and hope and tranquil joy,  
O God, to thee our thanks we bear."

Chapter 4. Husband and Father

This relates the meeting with Elizabeth, their marriage and early days as man and wife, both well aware of the importance of partnership in marriage, which this Hymn 403 stresses.

"Father of all, we look to thee  
 To bless thy servants now,  
 Who true till death shall part to be  
 Have plighted here their vow.

To them as all of human birth  
 Must some dark scenes be given  
 But oh! let every cloud of earth  
 Be touched with light from heaven.

Still hand in hand, their journey through  
 Meek pilgrims may they go;  
 Mingling their joys as help-meets true,  
 And sharing every woe."

#### Chapter 5. His Literary Interests

This deals with William as poet, hymn writer, adviser to Mrs Gaskell, writer of sermons and funeral addresses, and editor. In Hymn 66 William shows his desire to express God's glory in words.

"I will praise thee, O God, with my heart and  
 my voice,  
 I will call on the earth and the heavens to  
 rejoice,  
 There's nothing beneath, and nothing above  
 But declareth thy glory and telleth thy love."

#### Chapter 8. The Crowded Days at Plymouth Grove

The days at Plymouth Grove where the Gaskells removed to in 1850 were extremely busy ones and remained so for William, who continued to live there after Elizabeth's death, working as hard as ever.

#### Chapter 9. The Last Years

William continued as teacher, preacher, committee chairman, editor, lecturer and wise counsellor, until a few months before his death and was held in high esteem. This verse from Hymn 511 expresses his acceptance of death.

"Now is my day of duty done,  
 The sands of life their course have run;  
 And lo! from doubt and terror free

I wait, my God, I wait for thee."

(Ed. note: Barbara Brill's biography "William Gaskell 1805-84" is published by Manchester Lit & Phil Society, price £7.95)

#### BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

The Gaskell Collection in the Language and Literature Library, Manchester, has benefited by the purchase of several American doctoral dissertations which represent original research and fill some noticeable gaps. They are available in hard copy not microfilm.

THE HEART OF ELIZABETH GASKELL: THE UNITARIAN SPIRIT by Mary Brooks Howell, CPh.D (Texas Women's University) 1985. Thematic discussion of her specific religious beliefs.

THE SHORT FICTION OF ELIZABETH GASKELL by Marie D. Bacigalupo, Ph.D (Fordham University, New York) 1984. The only full length study in the collection devoted exclusively to the shorter works.

ELIZABETH GASKELL'S CHRISTIANITY IN A NEW AGE by June B. Kelly M.A. (Wayne State University) 1983. Novel by novel discussion including Moorland Cottage and the Life of Charlotte Brontë.

ADAPTING TO EVOLUTION: THE IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT IN THE WORKS OF GASKELL AND TROLLOPE by Erdnut Lerner, Ph.D (North Western University, Evanston, Illinois) 1983. Perception of time in Cranford and Cousin Phillis, the Yorkshire roots of Life of Charlotte Brontë and the Darwinian influences in Wives and Daughters.

FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN WOMEN'S NOVELS by Linda Roberta Gupta, Ph.D (American University, Washington DC) 1983. Father/daughter relationships in a wide range of works from the European fairy story to contemporaries such as Margaret Atwood and Mary Gordon.

THE ROLE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS WOMAN IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH INDUSTRIAL NOVEL by Patrician Ellen Johnson, Ph.D (University of Minnesota) 1985. In particular Shirley, Hard Times, Felix Holt and North and South, the most optimistic of the four.

THE NOVELIST AS BIOGRAPHER: THE TRUTH OF ART, THE LIES OF BIOGRAPHY by Marjorie Cullen Jones, Ph.D (Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois) August 1983.



Critical appraisal of biographical work of Elizabeth Gaskell, Henry James, E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf.

It is hoped to continue to add such material as it comes available.

ELIZABETH GASKELL by Patsy Stoneman (Lecturer in English at the University of Hull) The Harvester Press, 1987 £18.95

This is the major contribution to Gaskell studies in 1987. It is part of the "Key Women Writers" series whose other subjects have ranged from Charlotte Brontë to Angela Carter, from Madame de Lafayette to Alice Walker. Its aim is to challenge previous critics who have maintained that Gaskell's work has suffered because she muddled social and domestic issues, and to show that she is a stronger and more unified writer than is realised.

In an interesting opening chapter the author provides a summary of Gaskell critics to date and categorises them into those who have stressed the social problem novels and those who have dealt with the more genteel works, plus a number of recent feminist and Marxist critics of a more general and theoretical nature. In the second chapter the author applies her theory to Mrs Gaskell's private life and the inter-relationship of career and family.

The crux of this complex argument is that class and gender should not be considered as separate issues when assessing Gaskell's work. It is discussed methodically novel by novel beginning with a chapter on the short stories though it excluded the Life of Charlotte Brontë with constant references to other critics incorporated in the text. The alphabetical list of references runs to eight pages.

BEARING THE WORD: LANGUAGE AND FEMALE EXPERIENCE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY WOMEN'S WRITING by Margaret Homans, University of Chicago Press, 1986. £18.75

A discussion of the inter-relationship of woman's role as mother and as writer as shown by language with particular reference to Dorothy Wordsworth, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Gaskell, George Eliot, Mary Shelley and Virginia Woolf. The first of two chapters devoted to Gaskell aims to show that the death of her still-born daughter in 1833 was a greater stimulus to her writing than the death of her son in 1845 especially to Lizzie Leigh written in 1838 and Lois the Witch. A second chapter deals with the relationship of Mollie Gibson in Wives and daughters to her two mothers - her own already dead mother and her stepmother.

There are also several references to North and South in THE HELL OF THE ENGLISH: BANKRUPTCY AND THE VICTORIAN NOVEL by Barbara Weiss. Associated University Presses 1986. This study includes a factual and historical assessment of the subject as well as a critical one.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### GREEN HEYS FIELDS

"Country Rambles and Manchester Walks and Wild Flowers" was the title of a book by Leo H. Grindon, published in 1882, but the latter part of the title came from an earlier edition.

It is interesting to compare this with the opening scenes of Mary Barton as Green Heys Fields.

The preface to the original work of 1858 contained the following passages:- "No grown-up person who has resided in Manchester even twenty years, is unacquainted with the mighty changes that have passed over its suburbs during that period; while those who have lived here thirty, forty, and fifty years tell us of circumstances and conditions almost incredible. Neighbourhoods once familiar as delightful rural solitudes, are now covered with houses, and densely crowded with population; the pleasant field-paths we trod in our youth have disappeared, and in their stead are long lines of

pavement, lighted with gas, and paced by the policeman. In a few years it is not improbable that places described in the following pages as rustic and sylvan will have shared the same fate ... it is easy to understand how in half a century hence our present 'Walks' will have become as obsolete as their author, and the entire subject require a new and livelier treatment. A descriptive history of the suburbs of Manchester as they were fifty years ago, would be a most interesting and valuable item of our local literature. It would be as curious to the lover of by-gones as this book of to-day may perhaps appear to the Manchester people of A.D. 1900. How extraordinary would be the facts may be judged from the following extracts from De Quincey, whose youth, it is well known, was passed in the neighbourhood of Manchester. Mark first what he says of the 'place' he lived in. 'And if, after the manner of the Emperor Aurelius, I should return thanks to Providence for all the separate blessings of my early situation, these four I would single out as worthy of special consideration, - that I lived in a 'rustic solitude'; that this solitude was in England, that my infant feelings were moulded by the gentlest of sisters; and finally, that I and they were dutiful and loving members of a pure, and holy, and magnificent church.' And now mark where lay this 'rustic solitude'. He is describing the expected return of his father:- 'It was a summer evening of unusual solemnity. The servants and four of us children were gathered for hours on the lawn before the house, listening for the sound of wheels. Sunset came, nine, ten, eleven o'clock, and nearly another hour had passed without a warning sound, for Greenhay, being so 'solitary a house', formed a "terminus ad quem", beyond which was nothing but a cluster of cottages, composing the little hamlet of Greenhill; so that any sound of wheels coming from the 'country lane which then connected us with the Rusholme Road', carried with it of necessity, a warning summons to prepare for visitors at Greenhay'. 'Greenhay' was the centre of the modern Greenheys, and the 'hamlet of Greenhill' the predecessor of the present Greenhill Terrace."



ELIZABETH GASKELL'S childhood home, from a water colour dated 1832, the year she was married in Knutsford - that is, CRANFORD. The scene is set at the beginning of that book:

'For keeping the trim gardens full of choice flowers without a weed to speck them; for frightening away little boys who look wistfully at the said flowers through the railings; for rushing out at the geese that occasionally venture into the gardens if the gates are left open ... the ladies of Cranford are quite sufficient.'

# SUMMER OUTING TO NORTH WALES

by Joan Leach

Elizabeth Gaskell loved the Cheshire countryside surrounding the 'little, clean, kindly town of Knutsford', where she grew up, and the Sandlebridge farm two or three miles away which she first knew as her grandparents' home; her picture of Hope Farm in Cousin Phillis was painted from her lifelong love and knowledge of Cheshire. In later years, living in dirty, smoky Manchester, she yearned for Cheshire's 'deep, grassy solitudes'. By contrast the wild, rugged mountain country of North Wales evoked in her a deep, emotional response.

Wishing she could have been with her sister-in-law, Lizzie, to show her all her favourite haunts she recalled, 'When I first came from spending a very happy fortnight at Plas Brereton (nr Caernarvon, you know) I used to get on a sort of knoll from which I could see the Welsh hills, and think of the places beyond again.' (G.L.9) She consoled herself by adding, 'How I shall enjoy talking over Wales with you' and reminiscing about a visit in 1837 when she and Lucy Holland had called at a cottage to dry their shoes and stockings and had been given oat-cake by 'the woman who could not speak English. I long to be in those wild places again ... I cannot help feeling the feelings for you.' (G.L.9) And these were the same feelings she ascribed to Ruth: 'It was most true enjoyment for Ruth. It was opening up a new sense; vast ideas of beauty and grandeur filled her mind at the sight of the mountains, now first beheld in full majesty. She was almost overpowered by the vague and solemn delight; but by and by her love for them equalled her awe.' (p.64) The deep response felt for wild Wales must have helped Elizabeth to identify with the Brontës' love of the Yorkshire Moors.

On Sunday, June 28th, half a coach load of Gaskellians set off from Knutsford early in the morning to follow the Gaskell trail to North Wales. Sadly the weather was grey and drizzly, and, though this did not dampen our

enthusiasm, it shrouded the mountains from view - but at least it was in authentic style:

(Ruth, p.64 Knutsford edn.) The valleys around were filled with thick, cold mist which had crept up the hillside till the hamlet itself was folded in its write dense curtain and from the windows nothing was seen of the beautiful scenery around'.

This was exactly how we found the inn at Ffestiniog, the Pengwern Arms, which displayed a carved slate plaque with a coat of arms and date, I think, 1728. Here I should explain that for our guide book I consulted the memoirs of Elizabeth's cousin, Samuel Holland, who wrote many details of his exploits in the area, developing the slate quarries. His first journey in 1821 had been on foot from Liverpool to Ffestiniog where his father, 'gave me instructions what I was to do to learn the art of quarrying, look after the men etc. - and added that if I could get lodgings in some decent house, it would be better than staying at the hotel ... he rode off for Liverpool leaving me to my own devices. I was then 18 years old'. He played a large part in the building of the narrow gauge Ffestiniog railway. It was his house, Plas Penrhyn, which welcomed the honeymoon couple and became our place of pilgrimage.

The Gaskells and Hollands became even more closely related when Samuel's brother and partner, Charles, married William's sister Lizzie in 1838. A chart will explain some of the many convolutions of the Holland family tree. (see page 22)

As we set out from Knutsford, passing the Parish church where the Gaskells were married on August 30th 1832, we studied a copy of the entry in the parish register. Of course, Uncle Peter Holland 'gave her away'; the other witnesses were William's sister, and Susan and Catherine Holland; Winifred Gérin identifies these as daughters of Peter Holland by his second marriage but I think the latter must have been cousin Samuel's sister, known to the family as Kate. (G.L.3 identifies Kate as Fanny's sister, both probably then living at Liverpool with their father. The Holland family tree notes 'two sons and one daughter' by Peter's second marriage)

The wedding ceremony, according to a letter written by Elizabeth on her honeymoon, was a happy, almost hilarious, occasion (G.L.2)

'Kate had sent us a long, long letter a few days before and among other things made us laugh exceedingly with telling us one report of which I dare say neither you nor Sam (Gaskell) were aware. Pray ask him, with my love, whether he knew that Sue put his shoulder out of joint by pulling him to her at the altar and that so much force was required on Susan's part because Kate was pulling so at his other arm. Since hearing this Wm. and I have felt rather anxious to hear of his health. As you justly conjecture I have a great deal of trouble in managing this obstreperous brother of yours though I dare say he will try and persuade you the trouble is all on his side. I find he has been telling you I look very well, (this was a joint letter) so I think that is a pretty broad hint that I am to tell you he is looking remarkably well which he really is. Mountains seem to agree with us and our appetites admirably ... If you hear of the principality of Wales being swallowed up by an earthquake, for earthquake read Rev Wm. Gaskell'. This letter was postmarked 'Caernarvon' and we were sorry, from limitations of time and distance, not to be able to include this area and 'dear, little Aber' on our itinerary, as it was here that the couple 'spent a fortnight of our wedding journey and where I spent a very happy month with 17 aunts, cousins and such like once before' (G.L.9)

Her memories of the Port Madoc area also went back a long way as she must have been holidaying there when her brother wrote to her in July 1828 (J.G. Sharps owns this letter): 'You have really made a very pretty story of Captain Barton - it would almost make the foundation of a novel (it suggested her short story 'The Sexton's Hero') - it was indeed a narrow escape of Kitty's (? Kate, who signed the wedding register) and must have given her a tremendous fright, though I have heard many stories of them, I never saw a quicksand and hardly believed them to be so dangerous as was generally spoken of'. Ten years

later she enquired of her sister-in-law, 'You never mention Capn. Barton. Is he to the fore yet?' Samuel also mentions his house in the memoirs.

On our day out we had planned to visit the Gloddfa Ganol Quarry which still has a 'Holland tunnel' for tourists to walk in, but the weather prevented us. We arrived at The Pengwen Arms, Ffestiniog for lunch. This stone built old inn had a range of outbuildings which had been stables, and opposite was the village shop. Some of us ate inn fare while the landlord kindly allowed the rest of us to picnic inside and to think of Mr and Mrs Gaskell staying here in 1832. But their happy memories of it were coloured by the sad death of ten month old Willie in August 1845. Mrs Gaskell had brought Marianne and baby William away from the infection of scarlet fever raging in Manchester but after two weeks at the inn Marianne developed the disease. Sea air seemed the best convalescent treatment, so they moved down to Mrs Hughes guest house at Port Madoc, but here Willie sickened and died. Mrs Hughes did all she could to alleviate their distress and was fondly remembered. When Mrs Gaskell wanted a beautiful setting with sad overtones for Ruth, the inn at Ffestiniog would be an obvious choice, and we could feel echoes all around us. It was raining while we were there so we did not ramble as Ruth did: 'Flitting through the village, trying to catch all the beautiful sunny peeps at the scenery between the cold stone houses, which threw the radiant distance into aerial perspective far away, she passed the little shop...' and there it was opposite the inn. (Knutsford Edn. p.70)

Mrs Gaskell could not resist giving Mr Benson her own love of Welsh legend and tradition and particularly about the foxglove: 'its Welsh name is Maneg Ellyllyn - the good people's glove; and hence, I imagine our folk's glove or fox-glove'; the ones we saw, especially along the lane to Plas Penrhyn, had an extra significance for us.

Moving on from Ffestiniog we found the railway station of Tan-y-Bwlch to ride down to Minfford and Plas Penrhyn. Here we noted Samuel Holland's memoirs; he stayed at Tan-y-Bwlch Hotel in 1825 negotiating quarry leases,

advised by his Uncle Swinton and borrowing money from Uncle Peter in Knutsford and cousin Edward of Dumbleton (later Marianne's father-in-law). Edward also allowed Samuel Holland senior £200 a year so long as he did not speculate; when Lizzie stayed at Plas Penrhyn in 1838 she found father and son not on speaking terms over the definition of speculation. By then father and son were living together at Plas Penrhyn which Samuel junior rented on a long lease and had extended. Nephew, Charles Menzies Holland, later advised on steam locomotives for the narrow gauge Ffestiniog railway in which Samuel played a part in building and developing. He described the grand opening in 1836 when 'there was great cheering and rock cannon firing, all along the line and on our arrival at Port Madoc ... we were met by crowds of people, bands playing and the workmen had a good dinner given them. ... I used the Railway (horse drawn originally) for carrying my slates to Port Madoc for two years nearly before the other companies came upon it.' Today it was carrying Gaskellians, a delightful experience - almost miniature-sized carriages winding along mountainsides and wooded slopes as we steadied our drinks served from a refreshment bar.

We were met at our destination by Mr Smithson, the friendly owner of Plas Penrhyn (known to the Gaskells as PP), who kindly took three of our less mobile members in his car after directing us to the charming, secluded lane leading to the house, too narrow for our coach with which we had rendezvoused. The hedgerows on either side were bright with foxgloves and honeysuckle, intertwined with ivy, bramble and ferns; the botanists among us racked our brains to identify pennywort and wall rue and storks-foot cranesbill.

On a clear day the views would have been superb; Bertrand Russell thought so, as he recorded in his autobiography, 'Plas Penrhyn ... would make a pleasant holiday house for us and the children ... it had a most lovely view, south to the sea, west to Port Madoc and the Caernarvon hills, and north up the valley of the Glaslyn

to Snowdon. I was captivated by it and particularly pleased that across the valley could be seen the house where Shelley lived.' Russell spent the last fifteen years of his life here. Winifred Gerin's biography has two pictures of the delightful white plastered house surrounded by natural gardens merging into the wooded landscape and the old kitchen gardens.

It was here in November 1848 that Mrs Gaskell, accompanied by Emily Winkworth sought refuge from publicity and reviews on the publication of Mary Barton, which had come out anonymously, with even close friends and family left to guess at the author's identity. Emily wrote from PP to her sister: 'What do you think? I'm positive 'Mary Barton, a Story of Manchester Life' is by Mrs Gaskell! I got hold of it last night going to bed, and knew by the first few words it was hers - about Green Hays Fields and the stile she was describing to Kate and me the other day; - but we haven't talked about it yet ... The folks here know it I am sure - they all turned so silent when I began to talk about it at breakfast time, and Mrs Gaskell suddenly popped down under the table to look for something which I am sure wasn't there.'

After their return home Mrs Gaskell mischievously enjoyed the 'mystery', writing to Catherine Winkworth: 'By the way, Emily was curious to know the name of the person who wrote 'Mary Barton' (a book she saw at Plas Penrhyn), and I am happy in being able to satisfy her Eve-like craving, Marianne Darbishire told me it was ascertained to be the production of a Mrs Wheeler ... Marianne gave many proofs which I don't think worth repeating but they were quite convincing' (G.L.30). Elizabeth shared the joke with her publisher Edward Chapman adding, 'I am only afraid lest you also should be convinced and transact that part of the business which yet remains unaccomplished with her. I do assure you I am the author'; thus no doubt shaming him into paying his debts.

Samuel Holland wrote in his memoirs that one of his cousin's novels was written or finished while she stayed with him but gives no date or particulars to verify this. Besides the Welsh section of Ruth Mrs Gaskell wrote two

short stories set in this area; so we said goodbye to PP, strolled back down the lane to rejoin our coach and go in search of other Gaskell scenes from The Doom of the Griffiths and The Well of Pen-Morfa.

We made our way over the toll bridge which spanned the Cof, an embankment built by W.A. Maddocks creating the harbour of Port Madoc where Samuel Holland built a quay to ship his slates brought down by the Ffestiniog railway which had its terminus here. We drove through the busy town, returning later for tea, in search of Tremadoc and Pen-Morfa.

The Doom of the Griffiths is based on an old tradition of Owen Glendower. You will remember how Mr Benson in Ruth said he had 'been inoculated by an old innkeeper at Conway with a love for its people and history and traditions'. I detect that Mrs Gaskell's love dated from the visit there with 'seventeen aunts and cousins' when she was eleven or twelve years old. I have no doubt that given time we should have found the Bodowen farmhouse from The Doom of the Griffiths '... situated in a boggy valley ... running from the mountains, which shoulder the Rivals, down to Cardigan Bay ... It was square and heavy looking with just that much pretension to ornament necessary to distinguish it from the mere farmhouse'. (You can read this story in the Alan Sutton collection, 'The Manchester Marriage', price £3.95. Any member holidaying in this area is invited to spot and photograph 'Bodowen' farmhouse for me!)

We stopped our coach at just such a scene as described in The Well of Pen-Morfa: 'There are rocks high above Pen-Morfa; they are the same that hang over Tremadoc ... Everywhere they are beautiful. The great, sharp ledges which would otherwise look hard and cold, are adorned with the brightest coloured moss and the golden lichen ... crane's bill and tufts of purple heather ...' We also saw 'the great plain (formed by the reclaimed estuary) which stretches out like an amphitheatre, in the half circle of hills'. Here, in the story, was Edward Williams 'picturesque old farmhouse ... called by

some Welsh name which I now forget; but its meaning in English is 'The End of Time'. I found J.G. Sharps had been able to identify this, when writing in 1960, as \* Penamser (and the well as St Bueno). It made my day when I spotted this very name at the gateway of a farm on a rising bank as we turned a corner on the road back to Port Madoc. I was too excited to think of taking a photograph! The story is a sad one; the beautiful Nest Gwynn, engaged to be married to Edward Williams falls at the well, becoming a cripple, whereon he rejects her as unfit to be a farmer's wife. The story was probably rewritten in haste for Dickens, appearing in Household Words in November 1850.

Our expedition to North Wales was completed with a tea-stop in Port Madoc and a pleasant journey home.

\*Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, Linden Press 1970, by J.G. Sharps (The encyclopaedia of Gaskell information)

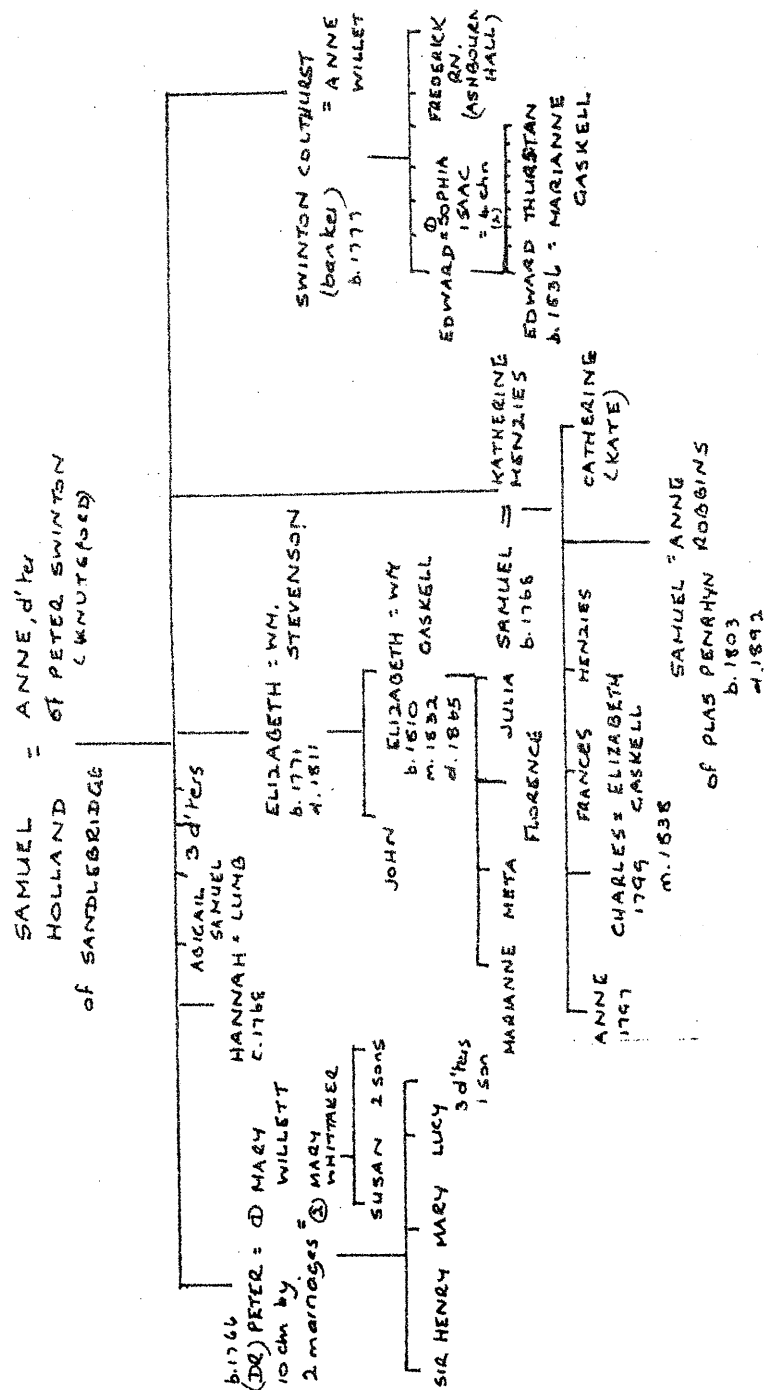
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#### VISITING NORTH WALES?

Plas Penrhyn has a furnished self-contained flat which can sleep five; close to sea, Snowdonia and Portmeirion. Details from G. H. Radcliffe, Plas Penrhyn, Minfford, Gwynedd LL48 6HY

Pengwern Arms, Ffestiniog, Gwynedd LL41 4PB. Fully licensed free house, retaining 18th Century charm - dogs welcome!

\* \* \* \* \*



## A 'CRANFORD' FAN

I was surprised to find that a cavalry officer at the battle front in World War I was reading Cranford!

This excerpt is from 'Letters and Journals of Sir Alan Lascelles from 1887-1920' edited by Duff Hart Davis, published by Hamish Hamilton (1986)

23 September 1918

H.Q.

2nd Cavalry Brigade

Who is my favourite woman in fiction? Helen of Troy? Jane Eyre? Belinda Jorrocks? Diana of the Crossways? Tess - no not even Tess, bless her poor heart, though I would sooner have my hands on that man Angel's throat than any German's. Not even little Kitty Cherbatsky (in Tolstoy's 'Anna Karenina') whom I would marry tomorrow. The prize goes to Miss Matilda Jenkyns.

I have just re-read 'Cranford' for the nth time. To me, it is one of the most remarkable books ever written, because, apart from all its obvious qualities, its gentleness, its mellow Raeburn portrait-gallery, its fun, and so on, I find it intensely exciting. It grips me more than any detective or 'Prisoner of Zenda' romance, and the reason I don't know it by heart is that once I start reading it, I go faster and faster till, when the Aga's return is imminent, I am turning pages like a cinematograph.

Can you tell me why this is? I know perfectly well what is going to happen; the story of Miss Betty Barker's cow has been a chestnut to me for nearly twenty years; Signor Brunoni is no mystery to me; the Hoggins-Glenmire marriage comes as no shock; and I know it's Peter long before even Mary Smith suspects it. And still that book makes me burn more midnight oil than almost any other. I have no explanation, except the crude one that its very sweetness makes one bolt it as a child bolts strawberries and cream. Does it take you the same way? I am willing to stake all my war-savings to a single meat-coupon that you are a devout Cranfordian.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE GASKELLS AND POETRY

William's work for the Chapel, various Manchester institutions, teaching and lecturing left him little time for creative work of his own, but Elizabeth's earliest appearance in print was jointly, in verse, with William in 'Sketches Among the Poor' described by Elizabeth Gaskell in a letter to Mary Howitt as 'somewhat after the style of Crabbe', and appeared in Blackwood's magazine January 1837 (see Barbara Brill's article on William Gaskell, p.6ff). In the same letter (G.L.12) she added 'my husband has lately been giving four lectures to the very poorest of the weavers in the very poorest district of Manchester, Miles Platting, on The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life.' She herself had helped to research the poets (G.L.4).

I found this report in the Macclesfield Courier (which would be Knutsford's local paper then):-

1842 Jan 1st

'Temperance Society Tea Party in the Parochial School Room' (situated just below Brook Street Chapel where the small lawn is now). The following evening Rev W. Gaskell delivered a lecture on 'Poets of Humble Life'. On the succeeding evening at the request of some who were present the reverend gentleman gave a second lecture on the 'Poetry of Burns'. Both lectures were highly interesting and gave general satisfaction.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are grateful to 'The Unitarian' magazine for allowing us to reprint Barbara Brill's article.

Any suggestions or material for future Newsletters will be welcome by the Editor, Joan Leach.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am compiling an accommodation in Knutsford leaflet. If any local members would like to offer bed and breakfast etc. please let me know details for inclusion.

Send s.a.e. for a copy, to the Secretary:

MRS JOAN LEACH, FAR YEW TREE HOUSE, OVER TABLEY, KNUTSFORD  
CHESHIRE WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)



# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1988

NO. 5

EDITOR'S LETTER

I have enjoyed putting this newsletter together and hope you will enjoy reading it. My only problem has been a surfeit of good things - I have enough left over for the next edition. Alan Shelston, editing the next Journal, is having the same problem, which only goes to show that the Society is fulfilling its aims, to stimulate interest and research.

I had intended to give you profiles of our worthy committee members, but cannot find space; I hope to do this when I send out the Summer outing details, in a mini-newsletter.

Perhaps when our Society has grown a little larger we will be able to afford a computer to keep track of membership details. I have to admit to inefficiency in this department so have enrolled an assistant to deal with membership renewals. Please note that these should be sent to: Mrs Lilian Clode, 15 Mereheath Park, Knutsford WA16 6AT. If you have slipped the net send your £4 cheque; renewals due August 31st for 1988/89 can be paid at AGM which will be on Saturday October 1st this year (please note slight change of date).

Would you like to brush up your Italian? We have several members, most of them Professor Francesco Marroni's students, who would like to visit England as paying guests. There may also be UK members who would like to attend the AGM if hospitality could be offered - perhaps on a reciprocal basis? Mrs Gaskell was such a wonderful hostess that it is difficult to emulate her but I like to think we are a friendly Society, with her example to follow.

We are looking forward to welcoming members of the Brontë Society on their annual outing, this year to Knutsford on June 7th.

Best wishes to you all,

JOAN LEACH

Editor



The watercolour by Herbert Smith, dated 1851, and believed to be a portrait of Mrs Gaskell

MRS GASKELL by E Jacobi

In July last year I bought a portrait at a local antiques fair believed to be of "Mrs Gaskell". The painting is a watercolour, by Herbert Smith, and is dated 1851. I have to admit that at the time my attraction to the painting had nothing to do with the fact it was or might be Mrs Gaskell. Despite having studied English Literature at University, I had somehow managed to miss 'Mrs Gaskell'. I bought the painting simply because I loved it.

My curiosity however, began to grow. I began with Mrs Gaskell's short stories, 'Life in Manchester; Libbie Marsh's Three Eras', 'Lizzie Leigh' and 'The Moorland Cottage' and was more than a little delighted by her work. The painting I had bought because I loved it had not only introduced me to the works of Mrs Gaskell but had also given me a wonderful new project - that being to try to prove the sitter in Herbert Smith's portrait is in fact Mrs Gaskell.

I began checking the sources at the local library and compiled a list of interesting 'coincidences'.

Mrs Gaskell would have been 41 when the portrait was done and looks to be about 40 in the painting.

She is sitting next to a writing desk and two books. This would of course be an appropriate pose for an author.

The sitter in H L Smith's portrait bears a striking resemblance to the watercolour drawing of Mrs Gaskell by her daughter Meta in 1865 and to the pastel drawing of Mrs Gaskell by Samuel Lawrence in 1854.

The pose and position in front of a distinctive picture window is very similar to the photograph of Mrs Gaskell taken about 1864 which is housed in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

Mrs Gaskell wrote to Eliza Fox in December 1851 describing a new gown with "blue ribbons all spick and span for Xmas". The gown and bonnet in Herbert Smith's

1851 painting are also trimmed with blue ribbon.

My imagination began to feel a bit stretched when after I showed the painting to a colleague of mine at work, she telephoned a family friend who had taught Mrs Gaskell's novels some 30 years ago. When my colleague described the portrait of Mrs Gaskell in a black silk dress to her friend, the retired school teacher is reported to have said "and she was wearing a white silk bonnet". The woman left me with a reference to chase 'Mary Barton' published by Dent in 1922!

My chances of finding this particular copy through a second-hand book store or inter-library loans was slim, so I went to the British Museum Readers Library in hope of getting a one-day pass. Miraculously, instead of a one-day pass I was granted two weeks! Thankfully my boss was sympathetic and I was given a somewhat unscheduled two week holiday.

Unfortunately, the school teacher's lead did not solve the mystery, though I was convinced she must have seen something. I combed through the British Museum ordering every book I could find which was described in the catalogue as having a portrait. I was sadly not able to find my portrait or even a reference to it in any of the books.

I decided to try a different track. I checked in the catalogue under H L Smith to find he had written a book! 'A Catalogue of Miniatures by H C Ross with Memoirs by H L Smith'. This however was never published. It was a proof. Unfortunately the copy once housed at the British Museum was destroyed during the war. There is reported to be another copy in the Victoria and Albert Museum. On my last visit however, they were unable to find this document.

W C Ross was a miniaturist much employed by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Ross exhibited over 300 paintings in the Royal Academy and produced an estimated 2,200 portraits in his life. He was a painter of historical figures and was H L Smith's cousin. H L Smith and Ross

painted many of the same people and subjects. Perhaps it there is any connection with W C Ross and Mrs Gaskell this could provide the vital clue. H L Smith also exhibited at the Royal Academy and was a copyist for Queen Victoria.

The mystery is still unsolved. I am hopeful that when the memoirs are found that there will be some more solid leads to work from. I am curious to know if W J Thomson, who painted the miniature of Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson in 1832, was acquainted with Ross or Smith. I am still chasing the Victoria and Albert Museum - the search continues.

(Ed. I discovered that Herbert Smith exhibited a watercolour portrait of Prince Albert in 1851 - perhaps this endeared him to Queen Victoria!)

\* \* \* \* \*

#### RESIDENTIAL HOLIDAY COURSE

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## NEW BOOKS

by Christine Lingard

Highlight of this season's new books is a new edition of Wives and Daughters in Oxford University Press' World Classics series (£3.95). It means that all seven major novels are now available from this publisher - the only publisher to offer this. The editor is once again Angus Easson of Salford University whose book, Elizabeth Gaskell was published by Routledge in 1979, and who edited North and South and Cousin Phillis in the same series. He claims that this is the first edition to be based on the text of the Cornhill Magazine serialization rather than the original manuscript (now in the John Rylands University of Manchester Library) or the first edition in book form of 1866. This claim however is also made by Frank Glover Smith for the Penguin edition of 1969.

Professor Easson argues that any variations between the manuscript and the Cornhill text would only have been made with Mrs Gaskell's full approval, whereas she was dead by the time the first edition was published. Nevertheless, he has added a ten page text of textual variants from the Cornhill text, some reverting to the manuscript and some editorial. There is a detailed introduction explaining the editorial policy and describing Mrs Gaskell's inconsistency with names.

Once again this edition chiefly scores with its provision of copious textual notes ranging from textual inconsistencies, to biographical details and definitions of obscure and foreign terms: a total of forty-two pages in all, compared with only three in the Penguin edition. The main introduction praises the novel's structure despite the circumstances and pressures under which it was written.

There are only three other books of interest: Nineteenth Century Women Writers of the English-speaking World edited by Rhoda B Nathan. New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1986, £32.50 - a collection of 23 essays which had

their origins as papers given at the Nineteenth Century Women Writers' International Conference in November 1980 under the auspices of Hofstra University, New York. Five of the articles are devoted to George Eliot, five to Emily Dickinson and two to Charlotte Brontë. The Gaskell contribution is The Price of Love: Gaskell versus Eliot by Coral Lansbury, professor of English at Rutgers University, New Jersey, and author of two books on Elizabeth Gaskell. The aim is to contrast the two authors' attitudes to love and marriage. Eliot was not the radical she is often painted. Her domestic arrangement was one of circumstance not choice which she regretted as much as the next man. She had a dread of women who deliberately chose the celibate life. Gaskell on the other hand maintained a relatively independent lifestyle. She placed devotion to God above devotion to any individual person and appreciated the single state. Evidence of this is given by quoting both authors' opinions of Florence Nightingale.

Consuming Fiction by Terry Lovell. Verso (New Left books) £7.95. Ms Lovell is a lecturer in sociology at the University of Warwick. A constant underlying feature of this book is the continual reference to Marxist literary critics. It shows how the standard of the novel, 1770-1820 was debased when it was merely a commodity whereas from 1840-94 when the "Great Tradition" prevailed and the novel was restored to a higher literary status women lost their dominant position. Elizabeth Gaskell and Sarah Grand are the only two people to be named in the chapter sub-headings. The author feels that Mrs Gaskell has received less attention from feminist critics than her contemporaries. Mary Barton belongs to the "Great Tradition" because of its realism, but she challenges accusations that the novel is melodrama akin to modern soap operas.

The Rich Man and the Diseased Poor in Early Victorian Literature by A Susan Williams. Macmillan, £27.50. The author has worked for UNICEF and the Ministry of Health. This book is a discussion of the threat to the rich of infection from the poor in many writers of early

Victorian Britain both actual and fiction but in particular Carlyle, Dickens, Kingsley and Gaskell. References to Gaskell are dispersed throughout the text.

(Christine Lingard is Sub Librarian, Lang/Lit. Library, St Peter's Square, Manchester)

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# HOLLINGFORD ALIAS KNUTSFORD

by Joan Leach

The new O.U.P. edition of 'Wives and Daughters' has most helpful explanatory notes but I cannot agree with Note 2 (p.689) which states 'the town initially is based on Knutsford with Cumnor Towers corresponding to Tatton Hall. The novel's topography later shifts to the Midlands, probably prompted by Gaskell's memories of schooldays in Warwickshire: references are made to e.g. the Malvern Hills, the Birmingham coach and the Birmingham-London railway.'

For the first, Malvern Hills, I feel that Mrs Gaskell would name her favourite hills or the first that came into her head, most likely. She often had a vagueness about names; Knutsford has hills on the horizon from several viewpoints and I am never sure if they are Pennines, Snowdonia or the Peak District.

The note for page 601 - 'the Birmingham coach started at early morning' - cites this as, 'another indication of the Midlands topography'.

A glance at the trade directories of the period in which the novel is set reveals that Knutsfordians could take the Birmingham coach, the Bang-up, at The George Inn (which figures throughout Wives and Daughters) every day at twelve; it went through Newcastle, Stone and Wolverhampton (Pigott's 1829 Directory).

The London-Liverpool coach which called at the George was The Umpire. Cynthia arrived on this coach (p.221). Mr Coxe stayed at The George on his return visit to Hollingford 'bringing his horses and groom'; there are still remains of The George's extensive stable block.

Roger departed on his travels by coach from the same inn.

The setting is so often reminiscent of Cranford and Knutsford: the Assembly rooms at the George where the magician performed for the Cranford ladies is the scene of the charity ball when the Countess of Menteith so disappointed everyone by her lack of diamonds. The Sedan chairs are in attendance again. And tea is socially significant in both books.

I do not think a mention of the Worcester/Three Choirs Festival (p.491 and 284) can be interpreted as stressing the Midlands locale again. On p.491 Cynthia explains that she had to borrow money from Mr Preston to TRAVEL to the festival, away from Hollingford. The other reference is by way of a comparison.

In Knutsford Joseph Jackson (alias Mr Johnson p.253 and in Cranford chapter XIII etc) 'respectfully announces that he is now prepared with a large assortment of NEW GOODS in the various departments of his establishment, suitable for the present and approaching season and of which he solicits an inspection' (Ad. in Warrington Guardian, Jan. 7, 1865).

Mr Jackson's goods included TEA:

'Sound congou at 2/4	Excellent family	3/8
Useful " 2/8	Strong rich	4/0
Very good " 3/0	Very fine	4/4
Capital flavoured 3/4	Very superior	4/8

Those were the facts which turned into fiction - Lady Harriet was 'quite struck' with the Misses Browning's tea (p.177). Miss Phoebe explained, 'I told her we only gave 3s/4d a pound for it at Johnson's (sister says I ought to have told her the price of our company tea, which is 5s/- a pound, only that was not what we were drinking; for as ill luck would have it, we'd none of it in the house.'

In 'Cranford' it was Mr Johnson who was consulted by Miss Matty before she, too, sold congou tea.

Whether consciously or not, Mrs Gaskell drew the Cumnor family from the Egertons of Tatton; the parallels are numerous.

The Charity School, known locally as Lady Mary's School, was supported by the Egerton ladies over a period of nearly a hundred years. It taught the girls 'whatever would render them useful to society'.

In the gardens at Tatton there is still a cedar tree and hothouses with orchids though there is no Lord Cumnor to potter around the estate. I have not the slightest doubt that he was the double of Wilbraham Egerton (1781-1856). On several occasions he entered in his carefully kept accounts, 'Five shillings in half pence to the school children'; or 'Gave £1 to a poor man at Ashley who had lost his cow'. Compare this with Lord Cumnor (p.552), 'If ever a peer was an old woman Lord Cumnor was that peer; but he was a very good natured old woman, and rode about on his stout old cob with his pockets full of half pence for the children, and little packets of snuff for the old people'.

He served the county as M.P. between 1812 and 1832 - 'one of the respectable country gentlemen whose influence is so much more felt than seen' (Annual Register, Obituary 1856). His son, William, followed him into Parliament, becoming the first Lord Egerton in 1859. And Mrs Gaskell's version of their political career:-

'If Lord Hollingford had not been returned for the county on the Whig interest - as his father had been before him, until he succeeded to the title - it is quite probable Lord Cumnor would have considered the British constitution in danger.'

You will meet Wilbraham Egerton again when I introduce you to Captain Hill alias Captain Brown.

Of course, she made sure no one would see the connection for the Egertons were Tories, not Whigs!

I have my theories about the Hamleys, too, but will follow them another time. Mrs Gaskell's advice to a would-be novelist (G.L.420) was to 'imagine yourself a spectator and auditor of every scene and event; I'm sure she and I see 'Wives and Daughters' taking place in and around Knutsford.

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# ADDITIONS TO THE KNUTSFORD COLLECTION

by Mary Thwaite

CRANFORD by Mrs Gaskell. Illustrated by Joan Hassall  
The Black Swan Press, Wantage, 1985, £7.95  
(ISBN 0 905475 06 2)

This edition, the first in a new series of English classics, reproduces illustrations and some of the decorative designs from the wood-engravings made by the renowned artist, Joan Hassall, for an edition published in 1940 by Harrap. This was evidently planned and in hand before war-time shortages hampered good book production, for this earlier edition (long out of print, but now to be seen in the Gaskell collection at Manchester City Library) is altogether a production of high artistic excellence - paper, print, page and pictures designed into a pleasing harmony.



Miss Jenkyns reading *Rasselas*

Although this present volume cannot compete in the quality of book design, it is printed by Letterpress on good paper and bound in buckram. Although not all the Hassall wood-cuts are included it is most welcome as reviving interest in what was a rather different treatment, unsentimental, yet sympathetic in style, and in contrast to some of the earlier fussy and nostalgic delineations of the Cranford world.

This new edition is, on its own merits, most worthy to present this most famous work by Mrs Gaskell.

Black Swan Press have taken pains to reproduce from the original blocks. They are planning to publish 'Wives and Daughters' using the George du Maurier illustrations.

(Ed. Available from good bookshops or direct from The Black Swan Press, 28 Bosley's Orchard, Grove, Wantage, Oxon. It is the only hardback edition of Cranford in print)

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The Great Writers: Their Lives, Works and Inspiration

Elizabeth Gaskell: CRANFORD

No. 24 of a fortnightly series published by Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd, 58 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PA.

Also supplied a hardback copy of "Cranford" 1987. Price £3.95 (inc. postage)

This attractive production (A4 in size) forms pages 554-578 of a fortnightly series begun in 1986, the first twenty-six issues covering 19th century writers. The aim is obviously to interest the general reader, and number 24, devoted to Mrs Gaskell, offers a popular survey, with plentiful pictures, mostly in colour, of the writer's life, art and background. Within its limits it succeeds very well, notwithstanding a few minor mis-statements, and although "Cranford" is made the special feature, it is not allowed to dominate the whole. There are sections on the writer's work, life, and brief summaries of the major

works. "Sources of inspiration", the final part, is devoted almost entirely to "The Poor Man's Charter" and seems to give undue prominence to the history of Chartism, compared with space allowed to other subjects, for example details of the minor writings and short stories. These are only described as they appear in one collection, "Tales of Mystery and Horror", published by Gollancz in 1978, now out of print, a collection of seven items, not thirty as stated on page 569.

The publication is well designed and illustrations are a main feature, covering not only photographs, facsimiles, portraits etc, but supplementary Victorian paintings and illustrations reflecting background or similar episodes to those in the Gaskell novels. For example, Von Herkomer's "Hard Times" is used for the social novels, and contemporary fashion designs are reproduced for the caps and headgear so dear to the Cranford ladies.

No guidance is offered as to further reading, but the work is useful as an introduction which may allure readers not yet familiar with the Gaskell world.

The copy of "Cranford" supplied with the issue of No. 24 in the series is a hardback reprint of the 1911 edition published by Cassell, slightly magnified in size. It is not illustrated except for a frontispiece of a sketch from the Samuel Lawrence portrait.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES SEMINAR

Saturday April 30th at the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

Alan Shelston, J G Sharps, Kenn Oultram and Joan Leach hope to attend this. Let me know if you would like to come. £3 fee

\* \* \* \* \*

The Angela Thirkell Society at Birkenhead organised a most enjoyable coffee morning for guest societies which several of us attended. This was such a success that it may be repeated. Send SAE if you would like details.

\* \* \* \* \*



THE GASKELL SERVANTS by Joan Leach

Roy Charnock, one of our book collector and dealer members, sent me the following excerpt from the Manchester Guardian dated 11th of October 1932:

"The Maid's Medicine"

Sir,

A rather curious incident illustrating the regard the Gaskells had for their servants to which Mr Allan Monkhouse refers in his "Book man's Notes" in your issue of October 7, came under my notice in, I think, 1883.

The daughters, Miss Gaskell and Miss Julia, who were living at 84 Plymouth Grove, had as medical attendant a physician whose abilities and fame were considerable. One morning one of the sisters called upon the chemist, a gentleman whose establishment was well known in Oxford Road, to ask him if he would recommend them to some other medical man. The chemist, who was in all things most discreet, did, however, venture to give some indication of surprise. He was told with some little display of feeling that Dr ----'s medicine had not been suiting her sister and the doctor, who had been asked to prescribe for one of the servants, had suggested that the abandoned physic would serve the needs of the maid. Of course, the idea of such a makeshift treatment of their servants was unthinkable.

I don't know whether the senior physician or the fortunate junior who succeeded him ever learned the true inwardness of the transaction; they have both joined the great majority. Yrs. &c

William Kirkby

Old Mill House, Darley Bridge, nr. Matlock. Oct 8

I was curious as to why this letter had appeared in the paper in 1932, so I checked the Manchester Guardian microfilm. On October 7th there was a review of 'The Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton',

edited by Jane Whitehill, which had just been published by O.U.P.

The reviewer noted the frequent appearance of Meta and Julia in the letters written by 'their admiring and devoted mother and there are many among us yet who will recall these gracious hostesses'. Elsewhere I saw a description of soirees held by Meta and Julia as a cross between the court of Louis XIV and Cranford!

In a letter from E.G. to Charles Eliot Norton she wrote, of one of the servants, 'I tell her I am writing to you, she bids (or asks me) to say she wished you would come back here again and adds, 'I liked him before he came into the house, I saw he was a good gentleman of the right sort as he stood on the steps'.

It must have been this quote, in the review, which called forth the memory of the Guardian's correspondent.

Another excerpt concerned Silverdale, where E.G. described the guide 'sitting sternly on his white horse the better to be seen when daylight ebbs', and she related how she had 'contrived to dine fifteen people, as hungry as hunters, on shrimps bread and butter'. Perhaps some of you will be able to sample Morecambe Bay shrimps later this year.

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Professor Marroni reports that two recent translations into Italian have been published of books by Mrs. Gaskell, formerly not available. These are:

Elizabeth Gaskell, La Vita di Charlotte Bronte, tradotta da Simone Buffa di Castelferro. Milano. La Tartaruga Edizione. 1987. pp. 531

Elizabeth Gaskell, Storie di donne, di bimbe e di streghe, racconti tradotti da Marisa Sestito. (Lois the witch, The Old Nurse's story, The Poor Clare, The Well of Pen-Morfa, "Susan Dixon" (Half a lifetime ago). Firenze. Giunti, 1988. (Collana "Astrea" series)

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SILVERDALE

by Elsie Davis

I had an opportunity to visit Silverdale (North Lancashire) a few weeks ago. My daughter lives and works in the area and knows the district well enough to escort me to the village where the Gaskell family first stayed for six weeks in 1850 and fell in love with the place.

Elizabeth Gaskell described it to a friend in these words: 'Silverdale is hardly to be called the seaside as it is a little dale running down to Morecambe Bay, with gray limestone rocks on all sides, which in the sun or moonlight glisten like silver. And we are keeping holiday in the most unusual farmhouse lodgings so that the children learn country interests and ways of living'.

This was written from Lindeth Farm ... but on future holidays they stayed at Lindeth Lodge, which they spoke of as the Wolf House because a wolf figures in the heraldic device over the door; and then at Lindeth Tower, a stone-built folly erected by a retired Preston banker in 1842. This building was four storeys high with a single room on each landing. Elizabeth used the room on the top floor for her writing where, according to farm workers, she was seen at work in the early morning as they were on their way to the fields. 'One is never disappointed in coming back to Silverdale', she wrote, 'the secret is the expanse of view'.

(She stayed here with her daughters during the Summer months to escape from the polluted atmosphere of industrial Manchester where they lived, to enjoy the pure sea and country air of Silverdale, and the Lakeland breezes from the North)

'It is certain that many of her books were conceived, and some may possibly have been written, in Lindeth Tower. It is of interest to note that the title of one of her books, Cranford, which is based on the town of Knutsford in Cheshire, happens to have been the

early name of Carnforth, a mere four miles away from Silverdale. Silverdale itself is Abermouth in her novel "Ruth".

Lindeth Tower is still standing and so is Lindeth Lodge that the Gaskells always spoke of as Wolf House; this is now the Wolf House Gallery of Arts and Crafts and retains its wolf crest.

Mrs Gaskell's own name is perpetuated locally in the name of the Village Hall, The Gaskell Memorial Hall, opened in 1931. There is a large portrait of her on the wall just inside the doorway.

\* \* \* \* \*

JOHN SEELY HART

by Christine Lingard

The Gaskell collection in the Manchester Central Library has acquired a valuable item once the property of Mrs Gaskell - a copy of John Seely Hart's Essay on the life and writings of Edmund Spenser with a special exposition of the Faery Queen, New York, 1847. It is inscribed:-

To the author of "Mary Barton" as a testimony of respect for her genius and for her admirable sentiments expressed in her work.

John S Hart, Philadelphia, Oct. 10, 1849

John Seely Hart (1810-1877) was at that time Principal of Philadelphia High School and the author of a number of books on English grammar and the Sunday School movement. He was also the editor of the journal Sartain's Union Magazine which in July 1849 carried an article entitled 'The last generation in England' by the author of Mary Barton communicated for Sartain's Magazine by Mary Howitt. Much of the material in this essay was reworked and polished to become Our Society at Cranford (Household Words, December 1851). The text of this essay was reproduced as an appendix to the Oxford University Press edition of Cranford (1972) edited by Elizabeth Porges Watson.

How Hart's book came into Mrs Gaskell's possession is recorded in her letter of April 28th 1850 (Chapple and Pollard ed no. 71). The book remained in the household until the sale of 84 Plymouth Grove in 1913. Manchester acquired it from a bookseller in Northern Ireland. It is a rare item in its own right despite the Gaskell connection. There is no copy in the British Library.

Elizabeth Gaskell's letter to John Seely Hart:-

April 28th 1850

Dear Sir,

It is only an hour since I received your 'Essay on the Fairy Queen' &c; but I will not lose any more time before thanking you for the pleasure which I promise myself in reading your book, and still more for the kind feeling towards me, which induced you to send it. I received a note from you, containing an expression of this feeling which gratified me exceedingly, although I am ashamed to think how long a time has elapsed without my answering it. But, owing to some mischance, the book, (the Essay,) was not to be found. Mrs Howitt had sent it to my publishers, who had mislaid it, and forgotten the very fact of its receipt. I have written often to try if I, at this distance, could find out where it was in London; and I did not like writing to you before I could acknowledge it's safe arrival. Will you forgive me?

The pamphlets you name are not to be heard of anywhere, but the fact of your sending them remains the same, and it gives me great pleasure to think of it. The writing of 'Mary Barton' was a great pleasure to me; and I became so deeply, sometimes painfully, interested in it, that I don't think I cared at the time of it's publication what reception it met with. I was sure a great deal of it was truth, and I knew that I had realized all my people to myself so vividly that parting with them was like parting with friends. But the reception it met with was a great surprise to me.

I neither expected the friends nor the enemies which it has made me. But the latter I am thankful to say are disappearing while the former are (some of them) friends for life. A good deal of it's success I believe was owing to the time of it's publication, - the great revolutions in Europe had directed people's attention to the social evils, and the strange contrasts which exist in old nations. However, I must not intrude upon your time, which sounds to be most valuable, and to be devoted to the highest purposes. I have not told you though how I have liked to receive an expression of approval from an American.

Yours very truly

E. C. GASKELL

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Highwayman Higgins was none other than Mr Robinson Higgins of Mrs Gaskell's 'The Squire's Story' - 'quite the gentleman, said the Landlord of The George Inn.'

In Knutsford, where he arrived in 1757 and was married to a respectable local lady at the Parish Church, he was accepted in the best society; at the Assemblies, the card parties and the hunting field but his nefarious career ended on the gallows at Carmarthen in 1767. I hope to tell his story in a book on 'Townfolk', later this year, meanwhile you can buy this charming Staffordshire fairings-type figure for £56, each hand painted.



WHAT THE HOWITTS DID

by Joan Leach

Reading a book about Australian history (Isn't everyone in this bicentennial year?) I was surprised to learn that the Howitt family had played a part.

William and Mary Howitt, you will remember, encouraged Elizabeth Gaskell by printing her first published story 'Libby Marsh's Three Eras', in their Journal. For this she used the pen-name, 'Cotton Mather Mills' - Cotton Mather was a New England divine and scholar and will be the subject of a later article.

Although Elizabeth's success as a writer soon eclipsed theirs, the Howitts long regarded her as their protégée.

At the age of 60, William and two sons, Alfred (22) and Charlton (15) joined the Australian gold rush, hoping, if not to make his fortune, at least to ensure a comfortable old age. Needless to say he returned two years later with no gold, but not disappointed with the experience which provided him with material for several books:

'A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia', 'The Squatters' Home' (three volumes), 'Land, Labour and Gold or Two Years in Victoria' (two volumes), and 'The History of Discovery in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand'.

This type of writing was typical of the steady output from his and Mary's pen; between them they produced over two hundred books! The most successful were, perhaps, 'The Rural Life of England' and 'The Seasons'. Both the Howitts worked hard but were never wealthy; Howitts Journal, launched with idealistic hopes of providing good reading for the masses, had to be abandoned after three volumes, leaving them disappointed and in debt. Elizabeth had contributed an essay on 'Clopton House' for the first volume of 'Visits to Remarkable Places'; there were two other volumes; these and 'Homes and Haunts of British Poets' were successful and have been used as reference books ever since.

The Australian adventure was not forgotten for Alfred

stayed on, becoming famous a few years later when he led the expedition to discover the fate of Burke and Wills, lost while attempting the first South to North coast crossing. Alfred found one survivor to tell the tale. He received a hero's welcome when he brought the bodies back for public burial.

The Howitts shared many of their literary and artistic friends with Elizabeth Gaskell; one was Mrs Frederika Bremer, a Swedish novelist whose books were translated by Mary Howitt. However, her friendship was a doubtful asset. Elizabeth described her (G.L.105) as a 'quaint, droll little lady of 60 ... she had annoyed Mrs Davenport and Mrs Stanley by her habit of - how shall I express it? - spitting right and left at the Exhibition and not entirely sparing private home'.

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If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

We are grateful to The Black Swan Press, Wantage, Oxon, for permission to reproduce the picture on our cover - Joan Hassall's wood-cut which appeared in 'Cranford'

# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1988

NO. 6

EDITOR'S LETTER

Literary societies come in all sizes and styles but have in common a commitment to one particular writer. Members join to share this interest in various ways. Our Society is still developing and our committee welcomes suggestions and comments. Are you getting what you expect from the Society? Participation can be on various levels and many members are happy just to receive our literature, even if distance does not preclude them from attending meetings in person. I sometimes get carried away with enthusiasm and almost chartered a train to go to Silverdale, then found I had difficulty in filling a coach! So we need feedback on what members like and expect.

For local members, I hope we will have regular study/discussion meetings this autumn, but I need to know whether this idea appeals and what times will be suitable.

I hope that through the newsletter and journal all members feel in touch with the Gaskell world. During the forthcoming Gaskell year I hope a London meeting will be arranged - perhaps S.E. members will suggest a venue.

Most of us have wide literary interests, so contact with other societies is enjoyable. We were pleased to welcome a hundred members of the Bronte Society to Knutsford on June 7th. After lunch at The Royal George - the Old Assembly Rooms of Cranford and 'Wives and Daughters' - Gaskell Society members guided them around the town. We all enjoyed meeting and were blessed with a fine day.

The Alliance of Literary Societies has been a loose federation, acting at times as a pressure group, but the meeting held at Birmingham on April 30th resulted in such a useful exchange of ideas that a further seminar is to be held on October 8th to further the formation of a new, closer Alliance of member societies, with a committee to be appointed.

I have a list of many other literary societies, so if you have another favourite writer you might like to check it. I have been sent literature by the newly-formed Ghost Story Society, as Mrs Gaskell's 'Old Nurse's Story' is a fine example of the genre. Elsewhere in this newsletter there are details of the Dickens Fellowship.

Literary Societies seem to be making news: BBC Radio 4 are researching for a programme and a journalist from Harper and Queen magazine came to Knutsford to find out about us.

We have something to look forward to in the shape of a television documentary on Mrs Gaskell and the Gregs of Styal. Julian Farino, who researched for the film, has kindly written about this for us.

Lastly, to wind up our year in style, Professor Yamawaki has written to me with the news that the Gaskell Society of Japan is well on the way to being formed. What a pleasure it is to make friends through literature.

JOAN LEACH

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#### OBITUARY

Just as this newsletter was going to press we received the sad news that our chairman, Dr Ken Walley, had died on August 12th. He had been in poor health for some time but carried on courageously with his interests and commitments; only three days previously he had been at a local council meeting, and the day before he died I had seen him to discuss Gaskell meetings.

When the 150th anniversary of Mrs Gaskell's birth was celebrated in Knutsford, Dr Walley was actively involved. He loved Knutsford and its history and traditions, working on town and county councils for the public good.

We shall miss him in the Gaskell Society.

JOAN LEACH

#### GETTING TO KNOW MRS G.

by Julian Farino

When I picked up Winifred Gerin's biography of Elizabeth Gaskell, I was struck immediately by the quotation chosen as the frontispiece. "I am myself and nobody else, and can't be bound by another's rules".

Unfortunately, the same cannot always be said for the life of a television researcher. We are bound by the rules of producers and executive producers, we work to order; it is not difficult to perceive that researching Blind Date is a far cry from World in Action.

Consequently, when I first heard about a series of films to be made detailing historical individuals of the 19th Century - in the North West, as these were 'local' programmes - I was suitably excited. Whereas a lot of television has a fast turnover rate, this was a meaty subject into which to sink my teeth.

The original idea was a loose one. The films - an hour's length each - would focus on the lives of lesser known philanthropists or radicals. Preliminary reading was done, largely by producer Bill Jones. One film would be about soap king Lord Leverhulme, another about the early women's movement. The third had an original working title of "The Manchester Set", and was to include figures such as Ruskin, Engels and James Kay as well as Mrs Gaskell. The Gregs of Styal were also floating around as a possibility, given the beautiful locations and a story of family intrigue to rival Dallas.

It didn't take long to realise that to do justice to all these notables in a one-hour film was ambitious to say the least. How we came to decide to limit the film to just the Gregs and Mrs Gaskell isn't entirely clear. True, they are connected (William Rathbone Greg's famous review of Mary Barton, Mrs Gaskell's friendship with Samuel Greg junior etc.) and it would open the possibility of exploring the world of the non-conformist Unitarians. Perhaps it was simply that Bill Jones enjoyed Mary Barton so much.

When I joined the production - comprising just three of us, producer, director and researcher - I had five weeks to set up two weeks' filming. That is, to become an expert on Mrs Gaskell, to view all the possible locations, and to decide how we would tell the story. Obviously I wouldn't be idle, my days were to be of William Gaskell proportions.

I had already read Mary Barton and North and South, when I was at University doing a social history paper. Mary Barton I remember particularly; I read it in just over a day, unable to put it down, revelling in the chance to read 'a good yarn' rather than another dense text. I easily forgave the corny ending (North and South I found a tamer version of the same theme), and for a couple of days wandered round saying "It's the poor, and only the poor, as look after themselves" (six years on, this is probably a gross misquote).

Even so, I didn't feel I knew Mrs Gaskell the person at all before this project. Trying to probe her character - not an easy task - was the most enjoyable challenge. Gerin's cogent biography, whilst brilliant on detail, I didn't find that illuminating; if anything, just a touch sycophantic. John Chapple's edited letters I enjoyed much more\*: Mrs Gaskell's energy and impulsive enthusiasm became far more apparent.

Alongside all this reading, plenty was happening. It was decided that the films would include at least ten minutes of 'drama-documentary', so the director was busy casting "Mrs Gaskell". Eileen Tully, who plays her, has a distinctive and extremely Victorian face, and turned out to be excellent. The scene at young Williams's grave in Warrington is very moving, and apart from seeing Eileen smoking off-camera, she was entirely convincing. Later, in the cutting room, we discovered there is an uncanny resemblance between Eileen and Mrs Gaskell's daughter: do watch out for it in the film.

\*Elizabeth Gaskell - A Portrait in Letters.  
J A V Chapple. MUP 1980

As we pieced together the story, draft storylines were written and re-worked. Contacts were made - obviously to Joan for general information at the drop of a hat and for expertise on Knutsford, and to John Chapple, plus several people in connection with the Gregs. We visited Heathwaite, Plymouth Grove, Cross St Chapel, The Portico Library and various other Manchester locations still in existence, but it was at Silverdale where we grew really excited. One could totally empathise with Mrs Gaskell's urge to escape there, and we decided that - with the owner of Lindeth Tower, Mrs Horsley's, permission - we would shoot the bulk of the drama there. When it came, we were blessed with the only sunshine of this miserable summer.

The days prededing our two weeks filming were hectic. Everything has to be in place, one has to be sure that pictures will match words and justice will be done to the story. We filmed in Knutsford, Manchester and Silverdale for the Mrs Gaskell part of the story. Everybody enjoyed it immensely - always a good sign for the final product.

One never has much time to linger in this business. As the director finished editing the film, I was already well underway researching a film about dogs. In hindsight, I enjoyed working on 'Voices for Change', as the three films are to be collectively known, immensely. When Joan asked me to write these notes, she suggested I say how I thought of Mrs Gaskell both before and after. Well, perhaps a little cheekily, I'll leave you to see the film to find out, for my impressions are accurately reflected there. It now looks as though transmission won't be until January, since the schedules have been thrown by the Olympics. I hope you enjoy it, and feel we give a fair appraisal. As they say, you've read the books, now ...

\* \* \* \* \*

THE PORTICO LIBRARY and THE GASKELLS. While researching the Portico Library records for her book on William Gaskell, Barbara Brill noted that these show books borrowed by William and, no doubt, read by ELIZABETH. Barbara plans some further research.



# OUTING TO SILVERDALE

by Joan Leach

On a fair morning, on July 3rd, a group of intrepid Gaskellians set forth from Knutsford by coach en route for Silverdale with me as guide - that is why I call them 'intrepid' for, as I had not had the opportunity of travelling the route ahead, it was something of a journey of discovery, akin to a pilgrimage. Of course, I had been thorough in my research and our destination was certain for Silverdale might well be the Mecca of Gaskell followers.

Mrs Gaskell wrote to Lady Kay Shuttleworth (G.L.72a, undated but probably 1850) of the family's 'annual migration' to Silverdale 'with grey limestone rocks on all sides which in the sun or moonlight glisten like silver' and 'our children learn country interests and ways of living and thinking'. And, later, 'I think - and it is pleasant to think, - that one is never disappointed in coming back to Silverdale ... such wide plains of golden sands with purple hill shadows, - or fainter wandering filmy cloud shadows & the great dome of sky. - We have not sat up all night on our tower this time ...' (G.L.401, July 1858). This description was to Charles Eliot Norton and in a previous letter she had drawn him a sketch 'We live in a queer pretty crampy house at the back of a great farmhouse. Our house is built round a square court, - Stay. We have all that is shaded'. Here in the printed version of the letters is a reference to the footnote, 'Mrs Gaskell is referring to a plan she drew here'. The original letter is owned by Harvard University Library, so I requested a photocopy.

She was so economical with her use of paper that it is difficult to interpret, but they clearly had more living space than the Tower. '... the rectangular piece is two stories high, the little bit by the lane one story' - this was the kitchen, the lower storey of the Tower being the larder.

town with his brother / to Silverdale (near  
Lancaster - you must have heard of  
- speak of it, - close to Lancaster sands.  
+ Mrs Gaskell's house at Silverdale  
comes to stay with me, - need there be  
I shall come here ~~for~~ <sup>down</sup> for six weeks, and at  
it as strong as horses it is to be hoped  
we live in a queer pretty crampy  
house, at the back of a great farmhouse.  
Our house is built round a square  
court, - Stay. <sup>Good</sup> <sup>1850</sup> <sup>1850</sup> we have all that  
is shaded, the  
rectangular piece  
is two stories  
high, the little bit by the  
lane one story. Said little  
bit being kitchen & larder  
bed rooms; the larder is round with

Plan of Silverdale

Up to 1852 at least, William accompanied the family, he liked to 'play pranks, go cockling etc etc and feel at liberty to say or do what he likes' without any visitors, to make him 'feel constrained and obliged to be proper'. In later years he had to be coaxed to take a break from Manchester cares and relaxed on holiday away from family responsibilities; perhaps too, he found the open house hospitality at Silverdale overwhelming. He was not one of the party of '15 people who had to dine on shrimps & bread and butter,- and when they asked for more (I) had to tell them there was no bread nearer than Milnthorpe 6 miles off' (G.L.394).

Knowing Silverdale was so much a part of the Gaskell family life gave it a special significance for us, as we saw the same sandy bay, the wide sky, grey limestone walls, rocks and lichens.

After we left the motorway, near Carnforth, the roads became narrow and winding but we had no difficulty in finding The Silverdale Hotel for coffee, where we met more of our party and our local guide, Audrey Fishwick, who, having learnt of our Society when I made enquiries, joined as a member and offered to guide us. This was no easy task as access was restricted for coaches.

First we sought the Tower which was unmistakable against the skyline, set back behind a high stone wall, in a delightful garden. Mrs Horsley, the owner, had agreed to let ten of us see inside the Tower and mount the narrow staircase to the top where Mrs Gaskell loved to write, with the expansive view of sea and sky. All our party had the pleasure of walking in the garden close to the Tower and being able to mount the 'high terrace at the top of the broad stone wall, looking down on the Bay' (G.L.391). Only a week or two before our visit the Granada film crew had filmed here, so we hope all Gaskellians will share the experience.

Close by we visited the Wolf House, now an art gallery and gift shop, before making our way back to the village for lunch. It would have been pleasant to have more



time to explore the area which Mrs Gaskell knew so well. 'Oh! we are getting so sorry to leave Silverdale. We know all the people here & they know us'. Just how true this was is evident from a letter of October 1857 (G.L.376a) when she and Meta took an unplanned, impromptu holiday and tramped around the village, seeking accommodation at various houses.

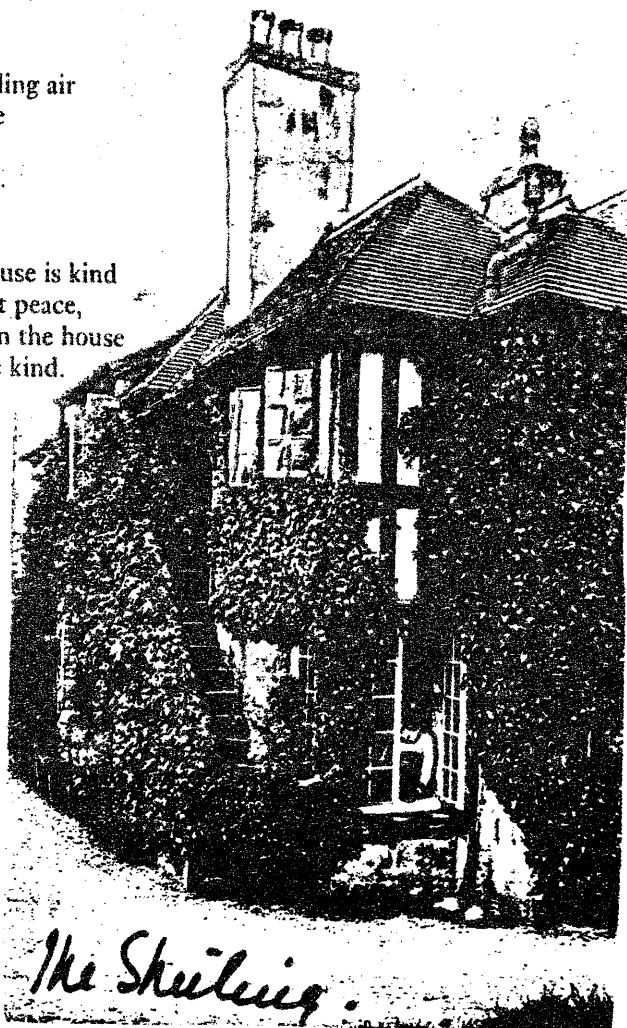
The Silverdale area can be recognised in several Gaskell works; the treacherous Morecambe Bay crossing

It stands alone  
 Up in a land of stone  
 All worn like ancient stairs,  
 A land of rocks and trees  
 Nourished on wind and stone.

And all within  
 Long delicate has been;  
 By arts and kindliness  
 Coloured, sweetened, and warmed  
 For many years has been.

Safe resting there  
 Men hear in the travelling air  
 But music, pictures see  
 In the same daily land  
 Painted by the wild air.

One maker's mind  
 Made both, and the house is kind  
 To the land that gave it peace,  
 And the stone has taken the house  
 To its cold heart and is kind.



where lives were lost and from Lindeth Tower the guide could be seen 'a square man sitting stern on his white horse (the better to be seen when daylight ebbs) ... leading (the) slow moving train of crossers' (G.L.394) gave the setting for 'The Sexton's Hero'. It also became 'Abermouth' where the dramatic scenery added to the emotional tension of the story (chapter 24). The water-lily scene (chapter 6) was drawn from Gaskell's memory of Deepdale Pool but we were not able to visit it on this occasion as it involved a rural walk.

We did however enjoy a lovely field-walk overlooking the Bay. Audrey directed us to this and tried to persuade our driver to rendezvous with us at the other end; unfortunately he gave up trying to negotiate the narrow road and Audrey had some difficulty in reuniting us. We almost missed this walk when a few spots of rain made us hesitate but were so glad we had not been deterred; it encapsulated the beautiful, unspoilt natural beauty which drew the Gaskell family here. At the top of a lane called The Cove was the house which Rev Carus Wilson bought as a holiday convalescent home for the Cowan Bridge school, but there is no evidence that any of the Bronte children stayed there - surely Mrs Gaskell would have mentioned this?

We had one more stop to make, at The Sheiling. This was the house built by Meta and Julia Gaskell - the Miss Gaskells - as their retreat from Manchester. The recent owners, Mr and Mrs Baker, kindly allowed us to visit this attractive house, with something of the Swiss chalet in its design, set in its own woodlands. Edward Thomas wrote a poem about it (see opposite) from which it seems that the house was once less enclosed by woods and that it retained the Gaskell aura. The poet had been visiting Gordon Bottomley, poet and dramatist who bought the house in 1914. At a sale of his furniture two chairs were listed as having been given to Mrs Gaskell by Charlotte Bronte and acquired by him with the house.

To complete our day we visited Levens Hall with its fascinating topiary gardens. We were sorry to go home without thanking our guide, Audrey, as we had unwittingly parted company. She arrived at Leighton Hall, but our coach driver had difficulty with narrow roads so we got lost.

The countryside was so lovely and there was so much to see that a weekend would be the best way to enjoy it. Now that reminds me, some day I shall want to visit Whitby, Sylvia's country; would any members like to consider a long weekend trip?

14. IX. 00  
From the two  
Miss Gaskells  
(we hate "the  
Misses G."!)



You will receive copies of all  
the volumes of the New Edition\*  
from us, for the library; but  
please don't think it necessary  
to acknowledge each volume.

\* Referring to the complete KNUTSFORD EDITION in 8 volumes

\* \* \* \* \*

# BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

The Folio Society has added Cranford to its collection. The text is based on the 1864 edition and the illustrations are the wood-engravings of Joan Hassall which first appeared in the Harrap edition in 1940 and are also available in an edition published by Black Swan Press, in 1984. Added is a six page introduction by the novelist Susan Hill praising the subtleties of the novel. Folio society publications are normally only available to members but a copy is available in the Gaskell collection, Manchester.

There have been no new books devoted to Mrs Gaskell since the last issue with the exception of Brodies notes on Mrs Gaskell's 'North and South' by Graham Handley published by Pan at £1.95. These slim volumes are intended as revision aids for students of GCE 'A' level and consist of plot summaries, character studies, textual notes and sample questions. There is a similar volume devoted to Cranford.

The framework of fiction: socio-cultural approaches to the novel by J.A. Bull (Senior Lecturer at Manchester Polytechnic) Macmillan, 1987. (£20.00). Chapter 5, entitled 'The Novelist in the Market Place: Dickens and Mrs Gaskell', deals with the structure of the novel and, in particular, how the demands of publishers and circulating libraries such as Mudies for a three volume work influenced not only the form and length of the novel but also the change of title from John Barton to Mary Barton, made at the behest of Chapman and Hall, altered the whole emphasis of the book.

The Victorian novelist: social problems and social change edited by Kate Flint. Croom Helm, 1987 (£27.50). A series of extracts from contemporary English literature and documentary material which bear directly on the fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens. In particular the Unitarian Domestic Mission Society Reports of the Mission to the poor; Peter Gaskell's Manufacturing population of England - 1833; and Thomas

Middleton's Annals of Hyde and district, 1899, which itself drew on earlier source material such as local newspapers describing the murder of Thomas Ashton as a possible source for the murder of Henry Carson in Mary Barton. In contrast strikes prevented by a Preston manufacturer (John Goodair) is quoted as a contrast to Mrs Gaskell's treatment of the strike in North and South.

The Gaskell collection, Manchester, has also benefited from the gift by Mrs Eileen Ellison of a copy of her thesis for the degree of B.A. at Liverpool Polytechnic School of Librarianship and Information Science. Mrs Ellison is to be congratulated for her work: Feminine self-sacrifice in the nineteenth century novel; Ruth by Elizabeth Gaskell, a critical bibliography of a much overlooked novel. All entries provide annotations averaging two hundred words and results in one of the most extensive studies of Ruth ever produced.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### BROOK STREET CHAPEL

Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 came the Act of Toleration in 1689 which allowed dissenters to build their own chapels. Brook Street Chapel dates from this time so will be celebrating its tercentenary next year.

The name of Peter Coulthurst appears on the first trust deed of 1694. It was through this ancestor of Mrs Gaskell's that Sandlebridge Farm came to the family, the Heathbridge of Cousin Phillis. The graves of Coulthursts and Hollands are close to Mrs Gaskell's in the graveyard. Among the ministers were a Holland and a Turner.

This chapel which she knew and loved from cradle to grave is showing signs of its age; 'the plain white-washed walls' are damp; 'The little diamond-shaped loaded panes still cast a green gloom, not without its solemnity within' but some have fallen into disrepair and are now replaced by plain glass temporary windows. At least £30,000 will be needed for restoration work. Any donation will be appreciated.

#### THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

This Fellowship was founded in 1902 with membership open to all lovers of the works of Charles Dickens. There are some twenty branches in the UK and a similar number in North America, and others around the world.

Manchester formerly had an active branch and it is hoped to re-establish this. A meeting with a Dickens entertainment is planned for December in Manchester; if you would like details, please send s.a.e. to - Rev R.R. Carmyllie, 27 Oaks Lane, Bradshaw, Bolton BL2 3RR.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### BLEAK HOUSE IN CHESHIRE?

Barbara Brill noticed an interesting paragraph in 'Cheshire' by T.A. Coward (Methuen, 1932) chapter IX, p.204:

'Robert Langton, author of 'The Childhood and Youth of Dickens' believed that Tabley Old Hall may have suggested the Chesney Wold of 'Bleak House' for he learnt that Dickens and Hablot K. Browne visited the neighbourhood more than once and knew Lord de Tabley. The owner of Chesney Wold is called Sir Leicester Dedlock ...'

The family name of Lord de Tabley was Leicester - the last owner Colonel Leicester Warren died some ten years ago. Bleak House original - if either Dickens or his illustrator had one in mind - is more likely to have been Rockingham Castle in Lincolnshire. Alan S. Watts, hon. secretary of The Dickens Fellowship, Barbara Brill and myself, having considered the evidence, find very little to confirm the idea of Tabley being an inspiration for Bleak House. Mrs Gaskell met illustrator, Hablot Browne at Dickens' dinner table (G.L.45a).

It is interesting to note that F.R. Leavis in his introduction to 'Felix Holt' by George Eliot (Everyman edition) thought Treby Manor owed much to Chesney Wold of 'Bleak House'.

\* \* \* \* \*

WIVES AND DAUGHTERS: A FURTHER NOTE

by Angus Easson

I was delighted by the Newsletter's review of my edition of Wives and Daughters. Christine Lingard is of course correct in noting that the Penguin edition claims to be the first based on the Cornhill Magazine serialisation, but the claim itself cannot be sustained. As comparison of even just the first chapter shows, whatever the Penguin is using as the basis of its text, it is not the Cornhill. By basing the World's Classics on the magazine serialisation and taking the opportunity of incorporating corrections from the manuscript, I can claim to represent more faithfully than any previous version what Elizabeth Gaskell intended.

More controversial is the question of setting, which Joan Leach picks up in 'Hollingford alias Knutsford'. First, we clearly do agree that many of the characteristics of Hollingford are those of Knutsford and that Tatton and the Egertons are drawn on for Cumnor Towers and its family. However, the references to Hamley being in the midland shires (p.319), to the sight of the Malvern Hills (p.482), and to the Birmingham-London railway ("this new line between Birmingham and London", p.638), minor though each may be, do build up a sense that Elizabeth Gaskell had in mind for many details of the topography somewhere other than Cheshire, deeper south, and most likely Warwickshire in the main. But no novel needs be tied to one fixed and unchanging spot.

\* \* \* \* \*

LITERARY COURSES

Embassy Hotels run a popular series of Leisure Learning Weekends which include literary themes. Next July, I am conducting a Gaskell weekend with a lively programme of visits. Send for brochure to:

Leisure Learning Weekends Ltd  
107 Station Street  
Burton upon Trent, Staffs.

JOAN LEACH

FOR YOUR SHELVES

We can supply copies of 'Wives and Daughters' OUP/PB, £3.95;

'William Gaskell, a Portrait' by Barbara Brill, M/C Lit and Phil. £7.95;

Marshall Cavendish, 'Elizabeth Gaskell' (part work magazine and copy of 'Cranford') £3.95.

Also, we have FOR LOAN -

'Cousin Phillis' on tape. £1.00 if posted, 50p otherwise

\* \* \* \* \*

REMINDER

If you will not be at the AGM, please renew your subscription - £5.00\* - s.a.e. appreciated, to:

Mrs L. Clode  
15 Mereheath Park  
Knutsford  
Cheshire WA16 6AT

\*increase to be ratified at the AGM. When we set membership at £4 there was no Journal, and postage costs keep rising

\* \* \* \* \*

Material and suggestions for future Newsletters should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN. Tel: 0565 4668

ISSN 0954 - 1209

# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1989

NO. 7

## EDITOR'S LETTER

I shall be brief because there is so much interesting material to squeeze into this newsletter. I already have enough for the next, I think.

Firstly, we must congratulate the Gaskell Society of Japan on their dynamic launch in Tokyo on 16th October. Guided by President Professor Yuriko Yamawaki of Jissen Women's University, the Society rapidly enrolled a hundred members and is already planning a journal. This international literary co-operation is so valuable in promoting friendship and understanding. There are also Brontë and Dickens Societies in Japan.

The television film made by Granada called 'Voices for Change' which features Mrs Gaskell and the Gregs of Styal Mill was a little disappointing. Firstly, it was only shown in the northern area (14th February) and, secondly, it concentrated more on the Gregs in a somewhat over-dramatised presentation, comparing them with a Dallas type dynasty. For the general viewer it was colourful and entertaining but did not put over its points clearly enough for Gaskell aficionados.

Forthcoming events are the Spring Meeting at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester on 29th April and an outing to Haworth on Wednesday 28th June. The AGM weekend will be 7/8th October.

The Alliance of Literary Societies will be holding its first AGM at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on Saturday 15th April. I have been representing our Society and Kenn Oultram has joined me for The Lewis Carroll and Randolph Caldecott Societies on a caretaking committee. Kenn has taken on the challenge of producing an Alliance Newsletter so that we may keep in touch with other groups.

PLEASE help to keep our membership list in order. With this newsletter you should receive our new-style membership card; if you do not it means that we have no note of your renewal which could be our mistake or your failure to send £5 dues. Last year we caused a muddle by enlisting the aid of Lilian Clode, as Beryl was busy planning her daughter's wedding, but now you may send your subs to Beryl Kinder, 15 Sandileigh Avenue, or to me if you have other matters to include.

We hope you will enjoy this newsletter and the Journal which is just going to print to be ready for the April meeting.

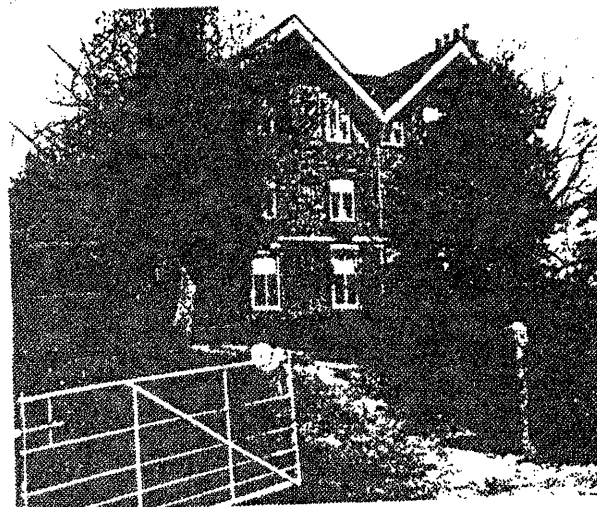
JOAN LEACH - Secretary



'The Cheshire folk differ from the rest of the English, partly better, partly equal', wrote cartographer John Speed in his Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain, published in 1611, and neither Elizabeth Gaskell nor I would disagree with that comment, but then we are all three 'Cheshire folk'! Speed continued, 'In feasting, they are friendly, at meat cheerful, in entertainment liberall, soone angry and soone pacified ... merciful to the afflicted, compassionate to the poore, kinde to their kindred, spary of labour ... not greedy in eating and far from dangerous practices'. And if Cheshire folk sound perfect, so does the countryside according to Speed: 'The Soil is fat, fruitful and rich, yeelding abundantly both profit and pleasure to man. The Champion grounds make glad the hearts of the tillers; the Meadows imbrodered with divers sweet smelling flowers; and the pastures makes the Kines udders stout to the paille from whom and wherein the best cheese of all Europe is made'. Alas, with intensive farming and use of weedkillers the meadows are no longer bright with buttercups, lady's smocks and campion but we set out on Sunday 2nd October to find the rural idyll of Cousin Phillis country.

The Heathbridge setting of the story is, without doubt, Sandlebridge, and the farm of her grandparents, only a few miles from Knutsford, sadly pulled down in 1960 though some of the farm buildings remain alongside the new farm and houses. You may recall a happy letter written by Elizabeth dated Sandlebridge May 1836: 'I wish I could paint my present situation to you. Fancy me sitting in an old fashioned parlour, 'doors and windows opened wide', with casement window opening into a sunny court all filled with flowers which scent the air with their fragrance - in the very depth of the country - 5 miles from the least approach to a town - the song of birds, the hum of insects, the lowing of cattle the only sounds - and such pretty fields and woods all round.' We stopped our coach to read this passage, looking over the green and pleasant Cheshire fields. Dr Wendy Craik, the day before at our AGM meeting, had pointed out the 'lore and learning' in Cousin Phillis and in this letter Elizabeth went on, 'Here is a sort of standard library kept - Spenser,

Shakespear, Wordsworth and a few foreign books' ... Dante? 'Baby (Marianne) is at the very tip-top of bliss ... There are chickens and little childish pigs, & cows & calves & horses & baby horses & fish in the pond, & ducks in the lane, & the mill & the smithy ...' (G.L.4) 'We stopped almost on the bridge over the mill stream, alongside the old smithy, now converted into an attractive house.



Colthurst House  
Sandlebridge



Sandlebridge  
Mill and Smithy



Something of the light, tranquility and timelessness of the scene is recaptured in Cousin Phillis at the beginning of Part Two.

Regretting that Colthurst House/Hope Farm was no more, we drove down the lane to The Stag's Head Inn. When Doreen Pleydell and I had reconnoitred our route we wondered how this pub made a living, it seemed incongruous, more like a town centre building, but alongside it were the out-buildings which had been the thatched country-style inn of Gaskell days. Our coach pulled up to puzzled greetings from a crowd of Sunday drinkers standing around in the afternoon sunshine, wondering why we had stopped. The fields just beyond us were shown as Heathgate on an old map.

I like to think that this was the scene Mrs Gaskell had in mind when Paul Manning had been instructed by his mother to check up on family connections: 'So the next time our business took me to Heathbridge, and we were dining in the little sanded inn-parlour, I took the opportunity ... and asked the questions I was bidden ...

'Yes'; the landlord said, 'the Hope Farm was in Heathbridge proper and the owner's name was Holman, and he was an independent minister, and, as far as the landlord could tell his wife's name was Phillis ... Hope Farm is not a stone's throw from here ... it's an old place though Holman keeps it in good order'.

'Heathbridge proper' is Gaskell's local knowledge and affinity with this area showing, although so thinly populated, Great Warford is the correct name for the inn's locality while Sandlebridge was in Little Warford.

We went on just around the corner to Great Warford Baptist Chapel, a tiny, timber-framed building believed to have been founded by ex-Cromwellian soldiers; placed at the junction of three townships when the Five Mile Act forbade ejected ministers to preach near towns. Inside the small, oak box pews and over-hanging gallery had a simple, homely dignity as the golden autumn sunshine filtered through the leaded window panes. The heavy iron-studded doors were opened with an ancient blacksmith made latch with small round boss inscribed



Stag's  
Head Inn ↑  
at Great  
Warford



Baptist  
Chapel →

1712  
'No the 4th'. There is some doubt as to whether this is a date or meaning the fourth Baptist chapel in the vicinity. It was not the time to discuss genealogy but the caretaker was Mrs Holland, who told us that the chapel had been used by the BBC in the filming of Cousin Phillis.

Our next stop was Dam Head House, Mobberley, where John and Mary Holland had lived, Mrs Gaskell's great-grandparents. It had been in possession of the Holland family

from about 1650 until about 1870. The owners were pleased to let us see their garden and told us what a charming, happy home it made; they felt it had been cherished through its many years. Although Robert Holland seems to have been living here in her day, Mrs Gaskell never mentions Mobberley and probably this branch of the family were not Unitarians.

Then along the quiet Cheshire lanes to find Moss Farm Bowdon. Here the Gaskell children came to learn country ways or to recuperate from childhood illnesses in the fresh air. The farm land has been built over with stock-broker type houses and suburban roads but Moss Farm has vestiges of its former character. (You can read more of the Gaskells at Moss Farm in another part of the newsletter)

The road from Bowdon goes through Bucklow Hill where there used to be several private schools for boys and girls. As it is so close to Tatton Park or Cumnor Towers of Wives and Daughters we might have stopped to look for Mrs Fitzpatrick's school; instead we paused at the beautiful Rostherne Mere overlooked by St Mary's Church which celebrated 300 years of history in 1988. Tradition has it that a mermaid swims by subterranean passages from the sea and River Mersey to ring a bell which rolled into the mere centuries ago. As she does this only at Easter we did not linger.

By this time our pilgrim band was ready for refreshment and tea was waiting for us at Arley Hall. Our host met us in the courtyard ready to enlighten us about the history of the charming house and gardens; this he did while we enjoyed our tea so that we might have a little time to see the Victorian-style flower borders, walled gardens and lime walks. Our tour had been a full one and sadly we had less time than we would have liked here.

Mrs Gaskell knew the family history, if not the house itself, for in Cranford Sir Peter Arley was godfather to 'poor Peter' the rector's son.

Our tour through Cheshire lanes in search of Cousin Phillis country had been almost idyllic and somehow gave us a feeling of timelessness, that we were able to span the years since Elizabeth Gaskell had travelled this way.

JOAN LEACH

Bowdon's strongest literary association is probably with the Cheshire novelist Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810-65) brought up in Knutsford and after marriage having her home in Manchester. Her letters give evidence of regular visits to Bowdon, especially during the 1850s, when Moss Farm was a loved retreat from Manchester atmosphere. Surviving letters to her eldest daughter Marianne between May 1851, when Marianne was away at boarding school, and January 1857, show how much the care of Miss Walker, the farmer's sister, was valued for the younger girls during periods of convalescence.

The first reference to the Bowdon farm (not named) appears in a letter of May 1851: "The two little ones are going with Hearn to lodge at Bowden in a farmhouse on Saturday" (G.L.97). At this period Mrs Gaskell regularly used the spelling Bowden.

A letter of 4 September 1851 (G.L.101a) shows that, with the opening of the Manchester/Bowdon railway in 1849, it was possible to escape for a day to country air at the farm, which the mention of the name Walker identifies as Moss Farm (near the present South Downs Road); it was then the only Bowdon farm tenanted by Walkers. "It was a dismal morning and we doubted if it would clear off; and indeed we gave up the thought of going to spend the day at Bowden as had been planned ... Then it cleared up so I sent Hearn and the three girls off with a dinner in a basket and tea and sugar to drink tea at Miss Walkers (where they lodge you know) ... I got away after a lunch-dinner, rushed to Bowden called on Mrs Haughton. Drank tea with the children, came home at six."

Hearn was the children's trusted nurse, and the three girls Meta, then aged fourteen, Florence (Flossy or Flossie, variously spelt) eight and Julia, four.

A year later the five year old Julia was taken by her parents to Bowdon after a short, acute illness. "She is quite well now", her mother wrote to Marianne on 28 August 1852, "though easily tired and feeble owing to the hot weather; but well enough to go to Bowden with Papa and me and stronger than I was in the walking way" (G.L.130a). This suggests another day-visit; it is not

explicitly stated that the family visited the Walkers, though it seems probable.

Mrs Gaskell herself was far from strong and very busy with Manchester commitments, so the children were used to staying at Moss Farm with their nurse, without their parents. Sometimes a Gaskell servant named Mary escorted them.

A particularly interesting reference to these visits appears in a letter of May 1851: "Hearn Meta Flossie and baby (Julia) went to Bowden yesterday. Mary took them as I was too weak and Papa too busy to go; and returned last night. Flossy was dreadfully tired when she got there. You have no idea how weak and ill she looks, and how very weak she is. But I am glad to hear her appetite seems better. Mary says she enjoyed the farm house bread and eat an egg which she has not been able to do for a long time and planned to have milk put by for breakfast a la Silverdale" (G.L.97a). (The Gaskells spent about six weeks each summer at Silverdale on Morecambe Bay.) "Meta has taken crochet, Mr Scott's poems and her sketch book to Bowden."

Then comes a valuable brief description of the farm: "It is a small old fashioned farm (like Wood's at Green Heys) - at the foot of the hill. More's the pity." Mrs Gaskell would obviously have preferred fresher air on the hilltop. "They have a double bedded room and a sitting room. They will stay a fortnight I think. But much will depend on Flossy. Papa intends to go over on Thursday and see if she is gaining strength."

A later letter seems to suggest that Hearn's home may have been in Bowdon, so she was, perhaps, the connecting link between the Gaskells and the Walkers of Moss Farm.

If Mrs Gaskell wrote any letters about her own periods of staying at Moss Farm, they appear to have been lost, perhaps through the destroying zeal of her unmarried daughters Meta and Julia, in respect for their mother's love of privacy.

A descendant of the Moss Farm family, Alice Walker, in a letter dated 1944, when she was 80, reminisced about the farm with its well-drawn water, fine orchard and 'a



room opening from the main stairs, with the deep eaves of the thatch over the little paned window, the lattice opening to floor level ...' which she always knew as the one Mrs Gaskell had stayed in.

'I think it was after Grandmother Walker's death, when my father and aunts were carrying on, feeling themselves orphans though grown-up, because she was so beloved, that Mrs Gaskell came to lodge at the Moss, with her girls Florence and Julia, and their nurse. It was a happy time. When I asked Aunt W. what Mrs Gaskell was like, she said enthusiastically, "More like an angel than anything else - an angel in the house". She must have been as beautiful in disposition as looks; and she must have loved the quaint house-place, for she came again after they had "walled in" the sitting room and made the lobbies, and she cried in distress - "Oh, you've spoiled it - you've spoiled it completely." They were sorry for her disappointment, but I think they went on being glad of the warmer room. Mrs Gaskell was very happy and busy in the old parlour where the roses

were tapping on the window, and the wood fire which she loved crackling in the high grate under the 18th century high narrow mantelpiece (which I remember myself with regret). She rested on the sofa as she wrote, and they were convinced that it was "Ruth" which she wrote, as it came out after that and they fancied that something of the Moss showed on it, but I never read the sad story carefully and don't know to what they referred. I do know that Mrs Gaskell talked with Aunt B. about Charlotte Brontë and "Jane Eyre", which was exciting everybody then, and she told of her visit to Haworth and exclaimed with deep feeling: "Oh, Miss Betsey, if you could see that dreadful place and know the life there, you would be so sorry for poor, poor Charlotte!"

My aunts liked Mr Gaskell very much, and Aunt Betsey, who went to see them at their Manchester house, enjoyed herself greatly and said he was the most kindly and courteous host imaginable. I heard so much about them and always associated the bedroom with the window looking towards the wood and hill road with Mrs Gaskell, as if she had left some of her thoughts behind in it.'

Perhaps Mrs Gaskell would not recognise Moss Farm today.

We are grateful to Bowdon Historical Society for permission to use this material, and in particular to Myra Kendrick and Ronald Trenbath who are also members of our Society.

### BOOK NOTES

Woman to Woman: female friendship in Victorian fiction by Tess Coslett. The Harvester Press. £29.95

As the title suggests, this book discusses the inter-relationship of female characters with particular relationship to Shirley. Chapter 4: Earnest women and heartless flirts, deals with three novels in which the friendship of a charming, flirtatious woman, usually portrayed as an opponent or rival of the plainer more virtuous heroine, is central to the plot. It enhances and by no means detracts from the heroine's relationship to men. The novels under discussion are George Eliot's Middlemarch, Mrs Humphry Ward's Sir George Tressady and Mrs Gaskell's Wives and Daughters. The analysis of the characters of Molly Gibson and Cynthia Kirkpatrick is set against the demands of the time and the place of women in society. The author is lecturer in English Literature, University of Lancaster.

Regions of the Imagination: the development of British rural fiction by W J Keith. University of Toronto press, £20.00

This book traces the development of the regional novel from the Scottish novels of Sir Walter Scott to D H Lawrence and includes some minor figures of the early twentieth century such as Eden Phillpotts, Sheila Kaye Smith, Constance Holme, Mary Webb and John Cowper Powys. As is often the case Elizabeth Gaskell is grouped with Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot in a chapter entitled Urbanism, realism and region. Cranford it is maintained is a local rather than regional novel. The image of Knutsford portrayed was already past when the book was written and is an idealised antithesis to Manchester. The influence of the town can be seen in other guises such as the Warwickshire of My Lady Ludlow. The use of regional material is discussed not only in other novels such as Sylvia's Lovers but also in the Life of Charlotte Brontë. There is also a hint of her influence on D H Lawrence. The author is Professor of English at University College, University of Toronto.

A new biography of Charlotte Brontë has been written by Rebecca Fraser, Methuen, 1988. It is of particular interest to Gaskell students as it challenges Mrs Gaskell's view of Charlotte as "the friend, the daughter, the sister, the wife" which it is claimed overshadowed her strong, unorthodox views and her "immense determination and indomitable will". The book is consequently full of references to and quotations from the earlier biography and the epilogue describes contemporary reaction to the book. The author is the daughter of Lady Antonia Fraser and has worked as a publisher's editor. It is her first book.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

Ed.

While I was standing in a supermarket queue recently a lady told me how much she was enjoying Rebecca Fraser's book and would go on to read Mrs Gaskell's biography of Charlotte. I have not yet had time to read the new book but I doubt if the author had the same pressures to face as Elizabeth Gaskell had in 1855

This is an unpublished letter, in the possession of Dr R Jamison, written to Mrs Green, wife of Rev Henry Green then minister of Brook Street Chapel.

Gawthorpe, Friday

My Dear Mary

Upwards of 300 letters to read through/copy what is worth in 2 days, and every day a journey to take till I land at Silverdale again on Monday must be my excuse. Yes! to be sure we can take them in, and with us, just as of old. I shall pack them in among our girls any how - they know the old ways, so that's all settled - and I must go back to my work -

Yours very affely

ECG

I am always so glad to hear from you & of you, - only I can hardly write back as I should do - I have got a packet pf Fox How flower seeds from Mrs Arnold to Isabella - Oh! I do so want some quiet. I must be so busy at Silverdale.

On 24th February 1855 Mrs Gaskell was looking down from a Roman balcony. Looking up at her was a young American, Charles Eliot Norton who was to become one of her greatest friends, and confidant. Mrs Gaskell had fled to Rome with her daughters Marianne and Meta, exhausted after having just completed "Life of Charlotte Brontë". The time was ripe for her to appreciate the full colour and vibrant life of Italy. Charles Eliot Norton was exactly the right person to open her eyes to the beauties of the South. He was a student of art history, later to become professor in that subject at Harvard University. That day, carnival day in Rome, was a fiesta for all who were with the Wentworth Storys, their hosts, as Meta recollected many years later -

"I shall keep the anniversary of that carnival day when we first saw you (she wrote to him) as a festa, for I can truly say that your friendship has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life. It is sealed now, too, with deep gratitude to you for your faithful affection to Mama, which she prized as highly as she returned it truly."

It is difficult to imagine the rapport there was between those two - indeed, at 30, Norton was nearer Marianne's age than Elizabeth's - but they had so much in common that age didn't enter into it. Winifred Gerin in her biography calls it "Platonic Love". He was the perfect guide, she the perfect recipient. He was a sensitive admirer of her books, and her "generous and tender sympathies, of thoughtful kindness, of pleasant humour, of quick appreciation, of utmost simplicity and truthfulness". On her part, there was something about the Roman air, the highly romantic atmosphere, the warmth, that Elizabeth could write after her return home -

"It was in those charming Roman days that my life, at any rate, culminated. I shall never be so happy again. I don't think I was ever so happy before. My eyes fill with tears when I think of those days, and it is the same with all of us. They were the tip-top point of our lives. The girls may see happier ones - I never shall."

Perhaps it was because she arrived back in England to the "hornet's nest" occasioned by the publication of "Life



of Charlotte Brontë" that the memory of that Roman holiday seemed even more dear in her imagination.

She and Charles Eliot Norton kept up their friendship, and their correspondence, right to the end of her life. When he married he called his elder daughter "Elizabeth Gaskell Norton" and she, too, was known to her intimates as "Lily". It was to him that Elizabeth wrote that delightful letter about having so many things to do before 10.30 in the morning. He shared her philanthropic interests, too. He built in Boston two five-storey houses, each for 20 poor families. They both enjoyed letter writing and some of that exuberance shines through in their correspondence.

At the end of a long life Norton was living with his two daughters in a little mountain farmhouse in Massachusetts. There he was visited by a very different woman from Mrs Gaskell - Edith Wharton. I first came across her only a few years ago when I heard a short story of hers on the radio. It was called "Roman Fever", and I later read a book of short stories with that title. They were pithy, witty and very readable. Edith Wharton was born into a well-to-do New York family in 1862. From a very early age she was making up stories, but never had any encouragement from her family. What saved her from the dreaded social round, and the extreme narrowness of New York society, were the years she spent abroad as a child, and her vivid imagination. Her family went abroad for long periods, not only for her father's health, but in order to economise! She fell in love with Italy, and when forced to return to the States after her father's death, she was never really happy until she could return. Like Mrs Gaskell, she had a genius for friendship, and pays tribute to the many writers who helped her get established in her autobiography "A Backward Glance". A clue to the attraction which Norton had for Mrs Gaskell is perhaps a quotation from that book -

"His animating influence on my generation in America was exerted through what he himself was, and what he made his pupils see and feel with him. Norton was supremely

gifted as an awakener, and no thoughtful mind can recall without a thrill the notes of the first voice which has called it out of its morning dream."

He was also very generous with his time and interest. Edith Wharton's first full-length novel was The Valley of Decision, a historical novel about 18th century Italy. For this she had to do a great deal of research, and happened to tell Norton that she was unable to get hold of the original version of Goldoni's memoirs, and the memoirs of Lorenzo da Ponte. "A few weeks later there came to the Mount (her New England home) a box containing these unattainable treasures, and many other books, almost as rare. For a whole summer, these extremely valuable books, some quite rare, were left at the disposal of a young scribbler who was just starting on her first novel - and to Charles Norton it seemed perfectly natural, and almost an obligation, to hold out such help to a beginner." Edith tells us that she had "to the end the warm enveloping sense of his friendship" and the last letter he ever wrote was addressed to her. Edith was a great correspondent, and the chief recipient of her letters was Norton's daughter Sara - another link between two authors.

DOREEN PLEYDELL

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Dan Head Farm near Knutsford: Sketch by Mark Unsworth (See page 5)

Two years ago an Australian visitor called Alan Holland came to Knutsford with a photograph of this house. I was able to direct him to it, where he was welcomed with afternoon tea, and assured him that it was not just Grandfather's imagination that they were descended from an important Cheshire family. Ed.

FANNY LEWALD'S IMPRESSIONS OF MRS GASKELL

In 1850 Fanny Lewald, the German authoress, spent four months in Britain (19 May - 10 September). During this period three weeks were spent in Manchester, where she stayed with Geraldine Jewsbury, the famous local writer, at her home in Carlton Terrace, Greenheys. On her return Fanny Lewald published her account of her visit: England und Schottland (Brunswick 1851), consisting of letters written home with a view to subsequent publication, and capturing her richly detailed impressions. In her letter dated 5 September 1850, she records a sighting of Mrs Gaskell (translated from the German) -

In the evening I was present at a large concert in the music hall (...) I derived pleasure in the concert from a sighting of Mrs Gaskell, the gifted author of Mary Barton, who is a beautiful woman between 30 and 40 years old. Fairly tall, with a full and powerful figure, black hair and a lively, reddish brown complexion. From the shape of her head, the cut of her features and her complexion you would without question take her for an Italian, an impression reinforced by her vivacious dark eyes. Her appearance given such an impression of ability and completeness, that the vigorous powers of perception and the unity of talent of such a woman are striking; and I will now have twice as much cause for regrets if I do not have the opportunity to make her closer acquaintance. (Vol. II p. 617)

In fact Fanny Lewald never met Mrs Gaskell: she left Manchester for London on 7 September, and a few days later returned to Germany. Her interest in Mrs Gaskell's work was keen. In a letter dated 7 August and written in Edinburgh, she tells her correspondent about Miss Brontë, who had been in London but whom she had not met, then goes on to recommend the novels of two other English women writers she had come across in England: Geraldine Jewsbury's Zoe (1845) and The Half Sisters (1848) and Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848).

Fanny Lewald (1811-89), born a Jewess, adopted Lutheran

Christianity in 1828 in order to marry a young theologian, who, however, died before the wedding. She began to write at the age of 30, dealing particularly with social problems and marriage. (Oxford Companion to German Literature).

(This article is based on information supplied by Dr P N Skrine, Department of German, Manchester University, July 1988)

Ed. - Jane Carlyle wrote to a friend (4 July 1850)

'I have seen little of Geraldine; she comes pretty often but has always engagements to hurry her away - She has sworn friendship with Fanny Lewald the German authoress, who is also lionizing in London at present - and gives me much of her semi-articulate company - I also met Jane Eyre (Miss Brontë) one night at Thackeray's, a less figure than Geraldine and extremely unimpressive to look at (ital)'

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STOP PRESS for our London and SE members

South Bank Centre presents an interesting series on 'The Writers Response'. Literature and the revolution in France through the eyes of British, French and European writers and others.

WEDNESDAY 19th APRIL at 6.30 pm - THE GROOVES OF CHANGE. Readings from Dickens, Gaskell, Engels, Darwin, Barbara Bodichon and others.

Many other interesting lectures.

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Material and suggestions for future Newsletters should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN  
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# The Gaskell Society



KNUTSFORD PARISH CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1989

NO. 8

### SECRETARY'S LETTER

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed the general meeting in Manchester at Cross Street Chapel on 22 April with a stimulating talk by Angus Easson, and an outing to Haworth and Gawthorpe Hall on 28 June. The latter was not too well supported; I wonder why? I would welcome comments and suggestions on outings, meetings and any other Society matters.

Plans are almost finalised for our joint weekend conference with the Brontë Society to be held at the Charlotte Mason College, Ambleside, 7-9 September 1990. Space is likely to be at a premium.

Our AGM meeting on 7 October will be held at The Royal George Hotel. (Optional) lunch will be followed by AGM and an address by Margaret Smith on 'Mrs Gaskell as a humourist'. Brook Street Chapel will be open during the morning for visits and viewing of the exhibition arranged by Mrs Mary Thwaite on the history of the chapel. On Sunday there will be an outing to Styal to see the apprentice house, village, chapels and Norcliffe Hall; Dean Row Chapel (contemporary with Brook Street) with tea at Adlington Hall.

On 4 November we will be holding our first London meeting at St James Church, Clerkenwell, close to Farringdon Street Station. Please try to come if you live in the South East - details later to members in this area.

The major problem in running our Society, and many others, is keeping track of membership. I mentioned this in my last newsletter. I must apologise to Mrs Lilian Clode, who took on the role of my assistant, if I implied that this resulted in problems; any errors and muddles are entirely mine, but we found that members were confused by having another address to remember. Please send your annual membership dues (£5 on 1 September) to Mrs Kinder, Treasurer, 16 Sandileigh Avenue, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0AG or to me, or pay at the AGM. An inaccurate membership list resulted in some delays and omissions in mailing the journal; if you have not received the 1989 edition please let me know. Until we have a computer or a

more efficient secretary, you'll have to make do with me!

We hope to see many of you at our AGM weekend and hope others feel they are sharing Society affairs through our publications.

JOAN LEACH

### "300 YEARS OF HISTORY"

An Exhibition with this title is being arranged in the gallery (above the west porch) at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, to mark the year of its Tercentenary, and the passing of the "Toleration Act" in May 1689. This Act made it legally possible for dissenters from the Anglican Church to gather together for their own way of worship, and to erect buildings for this purpose, subject to registration of such places by the proper authority. So the monopoly enforced by the established Church since the Restoration was broken, and a limited freedom was enjoyed at last by those who wished for some deviation from its creed and liturgy and government. But toleration as yet did not go very far. Roman Catholics and anti-Trinitarians were excluded, and nearly all the 39 Articles of Faith as set out in the Book of Common Prayer had to be accepted by dissenting ministers.

Brook Street Chapel, the oldest existing place of worship in the town, was the result of much effort on the part of those worshippers who had been meeting in secret for many years. It was in November 1687 that the first minister of what was to be Brook Street Chapel was appointed. This was William Tong, who after a short period in Chester, was then ordained as pastor of the Knutsford congregation. Mr Tong was later to become a distinguished leader of the English Presbyterians. He stayed in Knutsford for little more than two years - an eventful two years according to the Rev Henry Green who later found evidence that the 'New-Chappel' at Brook Street was being erected before his departure in 1690. With the devoted

layman, Isaac Antrobus, who gave land for the building, near to where he lived at Brook House, Tong may be acclaimed as one of the founders of the Chapel.

The Exhibition attempts to show in modest fashion something of the history of the Chapel since members met before it existed in a long vanished cottage, once sited near Cross Town Church. The oldest original item on show is a rather tattered copy of volume one of the Bible Commentaries of Matthew Henry, a friend of Tong, and minister at Chester from 1687-1711. Readers of North and South may perhaps recall that this work - all six volumes of it kept in her splendid dining room - was the usual reading of Mrs Thornton (chapters 9 and 26).

Another exhibit showing something of the early history of the Chapel is taken from a copy of the Minutes of the Cheshire 'Classis' (meetings of ministers of the district for the discussion of chapel affairs and the ministry). These cover a period from 1691-1743. Both the original manuscript and the printed transcription by Alexander Gordon published in 1919 are in the possession of the Chapel. Most of the meetings took place at Knutsford.

Other items in the Exhibition reflect the progress made from early Presbyterian orthodoxy to a more liberal and Unitarian faith. In Mrs Gaskell's day, when as a child she accompanied her Aunt Lumb through leafy lanes to the service at Brook Street, these changes were becoming more prominent. The leadership of Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey in the later 18th century laid the foundations of the Unitarian movement. And at Knutsford when Henry Green, fresh from college, became the minister in 1827, much was done to foster a more liberal and unfettered Christian faith. One example can be seen in the copy of the catalogue of the Chapel Library he instituted in 1833. This indicates the serious interest and extent of Unitarian writings. It was an age of Tracts, and one or two examples of Unitarian tracts of that time which still survive will be on show. Brook Street Chapel is one of the few that still retain an old Chapel Library - or what is left of it.

More recent events are also represented, including the Rev Albert Smith's 'Scrap-book' with illustrations of the 150th centenary celebrations in 1960 of Mrs Gaskell's birth, and chapel events of that period.

The Chapel will be open on Saturday 7 October 1989 from 10.30 am to 12 midday, to allow visitors to the Gaskell Society meeting to see this Exhibition and visit the Chapel that day if they wish. I hope to be there and to do my best to answer any questions.

MARY THWAITE



Available as note-cards. Packet of 6 for 95p. For Brook Street Chapel Restoration Fund.

For the same cause - FLOWER FESTIVAL - 15-17 September Staged by Knutsford & District Flower Clubs.

Admission by programme £1.00

I recently paid a visit to Pescara in Italy where, at the invitation of Professor Francesco Marroni, I gave two lectures to students of English at the 'Gabriel D'Annunzio' University. The first of these was on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the literature of the industrial city', and the second on George Eliot. The lectures were followed by informal discussion with the students, and I was impressed both by their command of English, and their enthusiasm for Victorian literature generally. Several of them were in the process of writing dissertations on works by Mrs Gaskell for their final degree examination, and their questions were both knowledgable and penetrating. I enjoyed my visit immensely, not least in that the programme Francesco had arranged for me allowed me to spend some time with him discussing our mutual interests. Francesco himself has recently been involved in the publication of translations of several of Mrs Gaskell's stories. His own translation of The Ghost in the Garden Room and other tales includes, as well as the title-story (more usually known in England by its alternative title of The Crooked Branch), The Doom of the Griffiths and Six Weeks at Heppenheim, while he has also written the introduction to a translation by his wife, writing under her own name of Grazia Colli, of The Grey Woman. The appearance of these stories in Italy is a tribute to Mrs Gaskell's popularity there: they are an interesting reflection too of her own taste for tales of the supernatural, an aspect of her work that has not always attracted the attention it might. Returning from Pescara via Rome I was able to visit the location close to the Spanish steps where Mrs Gaskell stayed during her own visit there in 1857. In the next issue of The Gaskell Society Journal we shall be publishing an article by Mary Thwaite on Mrs Gaskell's Italian connections, and my visit, for which thanks are due to Professor Marroni and his colleagues at Pescara, was a happy reminder of this dimension of Mrs Gaskell's life and work.

ALAN SHELSTON

This year's books indicate the increasing interest in the shorter works. Pride of place goes to a new paperback edition of My Lady Ludlow and other stories in Oxford University Press' World Classics series (£5.95). Edited by Edgar Wright, Professor of English in the Laurentian University of Ontario, Canada, who recently edited Mary Barton in the same series.

The text is based on the 1859 two volume collection Round the Sofa published by Sampson Low, but with certain somewhat controversial differences. Originally Mrs Gaskell had gathered together a number of short stories from various journals:- My Lady Ludlow, An accursed race, The doom of the Griffiths, The poor Clare, Half a life-time ago and The half-brothers and added an introduction and linking material to make a continuous narrative. The new edition omits Half a life-time ago because it was included with Cousin Phillis in an earlier volume in the series and replaced it with Mr Harrison's confessions. The linking material is now relegated to an appendix.

Nevertheless the text is scrupulously edited as instanced by the rectifying of the misprint 'as black a traitor as if he had been born in Builth' (p.229) which appeared as Bluith in the 1906 Knutsford edition, and provided with textual notes and an introduction which formed the basis of Professor Wright's article My Lady Ludlow: forms of social change and forms of fiction in Gaskell Society Journal vol. 3 (1989)

An anthology of British Women Writers edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd, Pandora Press, £23.00, is a mammoth volume (925 pages) which comprises a representative selection of women's writing. 60 British authors are included from Julian of Norwich to Angela Carter and all genres-fiction, poetry, prose and drama represented though novels regrettably only in extract. Mrs Gaskell is represented by the short story The well of Pen Morfa which "signals a growth of social and political concern" in women's writing. The book is also interesting for the presence of several minor contemporaries whose work is no longer available in

print, eg Geraldine Jewsbury (selections from Letters to Jane Welsh Carlyle) and Eliza Lynn Linton. George Eliot is represented by the critical essay Silly novels by lady novelists in which she bemoans the fact that "Harriet Martineau, Currer Bell and Mrs Gaskell have been treated as cavalierly as if they had been men".

Romantic crime in the Victorian novel by Anthea Trodd (lecturer in English at the University of Keele) Macmillan, £27.50, also mentions short stories as well as novels. The author tells how crime is used by Victorian novelists to show the tensions within society with particular reference to class and gender conflict. Novelists discussed include Dickens, Eliot, Trollope, James and Wilkie Collins as well as the more sensational writers such as Mary Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood. An early chapter deals with the relationship of the heroine to the police in Mary Barton and North and South while a later one discusses the role of the servant with particular reference to Dark night's work, the Grey women and Right at last.

However a new biography Charles Dickens by Fred Kaplan (Hodder and Stoughton, £17.95) which mentions their relationship dismisses the short stories she contributed to Household Words as morbid.

Staying with Dickens far more useful is the latest volume of the Pilgrim edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens vol. 6, 1850-1852 (edited by Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Nina Burges, Clarendon Press, £80.00) which has now reached the stage where it is relevant to Gaskell studies. It includes 35 letters from Dickens, several of them published for the first time. They show his reaction to several stories such as Lizzie Leigh and the early episodes of Cranford. They also mention a projected article which Mrs Gaskell planned to write on a factory school which had impressed her, run by James Pillans Wilson (Mr Wilson of Price's Candle factory in GL.162) but which she abandoned out of deference to her subject's wishes. This all goes to show how many of Mrs Gaskell's letters have been lost.

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 2nd enlarged edition Vol. VII: The Later Years Part 4 (1840-1853) by Alan G Hill (Clarendon Press, £70.00) includes a letter of July 22, 1840 to William Gaskell praising his Temperance Rhymes. Several letters assigned to Elizabeth Gaskell in the first edition have been reassigned to Mrs Mary Gaskell wife of MP for Maldon.

Finally the explanatory notes of Stephen Gill's biography William Wordsworth (Clarendon Press, £17.50) include the following anecdote. In a letter of July 1849, following a dinner at Rydal Mount, Edward Quillinan, Wordsworth's son-in-law wrote to Mrs Hartley Coleridge - that she was 'As nice a person as possible ... a great pet'.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

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The Society will be represented at THE NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL at Manchester Town Hall on 15th and 16th September.

This should be well worth visiting - publishers, book-sellers and dealers, libraries etc. Held for the first time last year, the editor of a leading journal described it as 'the most consistently crowded fair that I have attended'.

The Town Hall itself is well worth a visit. Architect Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) was also responsible for Manchester Assize Courts, the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, AND Knutsford Town Hall!

Mrs Gaskell would have been pleased about the latter as she knew him socially and he was a member of Cross Street Chapel. She tried to further his career by appealing to John Ruskin to use his influence in getting Waterhouse on the list of architects to compete for the design of London Law Courts in 1865. Does anyone know if this plea succeeded?

The range of varying emotions given unfettered scope in the last century is often remarkable. Readers of Mrs Gaskell's letters will recall her comical account of the hapless Mrs J J Tayler and her 'impromptu baby at Blackpool; - went there and lo & behold a little girl unexpectedly made her appearance, & clothes have had to be sent in such a hurry. Bathing places do so much good. Susan and Mary went to Blackpool last year, but did not derive the same benefit. ... So ends Mrs J J Tayler's "delicate state of health arising from some internal complaint", as Mr Ransom called it.'

A sense of humour was always useful in days when Mrs Gaskell could write that little cousins were 'pouring in upon the world'. In The Water Babies Charles Kingsley, with careless male insouciance, invented that nice, soft, fat, smooth, pussy, cuddly, delicious creature, Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, who 'took up two great armfuls of babies - nine hundred under one arm, and thirteen hundred under the other - and threw them away, right and left, into the water.' Not that they seem to have minded in his fable, for they 'did not even take their thumbs out of their mouths, but came paddling and wriggling back to her like so many tadpoles, till you could see nothing of her from head to foot for the swarm of little babies.' It all sounds great fun.

The very opposite is seen in a letter from Mrs Gaskell's American friend, Charles Eliot Norton, to her second daughter, Meta, on 17 June 1866. In it he announces the birth of his own second daughter and asks permission to name the child in memory of Mrs Gaskell, who had died some six months before. The 'birth of a little child is a most grave & serious joy', Norton writes; and he trusts that the influence of Mrs Gaskell's spirit will 'impress itself on the character of our little child if she should live to grow up'. The last clause reminds us that we must look elsewhere in Kingsley's myth of Evolution for the ever-present facts of mortality in this world.

To Meta, however, the request was infinitely touching:

Dear Mr Norton - thank you again and again - Papa is so pleased to think of your calling your baby by Mama's name - It was exactly - Elizabeth Cleghorn - She was called so after the daughter (the only child - 'and she was a widow') of a Mrs Cleghorn who had been very good to Mama's mother; and just as Mama was born this Miss Cleghorn died, and the little baby was called after her - at the poor mother's request - (5 July 1866)

A letter of 10 September 1866 from Mrs Susan Norton shows that the baby was sometimes known as Lizzie, and one of 17 March (1867) acknowledges Meta's gift of a locket 'for little Lily', which had been Mrs Gaskell's name in her family circle. Susan Norton carefully put the locket away in Meta's packing, 'that it may come to Lily if she lives, as it did to me, fresh from your loving hands'. Again, we note the automatic qualification. When life is known to be so very precarious for infants, it is no wonder that love and fellow feeling are openly expressed and often signified in names and keepsakes. The locket contained some hair of Mrs Gaskell's, not trusted to the jeweller's hands for fear it would be changed, but put in as neatly as 'dear old Hearn could' (Meta to Charles Norton, 28 March 1867).

Perhaps the name Cleghorn was not continued. The editor of Mrs Gaskell's correspondence with Charles Norton, Jane Whitehill, thanked 'Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton' for placing all these letters in Harvard University Library. It was a Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton who in 1928 gave Knutsford Library 'a lock of Mrs Gaskell's hair in a gold pendant set with turquoise and pearl': a valuable and tangible reminder of the bonds human beings forge - though 'Mama used often to say that the power of sympathy depended on the power of imagination', Meta told Charles Norton in a letter of 2 July 1867.

J A V CHAPPLE

### Editor's Note

Sadly the locket was stolen from Knutsford Library some time ago but there is still Meta's small water colour sketch of her mother, sent to Charles Eliza Norton with this letter:

'Dear Mr Norton

I cannot tell you how much I wish that this were better. But nothing could ever give her face. Your charming present of 'Snow bound' is come and I think it is most beautiful. It is so pleasant to feel that you think of us and it is so good of you to send such proof of remembrance. They always come just when one feels dreary, by some lucky chance.

Ever your

M.E.G.'

(dated April 19th - probably 1866 when 'Snow Bound' was published)

The picture, framed in Boston, seems to have been given to the Library by Miss Elizabeth Gaskell Norton, with the locket, in 1928. It seems as if the 'Cleghorn' name was either not given at Miss Norton's baptism or became unused later.



'A heterogenous mass of nonsense' was the critical comment on one of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters, made by her noted cousin, Sir Henry Holland. A remark which rankled enough to be remembered some years later when she believed that he could not say such a thing now that she had published Mary Barton! William had called another letter of hers 'slipshod and seemed to wish me not to send it' (though she did) (GL.13) but so often she wrote in haste, snatching minutes in a hectic schedule.

The letters reveal her caring, unselfish nature, always ready to give time, effort and sympathy to others; they show her anxieties and problems with family and writing, faced with courage and often humour; her commitment such as social work, entertaining and health-restoring travel which left her with all too little writing time.

Charlotte Brontë found one of her letters 'as pleasant as a quiet chat, as welcome as a spring flower, as reviving as a friend's visit; in short it was very like a page of Cranford'.

Rev Henry Green was the minister of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, and the two families were friends; the Greens' daughters often joined the Gaskells on holiday and visits were exchanged. A descendant of the Greens, Dr Robin Jamison has in his possession thirteen letters written to Mrs Green by Mrs Gaskell; these are mainly of family matters but reveal, once again, the pressure of many commitments.

Monday night  
(? 15 October 1855)

My Dearest Mary,  
I am dressed to go to the Hallés as your note and parcel are brought but I have a few minutes to spare before the others are ready & so I shall write as hard as I can. I am so dog-tired I would far rather stay at home, agreeable as it will be, Scotts and Hallés - but the girls want to go & Mr Gaskell is too busy to chaperone them so he stops at home & I go & only wish someone less tired were in my place to enjoy what I

know ought to be enjoyed'. She then details the last week - visiting 'one of Miss Brontë's friends' (Ellen Nussey) going all over 'Miss Brontë's school places and the places named in Shirley & made myself acquainted with a district of 5 miles square (research for the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë')'; then arrived home to find a stream of visitors and now 'I ought to be copying letters &c some hours every day, I ought to be making flannel petticoats, as usual and just at present I can't'.

Three of the Green letters add to our knowledge on the subject of Ruth. She had been surprised to learn that the first two volumes of Ruth had been printed (GL.137) while she was telling Marianne that she might put off publishing it for another year (GL.136). Then Mrs Green had written to say that she had seen an advertisement for it.

Saturday  
(November 1852)

My Dear Mary

... Ruth has yet to be written', which is an expression I used only this morning to Wm before your letter came. I mean it is far from completion and I feel uncertain if it ever will be done - I have written a good deal of it ... I am so far from satisfied with it myself, that I don't know how much to rewrite, or what to do about it; I was as much startled as you could be by the advertisement. However, it will not hurry me, & until I have thought it out fully I shall not write it, & if I never think it out it will never be either written or (consequently) published. And I am very very busy even for the mechanical writing, much so for the thought required. However it may all come in a minute, & it may never come; so you may fancy that in this state seeing the advertisement, or rather hearing of it - I have not seen it - is an annoyance. And if & when it does come I give you warning I doubt if it is a book that you will like to have in your family.

This is forced on me, and all by Chapman's impatience. I don't want it talked about. It only disturbs me utterly, and I expect I shall have grief and annoyance enough to go



through about it, & lack all the strength I can muster to do right. However it is not yet written & may never be.

... I would rather have all this considered private please dear Mary; except that discourage any putting it down on the part of my friends please. - I had hoped to have come over to Knutsford before this subject of pain to me was broached. Now I shall not come, because morbid or not morbid I can't bear to be talked to about it. So don't let us say any more. If I decide on never finishing it I will tell you all about it, - if not, you will know soon enough.

We (Meta & I) have enjoyed ourselves heartily at the Lakes, only I was very ill one week, partly with worry about this book, - & thought I was going to have the typhus fever. I had such deadly headaches and faintness.'

With the pressure from her publisher, Chapman, and the strain on her health from the anxiety and the conflict within herself on presenting the subject of illegitimacy in fiction, she clearly decided it must be finished quickly and wrote to Eliza Fox (GL.146) on December 20th,

'And Ruth is done - utterly off my mind and gone up to the printers - that's all I know about it.'

And to Mrs Green she wrote:-

'I do so wish I could come over to Knutsford. I have hoped & tried, - for after that book of mine is published (this week I think) I don't feel as if I ever could. And yet yr letter today makes me wish more than ever. I shd so like to 'compare notes' and talk things over with you. Yet every day brings ever more than it's full work; and - we have many visitors coming this Xmas, and an inefficient servant.'

Although she had steeled herself for a critical reaction to the publication of Ruth by the press and friends, it was even worse than feared and she suffered

physically and emotionally as a result. She 'could not get over the hard things people said of Ruth ... I think I must be an improper woman without knowing it, I do so manage to shock people' (GL.150). 'An unfit subject for fiction' is the thing to say about it; I knew all this before ... 'Deep regret' is what my friends (such as Miss Mitchell) feel and express. In short, the only comparison I can find for myself is to St. Sebastian tied to a tree to be shot at with arrows'; this she wrote to her sister-in-law, Anne Robson (GL.148); she wrote to her as she had to Mrs Green, saying that she had hoped to see her before the book came out and that she had '... taken leave of my respectable friends up and down the country; you, I don't call respectable, but you are surrounded by respectabilities, & I can't encounter their 'shock'.' But there was very little saving humour to be found and only the letters of encouragement from those whose opinions she cared for - Kingsley, Dickens, F D Maurice, Mrs Browning and Charlotte Brontë - revived her.

Mrs Green wrote, too, with approval, 'Henry says he has not cried so much for many years and we do all so admire not only the substance but the style', to which Elizabeth replied: (see facsimile on back cover)

'Your letter was such a relief (first) & pleasure afterwards. I had fancied from what Miss Mitchell had said of what Mr Green had said that both you & he wd be shocked. - I could not wonder, for I am sure I should have been repulsed by hearing that a 'tale of seduction' was chosen as a subject for fiction, - that was the opinion I dreaded; - I felt almost sure that if people would only read what I had to say they would not be disgusted, - but I feared & still think it probable that many may refuse to read any book of that kind - (I am writing in such a hurry I can't stop to make myself clear,) but yet I did feel as if I had some thing to say about it that I must say, and you know I can tell stories better than any other way of expressing myself.

This is all a muddle, but I am trying in my heart to arrange how I can do my duty (i.e. stop at home this

eveng for a class of Sunday School girls) & have my pleasure (i.e. go and dine at the Schwabes with the Scotts, Mrs Fanny Kemble -) & I find I 'cannot serve two masters', but must just stop at home - and now that's decided - I've written to Mrs S. - so now I can make myself distinct to you.'

When the dust had settled a little she weighed the balance and decided, 'From the very warmth with which people have discussed the tale I take heart of grace; it has made them talk and think a little on a subject which is so painful that it requires all one's bravery not to hide one's head like an ostrich and try by doing so to forget that the evil exists'. (GL.154)

JOAN LEACH

#### COLLECTED LETTERS

Professor J A V Chapple is working on the Green letters and others, as yet unpublished.

A new edition of 'The Letters of Mrs Gaskell' edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard would be welcome but Manchester University Press say the cost would be prohibitive. A supplementary edition would be the best substitute.

'Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell' edited by R D Waller, John Rylands, Library Bulletin Vol.20 1936 deserves to be revised and reprinted.

We will hope that Society funds and influence will increase to encourage such endeavours.

#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

You may be surprised at the range of interests.  
4 x 14p stamps to K Oultram, Clatterwick Hall, Little Leigh, Nr Northwich, Cheshire, for ALS newsletter.

Rebecca Fraser, in her recent biography Charlotte Brontë (Methuen), states that Mrs Gaskell had written in letters to 'several people', that if she had known of Charlotte's illness and the pregnancy that seems to have been the cause, she could have terminated it (p.488). I have only been able to track down the letter on the subject in Chapple and Pollard's edition of the Gaskell letters (No.233 and not 223 as given in Rebecca Fraser's chapter notes), in which, on the 12th April 1855, Mrs Gaskell wrote to John Greenwood (Chapple and Pollard p.337), 'I do fancy that I could have induced her - even though they had all felt angry with me at first - to do what was so absolutely necessary for her very life'.

I had always taken the meaning of 'induce' as 'persuasion' to accept her (Mrs Gaskell's) nursing. As a Dissenter who was not welcomed at Haworth by Mr Nicholls, but who herself had gone through five pregnancies and most probably experienced similar cases in her social work in Manchester, it seemed to me that she felt she could have persuaded Charlotte to allow her to nurse her, persuade her to eat and so saved her life.

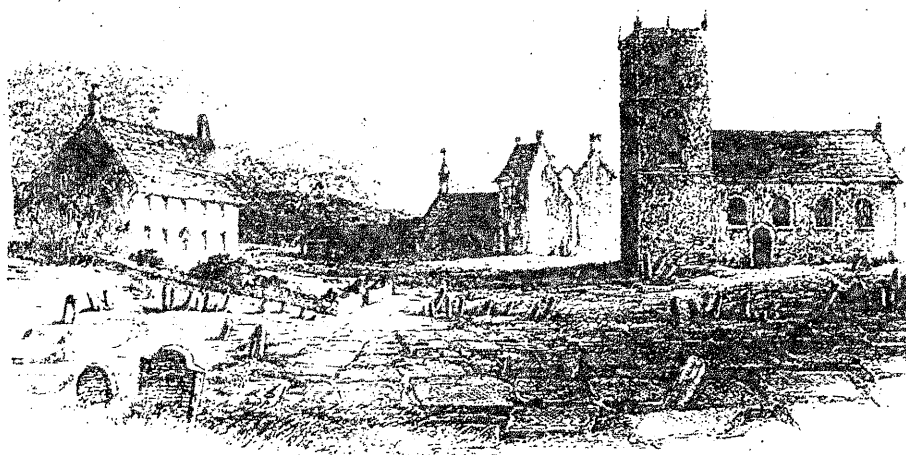
I had never considered that the word 'induce' had ever been used in a medical sense until recent years, when there has been some controversy about the birth of babies being induced by doctors on Fridays so that they could count on having a free weekend. However, the complete Oxford English Dictionary gives the word as having first appeared in The Lancet in 1840, then in 1852 and 1859, and defined as a new method of bringing about the premature birth of a child which was 'greatly to the benefit of the mother'. The treatment was a herbal one.

Of course, Mrs Gaskell knew well two distinguished doctors, her brother-in-law Sam Gaskell and her uncle, Sir Henry Holland, a distinguished London physician, and it may well have been that she had been given the herbal formula by one or other of them. Certainly, from the wording in The Lancet, there is no trace of medical prejudice against what we would now probably call abortion, as only the benefit of the mother is mentioned.

In any case, it seems that Rebecca Fraser is correct in her interpretation of the word, thus throwing a new light on Mrs Gaskell, who appears as even more 'practical' than she has so often been described. She may well have been prepared to act entirely on her own initiative and we must be prepared to be surprised at the way in which Victorian women may have helped themselves and each other to something that is now normally only available professionally.

ANNA UNSWORTH

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Mrs Gaskell to George Smith (publisher) Feb 6th, 1857

'I send you a sepia drawing from a sketch of mine of Haworth Parsonage, Sexton's Shed, School-house and Sexton's (tall) House (where the Curate lodged) and the Church' (GL.339)

As used in 'Life of Charlotte Brontë'

# OUTING TO HAWORTH AND GAWTHORPE HALL

When I mentioned to friends and acquaintances that I was going to visit Haworth the usual response was that they had been there and it rained! So when Gaskell Society members arrived there in the wind and the rain - it had not been raining when we left Knutsford - we felt it was traditional, but it was frustrating to have almost the only wet day in three months of hot, dry summer. Haworth did not exhibit its best for Mrs Gaskell either; Charlotte had invited her to come when 'the heath is in bloom, now. I have watched and waited for its purple signal as the forerunner of your coming' but when she arrived Mrs Gaskell found '... it had all been blighted by a thunderstorm a day or two before and was all of a livid brown colour, instead of the blaze of purple glory it ought to have been. Oh! those high wild, desolate moors, up above the whole world and the very realm of silence'. (GL.167)

We were prevented by the weather from walking on the moors as we had hoped to do, under the guidance of Mrs Eunice Skirrow who had helped us to plan our day.

We were welcomed to the Parsonage by the newly-appointed Chairman of The Brontë Society, Michael Steed; it seemed highly appropriate that this meeting was his first official event. Michael is also a member of our Society. He had been reading 'The Memorials of Two Sisters', where Catherine Winkworth told of her meeting Charlotte at the Gaskells' in Manchester, of her intensely shy nature and how the three of them had talked of Charlotte's forthcoming marriage. Charlotte wrote to Catherine while on her honeymoon in Ireland. It was in a letter to Catherine that Mrs Gaskell had described her first meeting with Charlotte, at the Kay-Shuttleworth's holiday house near Windermere, Briery Close: '... A pretty drawing room ... in which were Sir James and Lady KS and a little lady in black silk gown, whom I could not see at first for the dazzle in the room; she came up & shook hands with me at once ...' Charlotte had been an unwilling visitor, going more to please her father than herself, but she found Mrs Gaskell a congenial spirit, writing to Ellen Nussey: 'I was truly glad of her companionship. She is a woman of

the most genuine talent, of cheerful, pleasing and cordial manners, and, I believe, of a kind and good heart'.

On our visit it was this friendship we had in mind, the visits exchanged between friends and the link made between them by the Kay-Shuttleworths, whose home at Gawthorpe Hall we visited in their footsteps.

We were not surprised to find Haworth Parsonage busy with visitors, some pilgrims like ourselves, but we were privileged to have a special viewing, including the Library. Mrs Gaskell found the house 'exquisitely clean' and 'the perfection of warmth, snugness and comfort, crimson predominating in the furniture, which did well with the bleak cold colours without' (GL.166). Only the quiet was lacking for us to imagine the house back in the 1850s.

We walked down the High Street, noting the Black Bull, Branwell's haunt and Mr Greenwood the stationer's shop, to have an excellent lunch at The Heath Cottage Cafe.

Then, as the weather prevented us from walking on the moors, we made our way to Gawthorpe Hall. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was respected by both literary ladies as a practical man of business - nine tenths utilitarian and one part artistic was Charlotte's estimate - and both appreciated his kindness and good intentions. Charlotte observed that he gave her good advice, mostly in the form of monologues, but that she wished he were as sincere as he was polished and he showed his white teeth with too frequent a smile! Mrs Gaskell was grateful for his help in extracting material for the biography, from the unwilling Rev Nicholls, though her conscience smote her for allowing Sir James to over-ride his wishes.

The house at Gawthorpe is attractively set in woodland 'nearly three centuries old, grey, stately and picturesque' said Charlotte. The parterre gardens



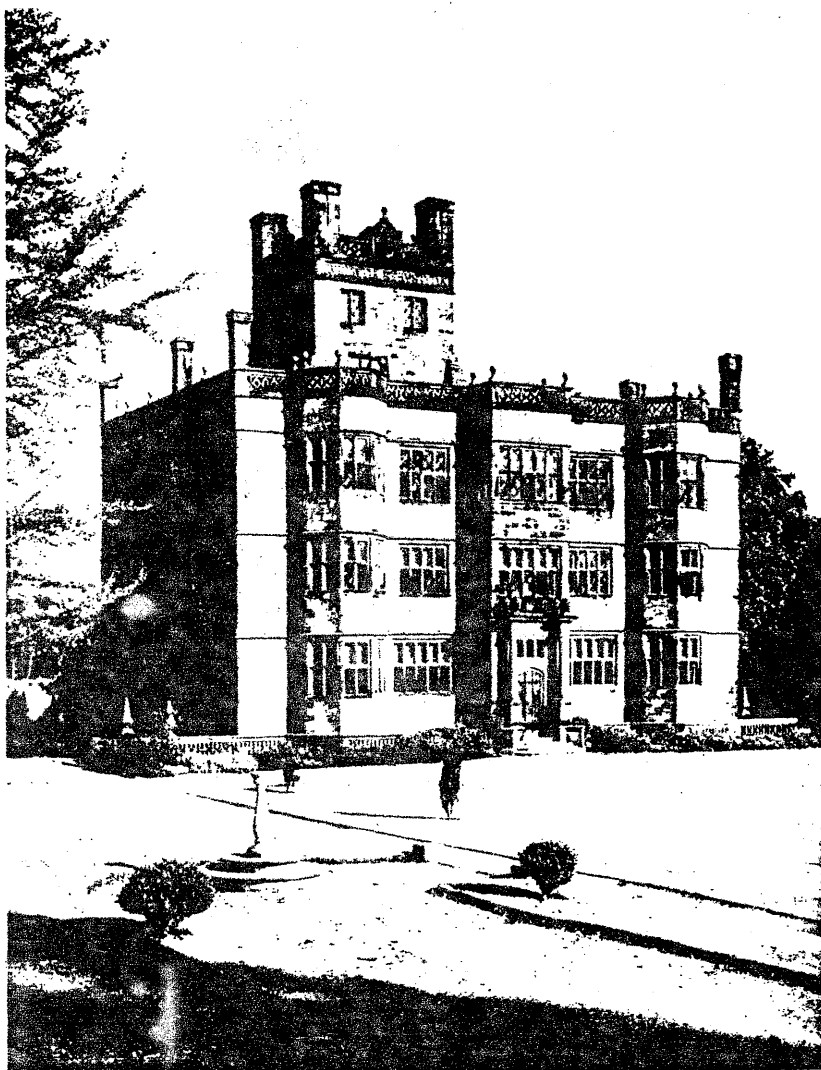
Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, 1st Bt (1804-77)  
from an early photograph c.1865

which she would have seen are being recreated but the wind and rain were strong enough to blow branches down so we were contented with the house with its Jacobean furniture, panelling, ornate plasterwork ceilings, and fine embroideries.

We enjoyed our day out, despite poor weather, and were particularly grateful to Mrs Eunice Skirrow, corresponding secretary of the Brontë Society, for being our guide at Haworth.

JOAN LEACH

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GAWTHORPE HALL

In the Autumn of 1985 while reading the Transactions of the Brontë Society Vol.18 I noticed the announcement of the formation of the Gaskell Society on 12th October 1985. As I have been a fan of Mrs Gaskell's writings for many years I became very interested and wrote to Mrs Joan Leach for information regarding the Gaskell Society. Incidentally, as a girl in Lisbon long ago, I loved that Brontë family and some years ago I presented the Brontë Society with a copy of Jane Eyre in Portuguese for their museum.

I duly joined the Gaskell Society and I have attended the three Annual General Meetings since 1986. After reading Mrs Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë my husband decided to accompany me as my escort.

I was quite excited at the thought of visiting Knutsford and seeing the places described in her novels and short stories, and this thrilled me immensely. I was most impressed with the large number of people who attended the meetings, and enjoyed making new acquaintances and friends. The various lectures were of great interest to me and I have derived great pleasure in attending these gatherings. It was quite intriguing to visit the different places connected with Mrs Gaskell and her works around the beautiful rural countryside of Cheshire. The whole atmosphere is simply delightful and Knutsford came up to all my expectations.

How engaging it is to throw one's mind back 150 years and in a sort of reverie go back and see Heathwaite - Aunt Lymb's house where Elizabeth Stevenson was brought up, with its open view to the heath; Cranford and the "Amazons"; Eltham of Cousin Phillis and Hollingford of Wives and Daughters with all the quaint Tudor buildings in King Street like the Rose & Crown, The Angel, the excellent Royal George Hotel which was built in the 14th century, supposedly named at the time The White Swan; the Unitarian Brook Street Chapel with its lattice windows; the graveyard where Mrs Gaskell is

buried together with her husband and two daughters, and realise that the Knutsford of today is still redolent of the atmosphere of the time and has kept its character to date.

Had I lived nearer I would have attended throughout the year many of the different activities organised by Joan Leach, who is the life and soul of the Gaskell Society. Instead I have to content myself with motoring down the M6 for the AGM in September. I do enjoy these weekends in a delightful English small town, a complete contrast with living in a large city like Edinburgh and a country like Scotland where people have a different outlook from the English people. I come home quite refreshed and looking forward to the next meeting.

I do hope and feel sure that the membership of the society will go from strength to strength and that the members will derive as much pleasure from the Gaskell Society as I have done.

MANUELA SUTHERLAND

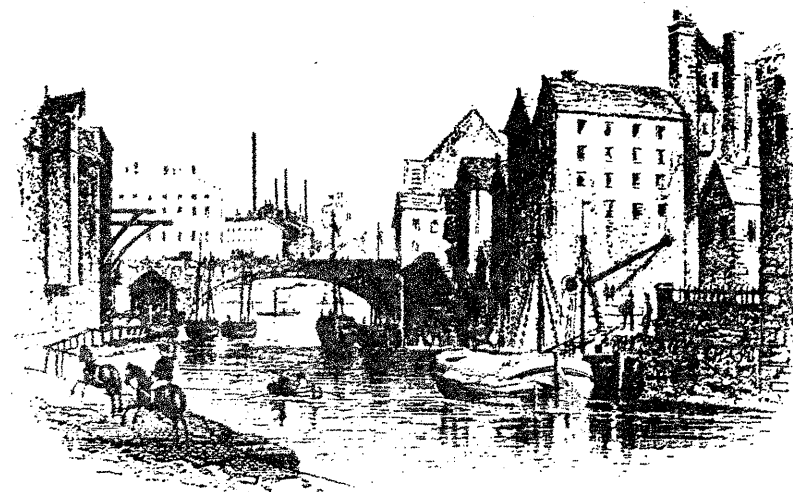
Material and suggestions for future Newsletters should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN  
Tel: 0565 4668

as a subject for fiction. - that  
was her opinion. I dreaded.  
I felt almost sure that if  
people would only read what  
I had to say they would not  
be disappointed. - but I feared I  
still think it probable that  
many may prefer to read any  
book of that kind. (I am  
writing in such a hurry I can't  
stop to make myself clear. / but  
yet I did feel as if I had done

afterwards. I was surprised.  
from what Miss Gaskell had  
said of what but I was not  
satisfied with you & the 102  
be shocked. - I could not wonder.  
for I knew since I should have  
been repelled by hearing that  
"a tale of seduction" was chosen.

Reduced facsimile of letter on p.15 - Mrs Gaskell's writing is sometimes referred to as a 'fine flowing hand'!!!

# The Gaskell Society



*The River Irwell & Ancoats Bridge Manchester*

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1990

NO. 9

As I am busy preparing this Newsletter, Alan Shelston is putting the Journal to bed, and both of us feel we are offering our members interesting reading. We hope, too, that you feel happy in sharing Gaskell interests through our publications or at our meetings. Looking back on 1989 I think all our meetings were enjoyed by those who attended and we hope even more members will try to get to a meeting in 1990. We look forward to a very full year.

Please don't forget that we are always ready to consider ideas for improving our Society in any way. Items for publication are welcome though space is limited.

Plans are well in hand for our joint conference with The Brontë Society at Ambleside on September 7th to 9th. Our President, Arthur Pollard will be chairman. We hope it will not prove too exacting a job as he must conserve his energies for a projected visit to Japan where he hopes to join The Gaskell Society there for their AGM in October. Professor Pollard's interest in Japan dates back to the war years when he worked on Japanese intelligence. The British Council will assist with travel costs.

Our Spring meeting will be held at Cross Street Chapel on 21st April. Work has been in progress there to restore an upper room to be known as The Gaskell Room; this will be dedicated in a special ceremony at our meeting. Minister, Reverend Denise Boyd, the Chapel members and ourselves all value the traditions enshrined there. Our speaker on this occasion will be Dr Edward Chitham on Elizabeth Stevenson's Education. Looking forward to this meeting, may I introduce our speaker?

Edward Chitham was born and has lived mostly in the West Midlands. He regards himself as a provincial, and was not too upset at being described by a London colleague as a 'hayseed, but a pleasant one'. His first book was a history of the Black Country, after which he wrote and published a children's novel and short story, but then began to formalise his research in English Literature, editing from manuscript a new text of Anne Brontë's poems.



This was followed by a number of other books on the Brontës, including a biography of Emily, based on research into her poetry which he is editing jointly with Derek Roper of Sheffield.

His interest in Elizabeth Gaskell dates from the 1970s, when he was called upon to devise a new novel course at Dudley College of Education and included Sylvia's Lovers. He has been working for some time towards a new biography, originally at the suggestion of Basil Blackwell of Oxford. His current posts include part-time lectureships at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, Westhill/Newman College, Birmingham, and the Open University, where he tutors the arts foundation course and makes use of his Cambridge Classics degree in teaching 'Augustan Rome'. He is also Education Consultant for the National Association for Gifted Children and enjoys teaching in schools when there is time.

JOAN LEACH

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#### THE SPANISH LADY'S LOVE

(see Postscript to following article)

"Will you hear a Spanish lady  
How she wooed an English man?  
Of a comely countenance and grace was she  
And by birth of high degree"

(Percy's Reliques)

The ballad relates how she had been taken prisoner but fell in love with Sir Urian and pleads to be taken to England. After making various excuses he finally admits to having a wife back home. The lady declares she will enter a nunnery and gives Sir Urian a 'chain of gold' for his wife.

For many years the Leghs of Adlington preserved a gold chain in a casket as an heirloom.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the delightful outings of 1987 and 1988, it was hard to believe that this year's could be anything but an anticlimax; and, being totally unmechanical, I had, to use Mrs Elton's phrase, "no great hopes" of Quarry Bank Mill. In fact, the outing of 8 October proved to be exciting and memorable, and the best of the three. The only fault one could find with the morning at Quarry Bank Mill was that it was too short. One lingered in this room and that, only to find that room succeeded room, and that, if one were to be at the Apprentice House by 2, there was nothing for it but to go faster and faster. Quarry Bank Mill, an unforgettable record of both human ingenuity and human inhumanity, provides, amongst other things, a vivid picture of the lives of the millhands of Mrs Gaskell's day - the din (if one or two machines could be so deafening, what must it have been like to work for twelve hours a day in a large room packed with machines?), the injuries, the brutality of the supervisors, and the houses in which the workers lived - a picture completed in the afternoon by the visit to the Apprentice House and Styal. Previous outings had taken us to places associated with Mrs Gaskell, some of which undoubtedly served as settings for her stories; this one introduced us to the substance of two epoch-making novels, Mary Barton and North and South, and sent me back to them.

In what was left of the day, we visited two seventeenth century chapels, Dean Row Unitarian Chapel (reminiscent of Brook Street) and the Baptist Chapel at Great Warford (previously seen in 1988) and Adlington Hall, where we had time to see the Hall itself, but not, unfortunately, to catch more than a glimpse of the grounds. Someone remarked to me recently - and I have some sympathy with the remark - that one stately home is very much like another. Adlington Hall, however, with its striking juxtaposition of Elizabethan and Georgian architecture and its Great Hall, adorned by that splendid organ flanked by the two forest trees, is, I feel, an exception.

POSTSCRIPT. Adlington Hall and The Old Nurse's Story

When I mentioned to my friend, Frank Whitehead, that we

had visited Adlington Hall, he asked if it had anything to do with The Old Nurse's Story. This had not occurred to me, but, on reflection, I think it has. The following notes are a composite effort; the names in parentheses are those of other people to whom I owe suggestions.

In the story, the organ in the hall of Furnivall Manor is played by ghostly hands.

(1) The distinctive feature of the Great Hall at Adlington is the organ. There cannot be many great houses with organs in their halls.

(2) The organ at Adlington was damaged in 1805 or thereabouts and remained silent until it was repaired in 1959 - i.e. during the whole of Mrs Gaskell's lifetime. In the story, the organ is "all broken and destroyed inside".

(3) Handel had played upon this organ. In the story it is a foreign musician who came to Furnivall Manor, had the organ brought from Holland, and won the love of the two sisters (Enid Duthie).

I know of no evidence that Mrs Gaskell ever visited Adlington Hall; the Leghs do not appear in her letters. However:

(1) Margaret's grandfather, in Mary Barton is Job Legh. There are plenty of Lees and Leighs, but the spelling Legh is uncommon.

(2) My Lady Ludlow, in the story of that name, has a son called Urian, who is drowned at sea (Enid Duthie). A portrait of Sir Urian Legh (1566-1627) hangs in the drawing-room of Adlington Hall. The name Urian is certainly not common; Sir Urian was a sailor, and took part in the expedition to Cadiz of 1596.

(3) Mrs Gaskell's friends, the Winkworths (at Alderley Edge) and the Gregs (at Styall) lived well on the Adlington side of Knutsford (Joan Leach). In any case, one did not need to know a family to visit their house: the housekeeper would show respectable people over, as the housekeeper shows Elizabeth Bennet and her aunt and uncle over Pemberley in Pride and Prejudice. We may be sure that, if she did, the housekeeper of Adlington would make the most both of the organ on which Handel was once believed to have composed "The Harmonious Blacksmith", and of the story of Sir Urian Legh and the Spanish lady of Cadiz.

P. J. YARROW

Annette B. Hopkins quoted several portions of William Gaskell's wedding-journey letter to his sister in Elizabeth Gaskell (1952). Since then it has only been mangled and inaccurately copied, though the original manuscript is available in the Brotherton Library Leeds. The crossed writing is admittedly not easy to read.

Plas Penrhyn Sept 16th 1832

My very dear Sister,

We seem to have been very much in the same mind - Whilst you were threatening me with a scolding for non-writing, I was preparing one for you. There were manifold reasons for my silence - not one that I can discover for yours. I shall only trouble you with one - we had no ink that we could make tolerably legible till we got here. Thank you for yours when it did come. Of our highways and byeways I cannot pretend to give you any thing like an account in an half-sheet. They must furnish subjects of talk for the fire-side.

We enjoyed our stay at dear little Aber very much indeed - and were not a little loth to leave it last Monday, though hope was leading us on to still more beautiful and grander scenes. We went that day through some of the finest which Wales has to shew. Our first stage was to Conway by coach - as beautiful a ride as heart could desire. On the left we had Beau maris and the sea shining and sparkling in the morning light, and on our right the hills covered with the richest and warmest tints, and the air so fresh and pure, and Lily (Elizabeth Gaskell)\* looking so very well, and two bugles playing all the way - wasn't it enough to make one very happy? We went through the fine old castle at Conway and, as I cannot tell you fully our feelings as we wandered through it and thought of departed greatness and all that - why I shall only tell you, that we felt very properly - and I (but I did not tell this before) felt very hungry.

However the next drive to Llanwrst was so lovely that all other sense was lost in sight - and it was not till we got there that I thought of applying to the cake which we

had brought with us. From Llanwrst we took another car on to Capel Curig, and our course seemed to be from good to better still. But you know in our highest enjoyments, it has been said 'Surgit aliquid amare' - and so it proved here. On the way Lily's boa took a fancy to some little nook or other, & though we stayed a considerable time at Capel Curig, consoling ourselves for its absence by eating and dinners, it made not its appearance before we left, and no tidings of it have reached us up to the present.

With hearts no lighter from our dinners, we proceeded on through the pass of Llanberis - and here boa and every thing else, but my own Lily, was forgotten in the wondrous wildness and rugged grandeur of the scene - but as I can give you no idea of it, I may as well tell you at once we reached Caernarvon about 8 in the evening, having just finished 50 miles - and such a 50 it would I imagine be very difficult to find elsewhere. I was rather hurrying through then, but we had fixed to be here on Wednesday, and wished to spend a night at Bedd Gelert. We left Caernarvon in the afternoon (of Tuesday,) and got there for tea.

The next day unfortunately proved very wet, and I only got a very short walk, which I regretted exceedingly, as there seemed some very tempting walks round about. Our ride to Tremadoc, which would have been so fine, if the weather had been at all so, was nothing but rain and wind, and when we got to the inn we were so washed in the showers that declining coming up here that night, we changed and got to bed as soon after tea as we could. On Thursday morning the carriage came for us almost before we had done breakfast, and we passed over the embankment (nearly a mile long) without much fear, though there is scarcely room for two vehicles to pass, and it is nearly 40 feet above the Sea. (Built by William Maddocks, between 1808 and 1811)\*

The scenery about here is very fine, and the view from the drawing-room windows quite glorious. We have not had good weather since we came - but on Saturday we had a delightful drive as far as Tan y Bwlch. I begin

now to feel myself at home here and shall be exceedingly sorry to leave. We talk of doing it on Wednesday. Mrs Holland is kindness itself - and Sam I like very much - and Ann I am quite in love with. My bonny wee wife - My bonny wee wife - grows I do think more bonny than ever. She is very much better than when we left Knutsford, and I hope will go on gaining strength, though she maintains she is already as strong as a horse. And now as I want her to fill up the other half (Gaskell Letter 2)\*, I must come to one or two little things which I wish you to do.

And first will you have any objections to go to Hargreaves & Hime, in the Square, and ask if they have disposed of the Piano, which Mr Shore recommended to me. It was one of Broadwoods Patents - price £55 for cash. If they have it still - get them to send it up, and say I will pay for it on my return. And had you not better get the remainder of the cake from Mrs Butterworth's, if it has not yet been sent. And have you got any saucers for the plants. And with respect to the celery be every now & then putting a little earth up round the plants - and while you do it, keep the stalks of the outside leaves well together, to prevent the earth from getting between them. Do this and there will be no need to apply to the gardener.

We can hardly tell yet when we shall be at home - but we proposing being (sic)\* at Knutsford at the beginning of next week. We will send a note letting you know the day when you may expect us. I hope the plants have been reviving since you wrote. Mind and water them well. I am feeling very much obliged to you for taking care of every thing so nicely as you are doing, I have no doubt, and with my kindest remembrances to Mr and Mrs Robberds believe me

Your very happy & affectionate brother

Willm Gaskell.

With my love to Sam (?Gaskell: a doctor, William's brother)\* tell him how glad I was to find he had nothing to do with the decapitation row -

J. A. V. CHAPPLE

\*Editor's notes, usually [ ]

Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in 19th Century British Fiction by Susan Morgan, Professor of English at Vassar College, Oxford University Press, £25.00.

- Discusses the reasons why there are so many heroines in the Victorian novel when the society it depicts was so male dominated; and shows how these heroines have been used to shape history. Mrs Gaskell has suffered at the hands of critics, who while praising her descriptive qualities and her sympathy, have failed to find anything innovative in her work. Professor Morgan claims to offer a new appraisal and shows how the novels are more revolutionary than they have previously been credited and how they have shaped history. This is just as true of Cranford and Ruth as it is of the more dramatic novels. A particular influence on Gaskell's writing was Scott's Heart of Midlothian. Other novelists treated in this study are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Sir Walter Scott, George Meredith and Henry James.

A Victorian reader, edited by Peter Faulkner (Key documents in literary criticism) B. T. Batsford, £7.95.

An anthology of passages from 22 Victorian writers, 1830-1870 in which they describe their attitudes to their work. It includes the preface to Mary Barton and Mrs Gaskell's letter to Herbert Grey, c1859 (GL 420) in which she gives advice to a novice writer on his work. George Eliot's essay Silly Novels by Lady Novelists recently published in an Anthology of British Women Writers edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd (Newsletter No. 8) is again reprinted.

The introduction also quotes from two other Gaskell letters which show her awareness of the problems of women writers. In GL 69 she writes to Eliza Fox 'I am sure it is healthy for them (women) to have the refuge of the hidden world of Art', while in 1862 to an unknown correspondent who had sent her the manuscript of a novel, she writes 'When I had little children I do not think I could have written stories, because I should have become too much absorbed in my fictitious people to attend to my real ones ...' (GL 515)

Now available on tape:-

Four short stories of Mrs Gaskell read by Judith Whale, Oasis 90025, £19.95, comprising four cassettes, playing time five hours. The contents are The Manchester Marriage, Lizzie Leigh, The Well of Pen-Morfa, The Three Eras of Libbie Marsh.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

How life goes! Essays in honour of Andrew Hughes by Hidemitsu Tohgo. Koyo Shoppan Ltd. Tokyo 1989.

Though not a study of Elizabeth Gaskell, this charming book is of interest to any lover of literature. The author charts, through a series of essays and letters, his growing enthusiasm for English literature and language, but learning so much more from his studies with his English teacher, Andrew Hughes.

Growing up in war-time Japan his ambition was to be a fighter pilot and kill for the 'glory of the Emperor and holy Japan' but through reading, paying his way through college by working in a US army camp he became aware of common humanity. 'And so I began to read books', the author writes of walking the moors at Haworth at dawn 'unable to express in poetry my feelings about the fluctuations of time and changes in personal position, I could only bow deeply towards the morning sun'.

He writes, in English, of meeting authors (including Christopher Leach) drinking in the Old Cock Tavern once frequented by Pepys, Sheridan and Dickens and the failure to 'reach' Hardy in a Dorchester shut down on December 30th. Hidemitsu Tohgo concludes that his life has become richer from the study of English and in this many of us will agree with him.

JOAN LEACH

\* \* \* \* \*

My first meeting with these two extraordinary women took place at the University of Pescara, where Professor Marroni, my teacher in English and a great "fan" of Mrs Gaskell, gave me the opportunity to become acquainted with Elizabeth Gaskell and Fredrika Bremer (1).

The research and the comparison between the two writers resulted in a thesis with the title "Elizabeth Gaskell and Fredrika Bremer - an analysis of a parallelism" -.

Is a comparison possible between these two writers? Indeed it is, is my answer. Though they were very different as women and writers, there were a couple of things that bound them together. Their friendship began when Fredrika was on her way home from America (1851), where she had stayed for more than two years, and decided to visit England, some friends and the Great Exhibition. She was very anxious to meet some of the most important writers of the moment and one of these was Elizabeth Gaskell. Fredrika Bremer's description afterwards of Elizabeth Gaskell, her home and the whole stay in England is documented by numerous articles in a Swedish newspaper, written by Fredrika herself. In particular she praises Elizabeth Gaskell with these words:

"Have you read a 'Manchester Story' called Mary Barton? If you haven't, do read this exciting and touching tale of the reverse side of the Manchester-workers' life. The novel has given the author Mrs E. Gaskell an excellent place among young English writers. I was so very surprised to see that it was she, this lovely little lady with the happy face and the nice voice in a most beautiful country-home, that had written this moving story of the earth's nightlife" (2).

Her admiration for Elizabeth Gaskell is so evident and this admiration leads further on to a close friendship, testified by some letters from Fredrika to Elizabeth. A letter from Fairfield, 19 October, 1851 says:  
 "Bless you, Elizabeth for your kind heart and all the good and genial influences with which it has surrounded

me on my way, all from our meeting in your home"! ... (3)

Another one dated Stockholm, 29 September, 1853 finishes with an ardent appeal to Mrs Gaskell: "Dear Elizabeth, dear sister in spirit, if I may call you so, give me your hand in sympathy and in work for the oppressed or neglected of our own sex" ... (4)

The last letter gives us a vision of how much Fredrika expected of her in the woman question. They had the same wish to try to better the conditions for women and partly they also tried to raise discussions about delicate problems through their novels. But as writers they were different. Elizabeth Gaskell described all sorts of problems, from social and working problems (Mary Barton), problems related to moral (Ruth), to problems of human



FREDRIKA BREMER

relations (Wives and Daughters). Fredrika Bremer wrote mostly about human relations and particularly about relationships between parents and children and between sisters and brothers (The Home, Nina, Father and Daughter).

Lastly they were also different as women. Elizabeth Gaskell was more like a dove according to Lord Cecil (5) and I'm sure, that he would have classified Fredrika Bremer as an eagle in excellent company with ugly, dynamic, childless and independent women like Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. But all these external things were not so important. The real importance was in doing something for those who were in need and this interest in common made their friendship lasting.

EVA AHSBERG BORRAMEO

#### NOTES

- (1) Fredrika Bremer, the Swedish writer, was born of Swedish parents in 1801 in Finland but was brought up in Sweden. She died in 1865 (incidentally the same year as Elizabeth Gaskell)
- (2) These articles with the title "England in the autumn 1851" were published between January and February 1852, in the daily newspaper of Stockholm "Aftonbladet"
- (3) R. D. Waller; Letters addressed to Mrs Gaskell, Bulletin of John Rylands Library, vol.19, 1935; p.165
- (4) A. Rubenius; The Woman Question in Mrs Gaskell's Life and Works, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1950; p.41
- (5) Lord D. Cecil; Early Victorian Novelists, London, Constable, 1934; p.97

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

In The Life of Charlotte Brontë (Chapter 27)  
Mrs Gaskell recalled a discussion between them when

Charlotte had been anxious that she might be accused of plagiarism, 'she thought every one would fancy that she must have taken her conception of Jane Eyre's character from that of 'Francesca', the narrator of Miss Bremer's story. For my own part, I cannot see the slightest resemblance between the two characters, and so I told her: but she persisted in saying that Francesca was Jane Eyre married to a good-natured 'Bear' of a Swedish surgeon.'

It is clear that both writers had read Bremer closely. Another link was through Mary Howitt, who had translated Bremer's works.

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#### BOOKS IN STOCK

These are mostly at special rates. If ordering by post please add postage at rate on receipt.

Elizabeth Gaskell. A Portrait in Letters by J. A. V. Chapple	£4.00
William Gaskell by Barbara Brill	£7.95
The Landscape of The Brontës by Arthur Pollard	£14.95
Manchester in the Victorian Age by Gary S. Messinger	£2.50
Cranford Revisited by John Rowe Townsend	£9.95
How Life Goes by Hidemitsu Tohgo	£7.50

\* \* \* \* \*

The Manchester City News, in 1878, printed several letters and notes about Greenheys, the De Quincey house, and the area surrounding it which was so charmingly depicted by Mrs Gaskell in the opening scenes of Mary Barton. One correspondent wrote:

'When this house disappeared in the changes taking place about four years ago piteous was it to see an old gentleman, its last occupant, who had lived in it nearly fifty years, turn away with tears running down his face. Well known was he in that neighbourhood and well liked. Poor old Walker. It was not long he survived the pulling down of his house. He had spoken with Mrs Gaskell on several occasions.'

Another correspondent wrote in detail of the Mary Barton background and characters:

'Another cottage which stood not very far from Jackson's farm, a white one-storey building, afforded less pleasing reflections. It was long the residence of a power loom weaver; who, however added botanical pursuits, and moreover was a leading delegate whenever disputes arose between masters and men upon trade questions. He is said to have been occasionally visited by the late Mrs Gaskell, and that he was the original of Job Legh, so graphically described by her in Mary Barton; but if so there seems to be no reason why she should have fixed his residence in the questionable quarters she names instead of the neat whitewashed cottage which her notice would have immortalized. But though a turn-out delegate, Job (as I may call him) had none of the fire-brand propensities which some of the disaffected indulged in.

'On the contrary, he was known to be more of a peace-maker, and never advocated violent measures, such as John Barton was accused of. The original John Barton I afterwards knew well, and a close comrade of his, also a delegate, both of whom were operative cotton-spinners.



Greenheys Lane, Manchester, 1827. Sketch by J.W. Ralston.

'The former whom I shall call R.K., was a thorough-going leveller, his motto being the three T's as "liberty, equality and fraternity" are occasionally described; and I can well imagine, from what I knew of him, that he was one of the most unflinching in upholding what he called the rights of the British Workman; but I have good reason to know that he was never guilty of the violent measures attributed to some of the turn-outs. Indeed, some of the acts of violence named in Mary Barton never occurred in Manchester at all, the locality of the murder of Mr Carson (a fictitious name) being changed from a neighbouring town to Manchester: neither were the murderers, two of whom were hung, Manchester men. But R.K. was ever after a marked man ... The disputes being happily settled, an agreement was come to between masters and men that by-gones should be by-gones, and that no workman, whether delegate or not, except actual criminals should be refused work. But though R.K. would be included in this amnesty, he found it impossible to obtain employment; so he decided to spend a few years in America, until as he imagined, the matter had blown over. But on arriving in the States, judge of his mortification to find his name had preceeded him, and that so prominent an

advocate of workman's rights would not be tolerated there.

'As R.K. had always regarded America as the El Dorado of freedom and liberty, this unpalatable extinguisher of his democratic theories took him by surprise; but only by changing his name and getting work in another trade could he obtain a livelihood, when after a stay of about six years, he returned to old England a sadder if not a better man. He, however, became painfully aware on his arrival here that his past political proclivities had neither been forgotten nor forgiven, as he was refused work on every hand. Indeed one of his old employers named to him that his rearrival in England had been made known to every master spinner in the country. Fortunately for him he had saved a little money, and this enabled him to open a retail coalyard in Ardwick, in which he prospered, and in after years, such was the reliance in his sterling integrity, particularly with those who had known him the longest, that he became one of the most trusted of men, having several trusteeships in his hands, one of them an estate of very considerable value, which virtually he rescued from the auctioneer's hammer, living to see it freed from its mortgages, and he restored it to the family descendants (whose previous ownership dated four centuries back) free from all incumbrance.

'He died only a few years ago, leaving property worth six or seven thousand pounds. The Greenheys cottage in question was long under the surveillance of the police, as ten delegates met there every Sunday, and many midnight sittings were known to be held. It was moreover searched more than once ostensibly for Chartist weapons, but nothing criminating was found. Many of these Sunday delegate meetings were professedly called botanist gatherings, but the police were able to point out those who had no pretensions to the science, and hence appearances were against their visits being so harmless a character as a botanical meeting would imply.

(signed) R. E. Bibby'

Manch. C. News 22 June 1878

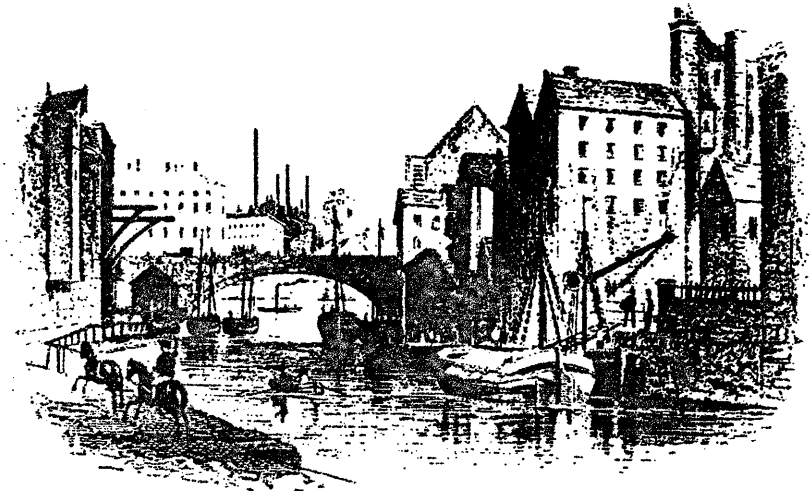
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If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN (Tel: 0565 4668)

ISSN 0954 - 1209



# The Gaskell Society



*The River Irwell & Albert Bridge Manchester*

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1990

NO. 10

As soon as this newsletter has been mailed, final preparations will be made for our joint conference with The Brontë Society at Ambleside, 7-9th September. I am sure this new venture is going to be a memorable weekend for both our Societies and those of you unable to join us will hear about it in our publications. I know many of you enjoy these and are content to share our activities by reading about them; in this way our more distant members in Japan, North America, Australia and Europe can be with us in spirit.

We do try to give members the opportunity to get together but it is not easy to know just what members expect or enjoy, therefore we are always keen to receive suggestions. As we are centred on Knutsford, we have a number of local members who could meet more often for social and literary events but recent response has been disappointing both for our unusual and fascinating 'cholera walk', Royal Exchange performance of School for Scandal and canal boat trip. Perhaps we have chosen the wrong times? Possibly more local members in our ranks would give wider scope, so please note the invitation to meet at The Angel on Saturday morning, August 25th, and bring a friend. Committee member, Mrs Alison Foster has agreed to take on the role of social secretary.

We are considering a monthly (or fortnightly?) literary circle, probably to read and discuss some of Elizabeth Gaskell's short stories; please let me know if you are interested and whether a weekday or Saturday afternoon would suit you best.

For our London and South East members, we are planning another London meeting, on Saturday 27th October at Chelsea, first meeting at Carlyle's house on Cheyne Row. Professor K J Fielding has agreed to speak on "The Sceptical Carlyles Meet the Unitarian Elizabeth Gaskell".

Looking even further afield and ahead we think Whitby area would make a fine literary venue for the study of Sylvia's Lovers. Cober Hill Conference Centre on the Whitby side of Scarborough offers excellent facilities,

in 6 acres of grounds overlooking sea and cliffs. The cost of a weekend at the end of May, for example, would be around £35 full board; or a three night mid-week break at about £55. The Royal Hotel Whitby could accommodate a group but it would be more expensive, but there is also a Methodist holiday home which is reasonable and central, so the party could be split. Let me know your thoughts on this; it seems the end of May/early June would be best for several reasons.

Our AGM weekend promises to be enjoyable. Saturday 29th September at The Royal George Hotel in Knutsford, which suited us very well last year. Brenda Colloms, writer and lecturer will speak about "William Johnson Fox and his circle". Those of you fortunate enough to own a copy of The Collected Letters of Mrs Gaskell edited by Chapple and Pollard (let me know if you ever spot a spare copy) will know that there are many letters to Tottie Fox, daughter of W J Fox, M.P. Brenda Colloms has a book due out on the subject of her talk and some of you will know her excellent study, Charles Kingsley: The Lion of Eversley.

On Friday 28th September, we hope you and your friends will join us at Tatton Hall for the premier of "Charlotte and Elizabeth", an imaginative new play on the relationship of the two writers. After the play there will be opportunity for informal discussion with the company.

It should be mentioned that there is always academic Gaskell work going on and we are pleased to be of use in any way. When I have finished this letter, I am going into Manchester to meet an American member and also hope to find time to look at registry records for Gaskell entries.

It is much appreciated if UK members will enclose a s.a.e. with any correspondence needing replies, and also if members NOT attending the AGM will pay their subs due on 1st September for 1991 year without waiting for reminders! (£5 for UK and EEC, £10 for overseas members, or \$18 to our US representative, Mrs L Magruder

Box 1547, La Canada, Ca 91012.

We wish our President well on his visit to the Gaskell Society of Japan in October. Professor Arthur Pollard will give several other talks there, and we are pleased to acknowledge assistance from the British Council.

JOAN LEACH

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(Above) Entrance Front, Capesborne, 1843. Edward Blore, architect.  
(Below) West Elevation 1843, showing the Paxton Conservatory.  
John Wood - Edward Blore, architects.



(see following article)

Mrs Susan Kearney has kindly given permission to print a letter to her great-grandmother, Agnes Sandars (née Paterson). It describes a visit to Capesthorne Hall, the home of the widowed Mrs Caroline Davenport, who was then about to marry Lord Hatherton. This is worth reading alongside the first chapter of North and South (1854-55). At the end of the new letter Elizabeth Gaskell gives a brief account of a play by Bulwer-Lytton and a farce called Mr Nightingale's Diary, by Charles Dickens and Mark Lemon.

The letter has not yet been fully researched, but our knowledgeable Secretary has identified the Macclesfield clergyman, Mr Weigall of Hurdsfield parish. Mr Nathan Hubbersty appears in volume 1 of the great edition of Darwin's Correspondence now in progress - as 'a Mr Hubble-Bubble' at first! The word 'Braidized' is exceptionally interesting. Dr James Braid, a Manchester physician writing scientifically about a popular phenomenon, first coined the term 'neuro-hypnotism' in 1842. He shortened it to 'hypnotism' in the following year, though 'Braidized' was still being used forty years afterwards.

I would welcome any information members of the Society could give me about minor figures or events in Elizabeth Gaskell's letters. It would be truly wonderful if the location of Caroline Davenport's diary and correspondence could be discovered, too. All that I have found so far are the two short extracts from her letters just printed in Brontë Society Transactions 1990, from a notebook of Jane Adeane of Llanfawr now in the Brotherton Library at Leeds.

Plymouth Grove  
Wednesday [?27 January 1852]

My dearest Agnes,

I think you will perhaps like to hear something of my doings lately; of my visit to Capesthorne in the first place, and of the Amateur Play in the second. You know Mrs Davenport was going to be married on the 11th of Feb [1852], so she wrote to ask me to come and see

her a long time ago, & renewed the invitation when she knew the girls were gone. So I went. I joined her at Macclesfield as she was coming home from Staffordshire, and we drove together to Capesthorne (5 miles) and on the way she surprised me by praising the President [Napoleon III], and believing from all her private information from Paris, that he was going to try to be the Napoleon of Peace (whatever that means).<sup>1</sup>

At Capesthorne I found her uncle, Mr Charles Hurt, her cousin Miss Emma Wolley (such a nice girl do you know her? daughter of a clergyman near Nottingham, her father's name was Hurt.) Mr Osborne the Principal of [?] Rossall School and a very clever agreeable ugly man, and Mr Weigall a clergyman at Macclesfield. It was very pleasant that day, but the next our two nice clergymen left, and a very stupid Mr and Mrs Blore came. He is an architect, who has made his fortune, and his wife has been a beauty.<sup>2</sup> Her daughter is married to a Mr [?] Careton a minor Canon of Westminster. Her dresses and jewels were something to wonder at, & as we could not find out anything to talk to her about, Mrs Davenport brought down all her wedding finery for public amusement.

A set of diamonds and opals, and a set of diamonds & emeralds - (the first far the most beautiful & far the most expensive too,) a green velvet cloak down to her heels lined & trimmed with miniver 6 Indian shawls of various kinds, the lowest priced one 90 guineas - one a soft green exquisitely embroidered in pale lilac & gold, another a crimson or Indian red ditto in white & gold, another a blue scarf, ends in gold - oh dear! they were so soft and delicate and went into such beautiful folds. Her gowns (only 7) were in London, - a white moiré antique a maize coloured do trimmed with black lace & coral-branch 'fittings', a blue silk with white lace, a green velvet, a black cloth (the only one with a waistcoat whh her dress maker told her was only to be worn with a cloth dress, [?] & rather going out in that) a dark blue silk, & a mouse coloured ditto. Her everyday petticoats were all made without bodies, set into a

round band [small sketch] with pretty jacket bodies with little skirts [small sketch] loose; trimmed all round with Valenciennes and with high-bodied jackets with long sleeves for high bodied gowns. They looked so pretty. Then her tip-top best were with embroidered stomachers. Everything else was as pretty as could be, only nothing else so very new and [?]fancy.

Mrs Blore was in ecstasies at every separate piece of finery, & put on rings till she could not bend her knuckles to try & come up to Mrs Davenport's grandeur. She left on the Monday, & good go with her! I hope I shall never see her again. Such a testing of everything by money I never heard in my life. If she heard of a man being successful, she asked directly what income he had, & neither Mrs Davenport nor I could knock any other idea into her head.

Then on the Monday your friend Mr Nathan Hubbersty, and Mr Alfred Arkwright came; I liked the latter much. I did not like the former, & could not imagine how any sister of Mrs Davenport's could have married him. On Tuesday I went, with much regret to the Sam Greys. He was ill, and they thought my coming might cheer him up, and do him good. When I came home on the Friday - (somewhere about Febry 5th) I found a note from Mrs Davenport, begging me to come back on the Saturday & stay with her over the Monday, when the tenants were to give her their presents; she had expected Lord H to be with her, but now she found he could not. So I went. I expected her to meet me at Chelford but she was not there & I took a fly. On the way I met another fly, and out jumped a nice-looking elderlyish gentleman, & introduced himself to me as Lord H. He had come down from London by the express train to see Mrs D unexpectedly as she had said she was not quite well, staid 3 hours at Capesthorne, & was going back by the evening express.

Sunday was a very nice day at Capesthorne. The S[unday] School come into the beautiful conservatory to be taught, and are clean wholesome country-looking children in the midst of camellias, & [?]sweet-scented geraniums

&c &c - the chapel through the conservatory - the pew a parlour with low luxurious sofas, a fire place &c,<sup>3</sup> - how easy it seems to be good compared with a long wet tramp down to a close school-room, full of half-washed children, - that's very wicked is it not? Then in the evening after dinner the children & choir sing chants in this same beautiful conservatory (almost as large as that at Chatsworth, & we opened the library door, which went into the conservatory & heard them singing in a green bower[.]

Then on Monday came all the present giving [-] a present for every servant - for nearly all the out of doors servants too, for the school children[.] We arranged all: desks for the men-servants, nicely fitted up, - gowns for the younger, fur-cloaks for the older women servants - ladies' companions for the school-girls, double-bladed knives for the boys: & towards 12 o'clock came a poor idiot to whom Mrs D had been very kind. 'Silly Billy' dancing along the park dressed in a gay horse-cloth, and preceding a band then came 200 school-children, - then women, then men upwards of 500 in all. Mrs Davenport put on her beautiful cloak and went and stood in the raised & covered terrace in front of the house, while they formed a semicircle round her. Then an old farmer came forwards, crying & trembling with a little speech of farewell & a bracelet (value 60 guineas) the farmers had bought for her, - & she made a little speech, & then she cried - then came forwards the labourers who had bought a clock for her dressing-room but she could not answer them for crying - then her house-servants - a church service all in purple & gold; then the school children a silver vase for flowers; then they all came to wish her goodbye; but as we saw they each had their separate private thanks to render for some little kindness done to them; it was proposed they should raise a cheer that she might not be utterly worn out; & the band played Should auld acquaintance &c, - and then the crowd went to have refreshment. All that day we were helping Mrs Davenport, & the next morning she & I & Mr Crackenthorpe (her co-executor) went to Chelford; and

now I shall leave Lord Hatherton to finish out the story; you'll find a letter from him, among those I send which I thought you might like to see. I can't read Meta's all over again, but I am sure I may trust to your & Eliza's discretion if Meta is imprudent; and I should like to have all the letters back again sometime.

Yes! we went to see the Amateurs; we asked Mr Forster & Dickens to stay here, but they could not. Mr F came up however to call, & told us they expected to gain 1000£ by these 3 nights (2 at Liverpool, where he was not going to act.) He said the play was very heavy, and so it was. He gave me a private admission for any friends, so I took the Winkworths & we escaped the crowd. We sat right under the very much raised stage, on the front row, & I think I got Braidized for I had such a headache with looking up. The play is very very long too - 3 hours & a half, & they omitted 1 scene. And very stupid indeed. The farce was capital. Dickens was so good, & Mark Lemon, - D Jerrold was not there and Mr Forster was sadly too long over his very moral sentences in the play.

We hope to see you here dear Agnes before long. I must beg your pardon for my writing. I have so much to do just now I can hardly get through it. My kind love to Eliza. Wms remembrances to both of you.

Yours very affely

ECG

Our remembrances to Mr Saundars [sic].

#### Editor's Notes

1. The Editor of the Macclesfield Courier (Jan 17th 1852) also speculated on the French President's hopes for peace:

"Louis Napoleon has promulgated a constitution in which he has appointed himself President for 10 years and adheres to the terms of the proclamation of December 2nd. For our own parts we are inclined to think that the Constitution is such as it will last if Louis Napoleon can escape assassination and keep the soldiery in good

humour without going to war."

2. "a very stupid Mr and Mrs Blore came. He is an architect, who has made his fortune."

It seems that Mrs Gaskell was unaware that much of the building around her, at Capesthorne, was the work of Edward Blore, in 'the style of the Jacobean period, but in an idiom unmistakably of his own making, and the general tone of Victorian Gothic revival cannot serve as a description of his particular expression'. He was also architect to William IV and Queen Victoria. The work he did at Capesthorne had been put in hand by Mrs Davenport's husband, Edward Davies Davenport between 1837 and '47 when he died.

The Paxton conservatory is of the same period. 'It possessed several features which reappeared later in his design for the Crystal Palace ... and in its day may well have been the largest conservatory in existence' - (Quotes from Capesthorne guide book)

3. The family pew from the chapel is now part of the entrance hall.

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#### A GASKELL PRECEPT

On the Gaskell Memorial Tower and other Watt buildings in Knutsford, texts are a feature of the architect's style; he believed architecture should instruct and uplift.

New building at the end of King Street in Watt's style gives the area a feel of Port Merion. An attractive Watt house, now offices, has a text from Mrs Gaskell (GL.12) which might serve us today:

"The beauty and poetry of many of the common things and daily events of life in its humblest aspect does not seem to me sufficiently appreciated"

On the opposite wall is a verse familiar to many, but few could identify the author as Carlyle:

So here hath been dawning  
Another blue day.  
Think wilt thou let it  
Slip useless away?

There is no doubt that reminiscence and autobiography play a considerable part in Mrs Gaskell's work: Cranford, it is well known, owes much to Knutsford, and Wives and Daughters would not have been written, had Mrs Gaskell's father not remarried. Nevertheless, we must not forget that she was a novelist, and her experiences are not reproduced exactly in her stories.

(1) In My French Master (1853), Mrs Gaskell writes:

"Three years ago I was in Paris, An English friend of mine who lives there - English by birth, but married to a German professor, and very French in manners and ways - asked me to come to her house one evening."

The friend is unmistakably Mme Mohl, and Mr J G Sharps, in his invaluable book, Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, wonders, on the strength of this passage, if Mrs Gaskell could have paid an unrecorded visit to Paris in 1850 or 1851. This, however, is untenable, since she wrote to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth on 7 April 1853: "... we may go to Paris on May 12 or 13th! I have never been there ..." Clearly, we cannot take this sentence in My French Master as straightforward autobiography.

Mr Sharps is probably right in saying: "It seems [...] the basic ingredients of the story My French Master were Knutsford and a love-story which could easily have come from the salon of Mme Mohl". As the story was published in December 1853, it looks as if the visit to Paris very naturally reawakened in Mrs Gaskell memories of her own childhood lessons from the émigré French master, M. Rogier. The Parisian hostess, whose match-making efforts unexpectedly succeed, after all, though not in the way she intends, does resemble Mme Mohl, who was well known for her interest in young people and their love affairs, and whom Mrs Gaskell had already known for several years. Whether the love affairs in the story came from Mme Mohl or from Mrs Gaskell herself, who thereby achieved her (unconvincing) happy ending, of course, we cannot know, though we might suspect the latter.

Mme Mohl may have known of the daughter of an émigré returning as mistress to her father's ancestral mansion through marriage with a descendant of its subsequent purchaser; but the double marriage in the story strains credulity.

As for the phrase "three years ago" in the passage quoted above, Mrs Gaskell, one suspects, instinctively thought of 1853, not only the date of her first visit to Paris, but also - more important - the date of the publication of her story, to which it gave a ring of authenticity. She was obliged to antedate the action to "three years ago" to allow time for all the events she mentions - the two marriages, the installation of M. de Chalabre as an old man in the house (formerly his property) of his younger daughter, the birth of his grandchild (now of an age to play in the gardens) and his death.

Conjectural as this may be, it is possible, and in tune with Mrs Gaskell's procedure on other occasions. In My French Master, for instance, though the narrative is supposedly autobiographical, the character of the narrator, from the start, is not entirely that of the author, and her circumstances and her subsequent life very different indeed.

(2) We know little about Elizabeth Stevenson's sojourns in Edinburgh, and biographers have been tempted to fill the gap from Round the Sofa (1859). The narrator is a girl who has been sent to Edinburgh for medical treatment, and who lives a rather dreary life in drab lodgings. This has been taken as a reminiscence of Elizabeth Stevenson's own life in Edinburgh, and it has even been assumed that she and Ann Turner were sent to Edinburgh to escape from the cholera raging in Newcastle (see, for instance, Winifred Gérin, Elizabeth Gaskell, 1976, pp. 42-43).

Now, just as Mrs Gaskell's visit to Paris may have revived old memories, and led her to write My French

Master, so the death in 1858 of Mrs Fletcher (née Dawson), the former society hostess of Edinburgh, who had known her parents and her cousin, may have awakened old memories (as W Gérin suggests, p. 205), and provided the occasion for Round the Sofa. But that the narrator's life reflects Elizabeth Stevenson's seems improbable. The letters to Harriet Carr, recently published by Professor J A V Chapple in vol. 4 of The Gaskell Society Journal, leave no doubt that Elizabeth Stevenson had left Newcastle for Woodside, Birkenhead, several months before cholera reached Newcastle; and, even if she had not, why should she and Ann have been sent to lodge in Edinburgh, when they could have gone to live with Mrs Lumb in Knutsford or Mrs Robberds in Manchester? Moreover, the narrator's life in Edinburgh does not tally with what little we know of Miss Stevenson's. According to Meta Gaskell, her mother stayed with relatives in Edinburgh; and the miniature and the bust of her, executed by well-known artists, suggest an interesting social life. Indeed, this, one feels, is likely. Mrs Gaskell was lucky with her friends and relations. In Newcastle, she lived with the Rev Turner, the very centre of the vigorous intellectual life of the city; and in Paris, she stayed with Mme Mohl, whose salon was frequented by many of the most distinguished writers, thinkers, and scholars of the day. It is hard to believe that her life in Edinburgh did not follow the same pattern.

E L DUTHIE

P J YARROW

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OUR AGM SPEAKER, Brenda Colloms, is Lecturer & Librarian at the Working Men's College, London. Her other books include Victorian Country Parsons (characters such as Jack Russell, William Barnes etc) and Victorian Visionaries about the Christian Socialist movement, both published by Constable. We look forward to her book on William Johnson Fox and his circle later in the year.

On a warm Sunday afternoon, though thankfully not as overpoweringly hot as it had been, July 22nd, members of the Gaskell Society drove into Manchester to Gt Ancoats Street for a 'Cholera Walk' conducted by fellow member, Blue Badge Guide and historian, Sheila Lemoine, M.A., M.Ed., Dip. in Adult Education. We were rather a disappointingly small band, possible due to holidays - just nine in number - which was a shame as the quality of the occasion was very high.

Sheila had arranged to meet us in 'The Crown and Kettle', a Victorian public house of great interest in itself as it had once been the local magistrates' court and boasted a splendidly ornate ceiling. We were thoughtfully provided with sheets of information on the background to the walk, including maps, and Sheila expanded upon them. In the early nineteenth century, she explained, cholera was not a new phenomenon - we had our own strain and actually called it 'cholera nostra'. But, in 1832, Asiatic cholera reached the shores of England, carried in by a boatman at Sunderland. There was no immunity and the new strain was devastating in its effect. By the May of that year, it had spread to Manchester though it was then considered to have arisen 'upon the spot', the first case being that of James Palfreyman, a 29 year old coach painter.

Much of Sheila's information about the cases came from the biographical notes written by Dr Henry Gaultier, a local physician, attempting not only to treat the patients (though there was little he could do for them) but also to determine the cause. How easy it is for us now to look back in horror, with the benefit of our modern knowledge, and realise that of course it was carried in the water and that lack of sanitation was responsible for its spread! But for Dr Gaultier, in the days when microbes and bacilli were unheard of and microscopes were only poor things which could not see them, how much more difficult it must have been! Yet this dedicated man chronicled in detail each of the first 300 cases he saw, including their previous condition, where they lived, what they had eaten and who



they had seen in an attempt to discover the relevant factors, before he was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of them. His intuition was very close - he made particular note of the fouling of every court by open cesspools.

We set off on our walk - past the old market and across the broad streets built to accommodate six 'lanes' of wagons plying to and from the cotton mills - and soon reached Swan Street. Here an engineering works, fallen into disuse, had been taken over and whitewashed and used as the first hospital. It still stands today though it has returned to a commercial use. Here, so many died and were taken away for communal burial underneath nearby Victoria Station. Coffins were not usual for the poor then but the terror engendered by 'King Cholera' demanded them. Despite these precautions and the use of chloride of lime as a crude antiseptic, nurses (revealed by Dr Gaultier's notes to be of the same general standard as Dickens' Mrs Gamp!) and porters who handled the bodies also died.

Ms Lemoine spoke with an obvious passion for her subject and brought it to life vividly. By the time we reached Angel Street and the site of Woodward's Court, we imagined the smell of the place as well as the tragedy which had wiped out whole pathetic families there. In 1773, the population of Manchester was 48,821. In 1832, it was 142,026. Much of this explosion was contained - if that word can be used at all - in this small area. Houses were back to back, crammed into recesses even in the angles of the filthy courts and severely overcrowded with beds being shared if there were any at all. Abattoirs and tripe-works were based nearby contributing to the general stench. I was much struck with the repeated comment in Dr Gaultier's notes that children, although basically 'healthy', were in a poor condition, starving and half-naked and subject to attacks of diarrhoea, even before the cholera gripped them. The wonder is that so many survived at all, as somehow they did. 674 died in a matter of months and most

significantly in June and July.

Our next stop was the parochial graveyard near the site of St Michael's Church, now gone. The stones have long since been flattened and used as paving but the names and ages remain on the middle-class graves in the superior church graveyard next door. It is an overgrown and strange place now. Within 300 yards of each other, two 'Ragged Schools' still stand. We were reminded that this excess of urban population had never been known before. It was a new problem and here were the visible signs of someone striving to do something about it and an indication of the greatness of the need in their proximity.

Downwards again: underneath Stevenson's Railway, carrying the main line between Yorkshire and Lancashire, where we were invited to imagine the houses, now demolished, crammed in under the bridges and subject to the belching of smuts from steam engines all day long. And finally the River Irk: still flowing beneath the railway and the broad roads constructed overhead, on its way to join the Irwell. It is cleaner today, clean enough to grow long weeds but still choked with litter and harbouring rats, which we saw, and still conveying a chilling sense of evil as it winds through tunnels and conduits built deliberately high to accommodate flooding.

It was here that Friedrich Engels stood on the bridge and formed his thoughts whilst looking down on the crowded hovels of 'Gibraltar'. He of course favoured Communist revolution as the remedy but, in England, it did not happen, possibly due to the sensibility of the need for reform.

We repaired to a pleasant afternoon tea in the Parker's Hotel, a different world indeed, only a street away, and we washed our hands gratefully in the sanitised water provided by the strenuous efforts of local government after the great cholera epidemics. Perhaps not quite the thing for a summer Sunday afternoon's outing? Not a bit of it. We headed home for the comforts of rural Cheshire with more than a slight feeling of awe and the knowledge that it was individuals such as Dr Henry Gaultier and

Mrs Gaskell that had drawn attention to the plight of the working classes in Manchester and, in their own separate ways, had done something about it.

ALISON FOSTER

### Editor's Note

While Elizabeth Gaskell was writing about the evils of industrial Manchester, William was also working to bring about reform. Catherine Winkworth wrote to her sister Emily (November 22nd 1852, Memorials of Two Sisters, p.93):

'Mr Gaskell is doing a great deal now and is gaining many warm friends in Manchester, particularly among the clergymen, by his activity, good sense, and good temper in two committees. One is for the better regulation of beerhouses and places of public amusement, the other a Sanitary Committee to prepare the town for the next visit of the cholera. (Note the accepted inevitability of this) Both the Dean and Canon Richson are saying everywhere that he is the most valuable member on these committees, and he was invited the other day to the distribution of medical prizes . . . to which no dissenting minister was ever asked before . . . Lily is proud that he is appreciated by people whose appreciation she cares for.'

\* \* \* \* \*

### A POSSIBLE NEW IMAGE OF MRS GASKELL

About three years ago, several old suitcases of family memorabilia came into my possession.

The cases contained many items which had belonged to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte Brontë's best friend.

A distant relation of mine, Mrs Richard Needham, attended the sale of Miss Nussey's effects at Moor Lane House, Gomersal, in May 1889.

The Brontë Parsonage Museum at Haworth has a catalogue of the house sale which gives details of some of the items bought by Mrs Needham. Catalogue item 192 refers to 14 small & 11 large photographs together with two

sheets of lithograph letters & a drawing of a cockatoo by Emily Brontë.

In one of the suitcases there was a large envelope containing what appears to be some of the above items, one of which is a photograph of a lady who looks convincingly like the known representations of Mrs Gaskell - arched eyebrows, centre hair parting and face shape. I have consulted Mr Colin Harding of the Bradford Photographic Museum about the above photograph and he has confirmed that it is a photographic print of a painting. If this photograph is a representation of Mrs Gaskell then I believe that it has not been seen before.



Mrs Gaskell spent many hours with Ellen Nussey collecting material for her biography of Charlotte Brontë. I can only think that Mrs Gaskell would have given this print to Ellen Nussey who had treasured it and kept it with her other "special" photographs.

AUDREY HALL

Lois the Witch & other stories. Pocket Classics series, Alan Sutton. £3.95.

This publisher continues its policy of producing lesser known works of the major Victorian authors in cheap no frills editions. Already available are the Manchester Marriage and My Lady Ludlow. This volume also contains the Old Nurses Story and The Crooked Branch, The Grey Woman and The Squire's Story. The Grey Woman has not been available in this country since the Knutsford edition of 1908. There are no textual notes and only a three page biographical introduction by Sheila Michell.

The Politics of Story in Victorian Social Fiction by Rosemarie Bodenheimer, Assistant Professor of English at Boston College. Cornell University Press. £20.60.

(The Gaskell sections of this book are based on an article in Nineteenth Century Fiction, 1979).

A discussion of the social problem novel showing how the plot influences social change as much as the proclaimed social intent. The first half deals with women's novels in which middle-class heroines are the instruments of social change. Gaskell's North and South was deliberately written not only as a reaction to criticism of her own Mary Barton but in answer to reservations she had with Brontë's Shirley and is more challenging to traditional conceptions. Two inferior novels are discussed in detail by way of contrast: Elizabeth Stone's William Langshawe: The Cotton Lord and Geraldine Jewsbury's Marian Withers. The second half discusses three social problem novels in which the romantic ideas of nature play an important part in the structure - Oliver Twist, Alton Locke and Ruth. An interesting feature of this book is the use of letters to show how the novels came to be written.

Mutual friends: Charles Dickens and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital by Jules Kosky. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.

Contains some small but new biographical details. Dickens was a patron of Great Ormond Street Hospital and solicited the help of a number of friends and colleagues in fund raising. Mrs Gaskell's involvement came about

through a number of relatives who were already subscribers to the project - Henry Holland, the royal physician, Capt. Frederick Holland R.N. (her cousins) and Dr Samuel Gaskell, her brother-in-law who was on Shaftesbury's Lunacy Commission. There is quite a lot of information about Capt. Holland, who was the son-in-law of Dickens' friend Lord Denman, Lord Chief Justice. He lived at Ashbourne Hall, Derbyshire. Mrs Gaskell made several visits to him in the 1850s, usually following a stay at Lea Hurst, the home of Florence Nightingale who is also discussed in the book.

#### (Editor's Note:

This book has solved a mystery for Professor Chapple and myself, who have been puzzled as to why Captain Holland's photograph was seen by Mrs Gaskell in the Ward Room of the Royal Yacht when she visited Portsmouth in 1861 (GL.484). Captain Denman, commander of the vessel was Holland's brother-in-law. The Denmans were also related to the Brodies with whom ECG spent a happy time at Oxford.)

Living Space in Fact and Fiction by Philippa Tristram. Routledge. £40.00.

A study of the English house as depicted by English novelists from 1740. All classes are represented from Blenheim Palace to the weavers' cottages in Mary Barton. There is also an illustration and description of her drawing room at Plymouth Grove.

The Industrial City, 1820-1870 by Dorothy and Alan Shelston. Macmillan, 1989.

The interesting study by the Journal Editor of the Gaskell Society aims to show how the industrial city has been portrayed in a wide variety of writings not just fiction. Overseas topographical and sociological writers such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Friedrich Engels are treated alongside Dickens, Gaskell and George Eliot. Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool are amongst the cities described. Extensive quotations are used to

emphasise the points. The book is complementary to the address given by the author to the Gaskell Society - Elizabeth Gaskell's Manchester (Gaskell Journal 1989) which was concerned with identifying and verifying Gaskell's descriptions, and, while including some of the same material provides a totally different angle.

A Brontë Diary: a chronological history of the Brontës from 1775 to 1915, by Michael Steed. Dalesman. £7.95. This is a table of events in the family from the meeting of Rev Patrick Brontë's parents to the death of Rev Arthur Nicholl's second wife. There is a Who's Who and over thirty photographs. It is a little confusing to use with three indexes - a topographical index, an index of people which includes several names not in the 'Who's Who' and a general index which includes references to the Brontës as well as those in the index of people. It would also have been useful to indicate which of the letters alluded to in the text have survived. On April 5th 1855 it states that Patrick writes to tell Mrs Gaskell of Charlotte's death with no mention of the fact that on April 4th she had replied to John Greenwood's letter informing her of the news.

Incidentally, Mrs Gaskell's maiden name was spelt Stevenson not Stephenson.

CHRISTINE LINGARD

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#### ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

Kenn Oultram has produced issue 2 of CHAPTER ONE, the official newsletter of the Alliance. This contains fascinating details of literary events and various societies, in fact essential reading for the literary connoisseur. If you would like a copy, please send 50p (i.e. 2 x 20p coins, 2 x new 5p coins, in strip of sellotape), plus self-addressed label to: Kenn Oultram, Clatterwick Hall, Little Leigh, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 4RJ

On 26th April 1990, three months into research on Mrs Gaskell and the achievement of the work Mary Barton, my search for material led me to Manchester for the third time, to attend the Spring Meeting of the Gaskell Society at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel. I had travelled from Birmingham to hear Dr Chitham's talk on Elizabeth Stevenson's education - some clues here perhaps to her extraordinary talent?

Prior to the meeting proper was a short Unitarian service to commemorate the newly-opened Gaskell room. This short service, led by Rev Denise Boyd, was my introduction to the non-conformist faith of Mrs Gaskell. It proved to be most revealing and enlightening: the intellectual content, the appeal for the love of learning and literature, the absence of ritual, a prayer shared without the need to clasp hands, bow heads or close eyes, the manner in which the service was led by an "unfrocked" lady minister - all this created an ethos indicating the special nature of the theology of Unitarianism, and the murmurings of its significance upon, not only Mrs Gaskell's actions and thought, but also her writing, began to stir in my mind. From this point, my study focused upon Unitarianism, and firm links began to emerge between her faith and her art in the work Mary Barton.

How then did Unitarianism, for which it remained a legal offence to openly confess belief until 1813, differ from orthodox Christianity? The weekly periodical for the religion was entitled 'The Inquirer' and this implies a questioning, intellectual response to religious thought. Rational thought and the quest for religious truth led the founding fathers to find the Trinitarian formula an impossible one, and in consequence the doctrine derived from it was equally invalid.<sup>1</sup> They rejected the Trinity and Divinity of Christ, whilst emphasising the simple humanity of Christ and his witness to the truth. Coral Lansbury (75) is particularly helpful in her explanation of Unitarianism. She states:

"Their theology was an optimistic affirmation of man as a rational being who could ultimately attain a perfect state in this world without

recourse to marvels and miracles. Further, they were untouched by the struggle between science and Christian doctrine ... they gladly espoused the cause of the apes as further proof of man's capacity to evolve by reason and by will."<sup>2</sup>

So at a time of religious doubt, Unitarians stood firm in their beliefs: the new science held no threat for them, it merely confirmed and strengthened their convictions.

Theirs was a particularly tolerant religion: as such Unitarians did not attack traditional doctrines, whilst insisting that no doctrine was too sacred to be questioned.<sup>3</sup> Additionally it was marked by forward thought in the search for religious truth, the areas of education, gender discrimination and emancipation for women. By mid-nineteenth century, they abandoned belief in the infallibility of the Bible. Accompanying the questioning, scientific attitude towards religious truth, was a marked independence of mind, and a belief that people must be free to work out their own salvation. Unlike mainstream Christianity, they were not over-preoccupied with the life to come, but rather sought to improve life on earth. So that whilst contemporary attitudes allowed men to quote the Bible and say 'the poor will always be with us', seeing the problem as inevitable, Unitarians refused to accept this logic, arguing that God had given each human reasoning powers which could be put to use in improving his fellow man's lot.

While freedom, reason and tolerance was the motto for their faith, theirs was also an active religion - they believed actions were stronger than words. Unitarians were at the forefront of social reform, and many a mechanic institute was founded by these active philanthropists, whilst ragged schools for children of the very poor were pioneered by Unitarians.<sup>4</sup> Education was a major Unitarian concern long before there was a national system of education. The enlightened views of the Unitarians led them to believe education was the right of every human being, male and female.<sup>5</sup> They

sought good education for their daughters, a most uncommon attitude in Victorian days. As a result, Unitarian women did not suffer the social and cultural deprivation known to most Victorian women. Because of their emancipated attitudes, Unitarians attracted to their ranks a number of eminent women, amongst them Frances Power-Cobbe, the greatest feminist campaigner of the century, Barbara Leigh Smith who in 1855 set up the first Feminist Committee to campaign for Women's Property Rights, and ten years later, the Woman's Suffrage Committee. Eliza Fox, Barbara Bodichon, Harriet Martineau, Emily Shaen and Florence Nightingale were all Unitarians of varying degrees of faith.<sup>6</sup> Another demonstration of their liberal thought was that they were the first denomination in Britain to accept women into the ministry.<sup>7</sup>

This impressive list of firsts enables us to understand the dynamics of belonging to such a church, a church at variance with mainstream religion, and at the forefront of modern thought. Whilst rationality was at the centre of Mrs Gaskell's religion, she was at the centre of Unitarianism, through birth, marriage and geography.

The attributes of this active faith, namely realism, rationality, independent thought, belief in the individual, tolerance and optimism were all headed by a quest for the truth. 'Truth to a Unitarian was the torch that would eventually illuminate the whole of mankind.'<sup>8</sup> Mrs Gaskell, moving between the world of the poor and the privileged world of her class was aware of the truth and beauty in the lives of the working classes, unknown to the middle classes. In a letter to Mary Howitt, she comments:

"We have such a district, and we constantly meet with examples of the beautiful truth in that passage of 'The Cumberland Beggar'.<sup>9</sup>

Adhering to the truth for a Unitarian involves a refreshingly honest depiction of all aspects under consideration, and where scholars have often described Mrs Gaskell as authentic or realistic, they have missed the all-pervading nature of this quest for truth, I feel.

In addition, I believe it is possible to make strong links between the features of Unitarianism named above, and the work of Mary Barton, and this I have attempted to do in a study entitled The Impact of Unitarianism on the Work of Work of Mary Barton by Mrs E Gaskell, prepared for the Humanities Department of Birmingham Polytechnic for fourth year B.Ed. Hons. studies, and now submitted to Alan Shelston at the University of Manchester.

SYLVIA KIRBY  
Birmingham Polytechnic  
July 1990

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If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 0565 4668)



Ashbourne Hall, 1839.

(see Book Notes p.19)